

# Awake!

APRIL 2006



## How Can You Find Real Happiness?

ALSO: DID JESUS REALLY  
DIE ON A CROSS? PAGE 12

# **Awake!**

AVERAGE PRINTING 32,412,000  
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- 3 You Can Find Real Happiness!
- 4 The Recipe for True Happiness
- 8 Rejoice in the Hope
- 10 "Imprisoned for Their Faith"
- 12 The Bible's Viewpoint  
Did Jesus Really Die on a Cross?
- 17 Young People Ask . . .  
School Friendships—How Close  
Is Too Close?
- 20 I Learned to Trust in God
- 29 Watching the World
- 30 From Our Readers
- 31 How Would You Answer?
- 32 Help for Protecting Our Children

## **How Can You Find Real Happiness? 3-9**

Many people strive to achieve happiness, but few seem to find it. Why? What is the key to finding genuine happiness?



### **A Day Trip to Chernobyl 14**

April is the 20th anniversary of the greatest peacetime nuclear disaster. How are people coping?



### **Raising Children With Special Needs 25**

Up to 3 percent of earth's population are estimated to suffer some form of mental retardation. Learn how families are coping successfully with affected young ones.

# You Can Find Real Happiness!

MANY people the world over seem to believe that the keys to happiness are a fancy car, a fat bank account, a prestigious career, a big house, and the latest electronic gadgets, along with an attractive figure or muscular physique. Yet, does happiness really depend upon such material and physical assets?

There has been "an explosion of research on happiness, optimism, positive emotions and healthy character traits," says a special report in *Time* magazine. The results of such studies have been surprising to many. With remarkable consistency the evidence shows that people who are governed by the premise that money, fame, or beauty will make them happy are deceiving themselves. In fact, they are building their lives on a foundation that may be detrimental to their mental health and may even lead to their suffering depression.

In the United States, many people are richer than they have ever been. "But we are basically no happier for it," says *Time*. Of course, the same could be said of people in other lands. China with its booming economy has also seen an alarming increase in unhappy people. There suicide has become "the leading cause of death in persons aged between 15 and 34 years," says the quarterly *Access Asia*. One factor underlying this trend seems to be the pressure on young people to succeed in a tough and demanding secular environment.

Clearly, material progress does not diminish anxiety and stress; if anything, it heightens them. "Our very mode of life has now become our principal cause

of emotional and mental instability," concluded one university study. According to social-trends analyst Van Wishard, "mental and emotional health is the fastest growing component of health insurance for many companies."

Even children are affected by our rapidly changing world. Books are now available for eight-year-old children that give them advice on "how to recognize the symptoms of stress and how to deal with it," says Wishard. And according to a fact sheet on depression, diagnosed depression among children in a number of Western lands is increasing at an astounding 23 percent a year. Moreover, "preschoolers are the fastest-growing market for antidepressants."

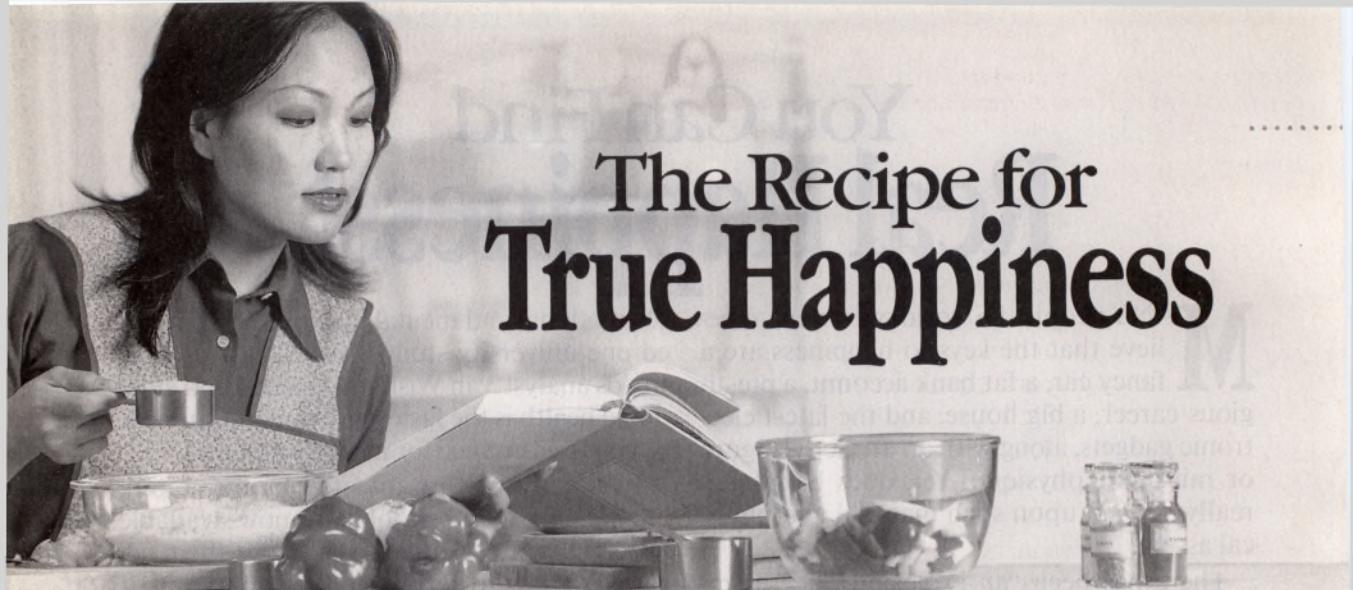
Fear is also increasing—and not just because of economic uncertainties. With political and religious extremism on the rise, many people shudder at the horrors that tomorrow may bring. Is help available?

Some two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ taught a way of life that is refreshingly different and reduces stress. At the heart of his teaching was a simple but profound truth. "Happy," he said, "are those conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) Yes, Jesus encouraged his listeners to focus on mankind's greatest need—spiritual truth about our Creator and His purpose for us.

As we shall see in the following articles, that truth can help us to discern what is really important, leading to a happier and more meaningful life. Such spiritual truth also furnishes us with a bright hope.

*Does  
happiness  
depend on  
material  
possessions?*





# The Recipe for True Happiness

**A** GOOD recipe and a good cook make for a good meal! In a way, it is similar with happiness. It is not the result of a single factor, but many things in life come together to produce happiness. These include work, play, time with family and friends, and spiritual activities. But there are also more subtle factors, such as attitudes, desires, and goals in life.

Thankfully, we do not have to figure out the recipe for true happiness by ourselves. Why not? Because our Creator has given us a wonderful book of instruction, the Bible, which is now available in whole or in part in 2,377 languages and dialects—far more than any other publication in the world!

This impressive circulation reflects God's concern for the happiness and spiritual welfare of all people. (Acts 10:34, 35; 17:26, 27)

"I . . . am . . . the One teaching you to benefit yourself," God says. If we heed his commandments, then he promises us tranquillity and peace, "just like a river."—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

That promise calls to mind the words of Jesus that were quoted in the preceding article: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) The spirituality mentioned here is not superficial piety. Rather, it influences our life as a whole. It reflects our willingness to listen to and be taught by God because we recognize that he knows us much better than we know ourselves. "What convinces me more than anything else that the Bible is from God," says Errol, a Bible student for over 50 years, "is that when you apply its teachings, they work!" Consider, for example, the Bible's excellent counsel on matters such as the pursuit of riches and pleasures.

## 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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**Just as following a good recipe can produce delicious food, so following divine guidance can result in happiness**

### Wise Guidance Regarding Money

“Even when a person has an abundance,” Jesus said, “his life does not result from the things he possesses.” (Luke 12: 15) Yes, your true value as a person, especially in God’s eyes, has nothing to do with the size of your bank account. In fact, the pursuit of wealth often adds anxieties, which sap the joy out of life and steal time from more important pursuits.—Mark 10:25; 1 Timothy 6:10.

According to Richard Ryan, a professor of psychology in the United States, the more people seek satisfaction in material things, the less they find it there. The Bible writer Solomon put it this way: “The man who loves money can never have enough, and the man who is in love with great wealth enjoys no return from it.” (Ecclesiastes 5:10, *The New English Bible*) The situation might be compared to the itch produced by a mosquito bite—the more you scratch it, the more it itches, until it becomes an open sore.

• The Bible encourages us to work hard and to enjoy the fruits of our labor. (Ecclesiastes 3:12, 13) By doing so, we increase our self-respect—another vital ingredient in happiness. We may also be able to enjoy some of life’s wholesome pleasures. There is a difference, however, between enjoying some of the good things money offers and making the pursuit of riches the focus of our life.

### Pleasures Have Their Place

A spiritual outlook on life helps us to gain the greatest benefit from recreation, entertainment, and other pleasures. Jesus enjoyed pleasurable occasions that included food and drink. (Luke 5:29; John 2:1-10) But these things were by no means the prime source of his joy in life. Rather, he found the greatest delight in spiritual

## Success Stories —How True?

Occasionally we hear anecdotal accounts about individuals who grew up in troubled homes but fought against all odds and became very wealthy. “Such stories are sometimes cited as evidence that they made the best of a bad thing, turning out well despite or because of their unhappy childhoods,” explains a report on happiness in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. “The problem with this interpretation, according to research, is that they may not have turned out so well after all. They just turned out wealthy.”



**Languages:** Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech,<sup>#</sup> Danish,<sup>#</sup> Dutch,<sup>#</sup> English,<sup>++</sup> Estonian, Finnish,<sup>#</sup> French,<sup>#</sup> Georgian, German,<sup>#</sup> Greek, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hungarian, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,<sup>#</sup> Japanese,<sup>#</sup> Korean,<sup>#</sup> Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Myanmar, Norwegian,<sup>\*</sup> Polish, Portuguese,<sup>#</sup> Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Sesotho, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,<sup>#</sup> Swahili, Swedish,<sup>#</sup> Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

<sup>#</sup> Audiocassettes also available.

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**Would you welcome more information?** Write Jehovah’s Witnesses at the appropriate address: **America:** United States of: Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Ghana:** P. O. Box GP 760, Accra. **Jamaica:** P. O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 75-142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City 300001, Edo State. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** Private Bag WG-5001, Westgate.



## Happiness Fosters Good Health

A happy disposition is good medicine. "Happiness or related mental states like hopefulness, optimism and contentment appear to reduce the risk or limit the severity of cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, diabetes, hypertension, colds and upper-respiratory infections," says a report in *Time* magazine. Furthermore, a Dutch study of elderly patients revealed that over a nine-year period, a happy, positive disposition reduced the risk of death by an amazing 50 percent!

How mental states affect the body remains unclear. Research has shown, however, that positive, optimistic people have lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which is known to suppress the immune system.

pursuits, which included helping others to learn about God and his purpose for humankind.—John 4:34.

King Solomon experimented with pleasures to see if they held the secret to happiness. "I will plunge into pleasures and enjoy myself," he said. This wealthy king did not wade into them timidly. No, he dived into pleasures! Yet, how did he feel afterward? "This too was emptiness," he wrote.—Ecclesiastes 2:1, *New English Bible*.

Empty and unfulfilled—that is how pleasure-seekers usually feel. In fact, when researchers compared the pursuit of pleasures with such things as meaningful work, spiritual activities, and involvement with family, they found that pleasure-seeking rated as the least consequential factor in their subjects' overall happiness.

### Be Generous and Thankful

Instead of being self-centered, happy people tend to be generous and interested in others. "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving," said Jesus. (Acts 20:35) Besides giving in a material way, we can give of our time and energy, which may be even more appreciated, especially in the family. Husbands and wives need to spend time together to keep their marriage strong and happy, and parents need to make ample time for their children, talking with them, showing them affection, and teaching them. When family members give in such ways, they thrive and their home becomes a haven of happiness.

Conversely, when others give to you—whether of themselves or in some other way—do you 'show yourself thankful'? (Colossians 3:15) Living by those three words can make a world of difference in our relationships with others and can greatly add to our own joy. When someone expresses heartfelt gratitude to you, doesn't your heart glow with warmth?

Showing gratitude also raises our awareness of the good things that happen to us. In a controlled experiment, a researcher at the University of California at Riverside, U.S.A., asked her subjects to keep a "gratitude journal"—a diary of things for which they were thankful. It comes as no surprise that over a period of six weeks, the subjects felt noticeably more satisfied with life.

The lesson? No matter what your situation, learn to count your blessings. In fact, the Bible urges you to do so, saying: "Always be rejoicing. . . . In connection with everything give thanks." (1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18) In order to do that, of course, we need to make a conscious effort to recall the good things we experience. Why not make that a personal goal?

## **Love and Hope—Essential for Happiness**

It has rightly been said that from the cradle to the grave, humans need love. Without it, people pine away. But what exactly is love? Although the word is used loosely nowadays, the Bible beautifully describes it: “Love is long-suffering and kind,” it says. “Love is not jealous, it does not brag, does not get puffed up, does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked. It does not keep account of the injury. It does not rejoice over unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”—1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

How unselfish true love is! Because it “does not look for its own interests,” it places the happiness of others ahead of self. Sadly, such love is becoming increasingly rare. In fact, in his great prophecy about the end of the present system of things, Jesus said that “the love of the greater number [would] cool off.”

—Matthew 24:3, 12; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

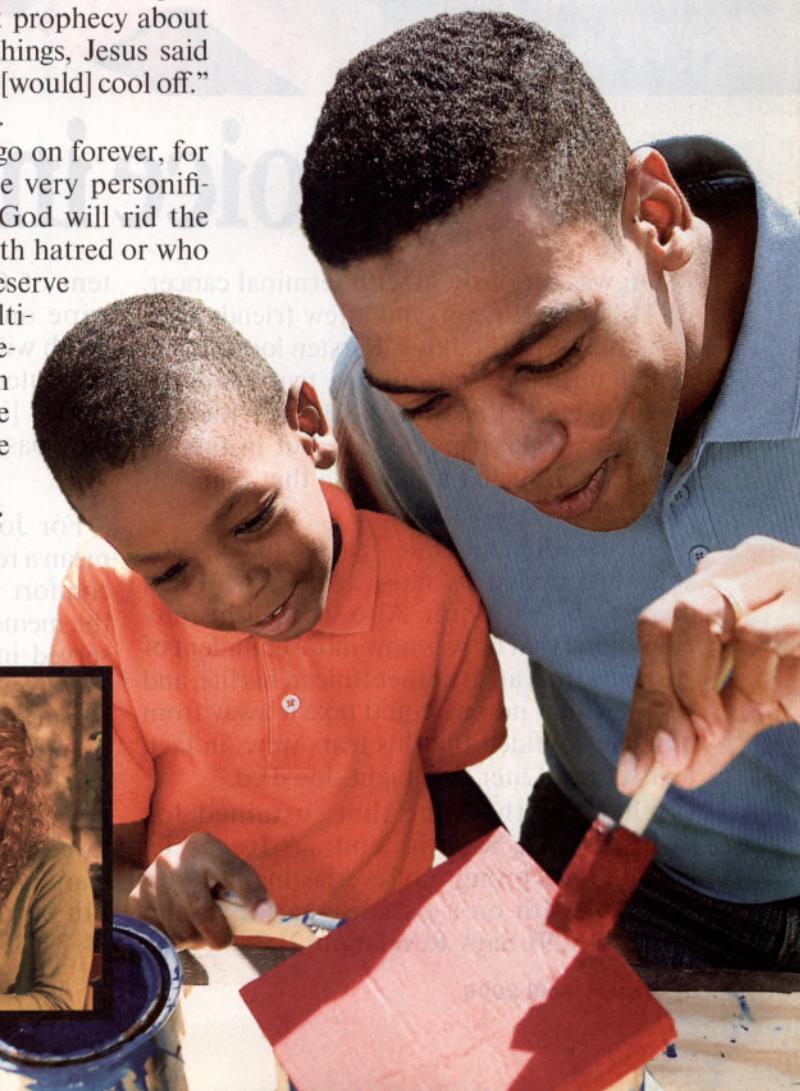
This situation, however, will not go on forever, for it is an affront to the Creator—the very personification of love! (1 John 4:8) Soon God will rid the earth of all people who are filled with hatred or who are governed by greed. He will preserve alive only those who strive to cultivate the love described above. As a result, peace and happiness will reign earth wide. The Bible promise is sure to be fulfilled: “Just a little while

*“There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.”—Acts 20:35*



longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be. But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”—Psalm 37: 10, 11.

Imagine having every day filled with “exquisite delight”! Is it any wonder that the Bible says: “Rejoice in the hope”? (Romans 12:12) Would you like to learn more about the wonderful hope that God holds out for obedient mankind? Then please read the following article.





# Rejoice in the Hope

**J**OE was seriously ill with terminal cancer. His wife, Kirsten, and a few friends were at his bedside talking. Kirsten looked over at her husband and noticed tears running down his cheeks. At first, she thought that Joe was in pain. Perhaps he was, but in this instance, he revealed to his wife that pain was not the cause of his tears.

"At this difficult time," says Kirsten, "Joe was surrounded by close friends who had come to be with him. Also, he had his precious hope that he was now more confident of realizing than at any other time in his life, and he knew that no one could take it away from him. He confided that his tears were, in fact, tears of joy. Later that night, Joe died."

What was the hope that sustained Joe as his disease took its course? It was Jehovah God's promise of everlasting life with perfect health on a paradise earth. (Psalm 37:10, 11, 29) Says Revelation 21:3, 4: "The

tent of God is with mankind . . . He will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things [including today's many problems] have passed away."

## Hope Even for the Dead

For Joe the fulfillment of his hope will mean a return from the grave. Indeed, he took comfort in Jesus' promise that "all those in the memorial tombs"—the dead who are preserved in God's memory—will return from the sleep of death. (John 5:28, 29) Are you sad because you have lost a family member or a friend in death? If so, the resurrection hope can buoy you up too. Granted, this hope does not eliminate the deep loss we feel when a loved one dies. Jesus himself "gave way to tears" when his friend Lazarus passed away. But our hope does ease our pain.—John 11:14, 34, 35; 1 Thessalonians 4:13.



## Nine Ingredients for Happiness

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1. Developing a spiritual outlook on life.—**Matthew 5:3.**
  2. Being content and avoiding “the love of money.”—**1 Timothy 6:6-10.**
  3. Keeping pleasures in their place.—**2 Timothy 3:1, 4.**
  4. Being generous and working for the happiness of others.—**Acts 20:35.**
  5. Being thankful and counting your blessings.—**Colossians 3:15.**
  6. Having a forgiving spirit.—**Matthew 6:14.**
  7. Choosing your associates wisely.—**Proverbs 13:20.**
  8. Taking care of your body and shunning bad habits.—**2 Corinthians 7:1.**
  9. ‘Rejoicing in the hope’ set out for you in the Bible.—**Romans 12:12.**

“When Joe lost his battle with cancer,” says Kirsten, “I felt that I could never again be really happy. Even now, a few years later, I realize that my life in this system will never be the same. Joe left a void that cannot be filled. Yet, I can honestly say that I again have peace of mind and contentment.”

Kirsten’s comments remind us that in the present system, we cannot expect to bubble over with joy every waking moment. Life has its ups and downs. And there are times when we should be sad, when gaiety is entirely inappropriate. (*Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4; 7:2-4*) Also, some of us may battle depression, which can have a variety of causes. Nevertheless, the Bible’s promises are a source of great comfort, and the unsurpassed wisdom we find in the Bible can help us to avoid many of the pitfalls that make for unhappiness. “As for the one listening to me,” God says, “he will reside in security and be undisturbed from dread of calamity.”—*Proverbs 1:33.*

Yes, Jehovah has our very best interests at heart. He wants us to be happy—not superficially, but deep inside and, not just for a few short years, but forever! Hence, his Son made this truly timeless statement: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.” (*Matthew 5:3*) Wise we are if we take his words to heart.

***The Bible-based hope of life  
in a new world is a source of  
great comfort***



ARBEIT MACHT FREI

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN POLAND

# "IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH"

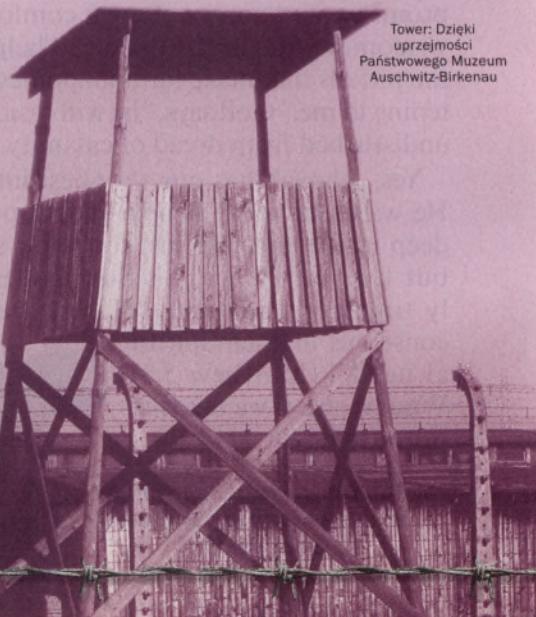
THE words *Arbeit Macht Frei* (Work Makes Free) are to this day found on the iron gates of the Auschwitz concentration camp in southern Poland, some 35 miles from the Czech border.\* Yet, those words belie what happened to most who entered those gates between 1940 and 1945. During these years, over a million people in Auschwitz died at the hands of the Nazis. Individuals of one group, however, could have been given their freedom at any time.

\* Auschwitz was actually composed of three main parts—Auschwitz I (main camp), Auschwitz II (Birkenau), and Auschwitz III (Monowitz). Most of the notorious gas chambers were at Birkenau.



**Three Auschwitz survivors holding the exhibition title board**

Tower: Dzięki uprzejmości Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau



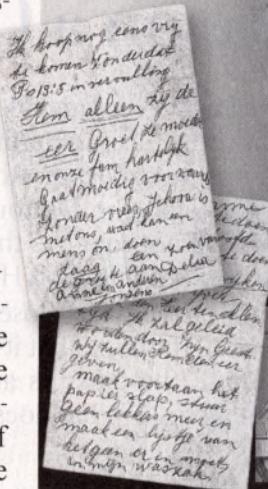
What was the price of their freedom? Any prisoner who was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and who signed a paper stating that he or she would no longer actively serve as a Witness could be set free. What did most decide? Historian István Deák says that the Witnesses "were similar to the early Christians who would rather be devoured by lions than make a modest offering at the altar of a Roman emperor." Such a stance certainly deserves to be remembered, and it has been.

For two months, beginning on September 21, 2004, the main hall of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum featured an exhibition dedicated solely to the Witnesses. The exhibition carried the appropriate theme "Imprisoned for Their Faith—Jehovah's Witnesses and the Nazi Regime." It consisted of 27 historical display boards portraying the firm resolve of the Witnesses to maintain Christian neutrality during the Nazi era.

Many visitors were touched by the copy of a letter that had been sent from prison by Deliana Rademakers of the Netherlands. Addressing her family, she wrote: "I vowed to do Jehovah's will. . . . Be valiant and fearless. Jehovah is with us." In 1942, Deliana was deported to Auschwitz, where she died less than three weeks later.

There were altogether about 400 Witnesses in Auschwitz. Three of the survivors were present at the inauguration of the exhibition, where they shared their experiences and answered journalists' questions. They displayed

**Deliana  
Rademakers,  
and a letter  
she wrote  
while in prison**



the same fortitude that had allowed them to survive the conditions in the camp.

In her book *Imprisoned for Their Faith—Jehovah's Witnesses in Auschwitz Concentration Camp*, researcher Teresa Wontor-Cichy of the State Museum wrote: "The stance of this little group positively influenced other prisoners, and their daily, determined resistance strengthened others in the conviction that under all conditions people can stay faithful to the principles they adhere to."

The fact is, imprisonment and death are nothing new to followers of Jesus Christ, who was himself arrested and executed for his faith. (Luke 22:54; 23:32, 33) Jesus' apostle James was executed as well. The apostle Peter suffered imprisonment, and the apostle Paul was beaten and imprisoned many times. —Acts 12:2, 5; 16:22-25; 2 Corinthians 11:23.

Similarly, Jehovah's Witnesses in Europe provided a sterling example of faith in God during the 1930's and 1940's. It is fine that the faith of such ones has been acknowledged at Auschwitz.

#### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- How Long Can You Live?
- Preparing Your Daughter for Menarche
- Why Do I Have to Read?

# Did Jesus Really Die on a Cross?

THE cross is one of the most recognizable religious symbols known to man. Millions revere it, considering it to be the sacred instrument on which Jesus was put to death. Roman Catholic writer and archaeologist Adolphe-Napoleon Didron stated: "The cross has received a worship similar, if not equal, to that of Christ; this sacred wood is adored almost equally with God Himself."

Some say that the cross makes them feel closer to God when they pray. Others use it as an amulet, thinking that it protects them from evil. But should Christians use the cross as an object of veneration? Did Jesus *really* die on a cross? What does the Bible teach on this subject?

### What Does the Cross Symbolize?

Long before the Christian era, crosses were used by the ancient Babylonians as symbols in their worship of the fertility god Tammuz. The use of the cross spread into Egypt, India, Syria, and China. Then, centuries later, the Israelites adulterated their worship of Jehovah with acts of veneration to the false god Tammuz. The Bible refers to this form of worship as a 'detestable thing.'—Ezekiel 8:13, 14.

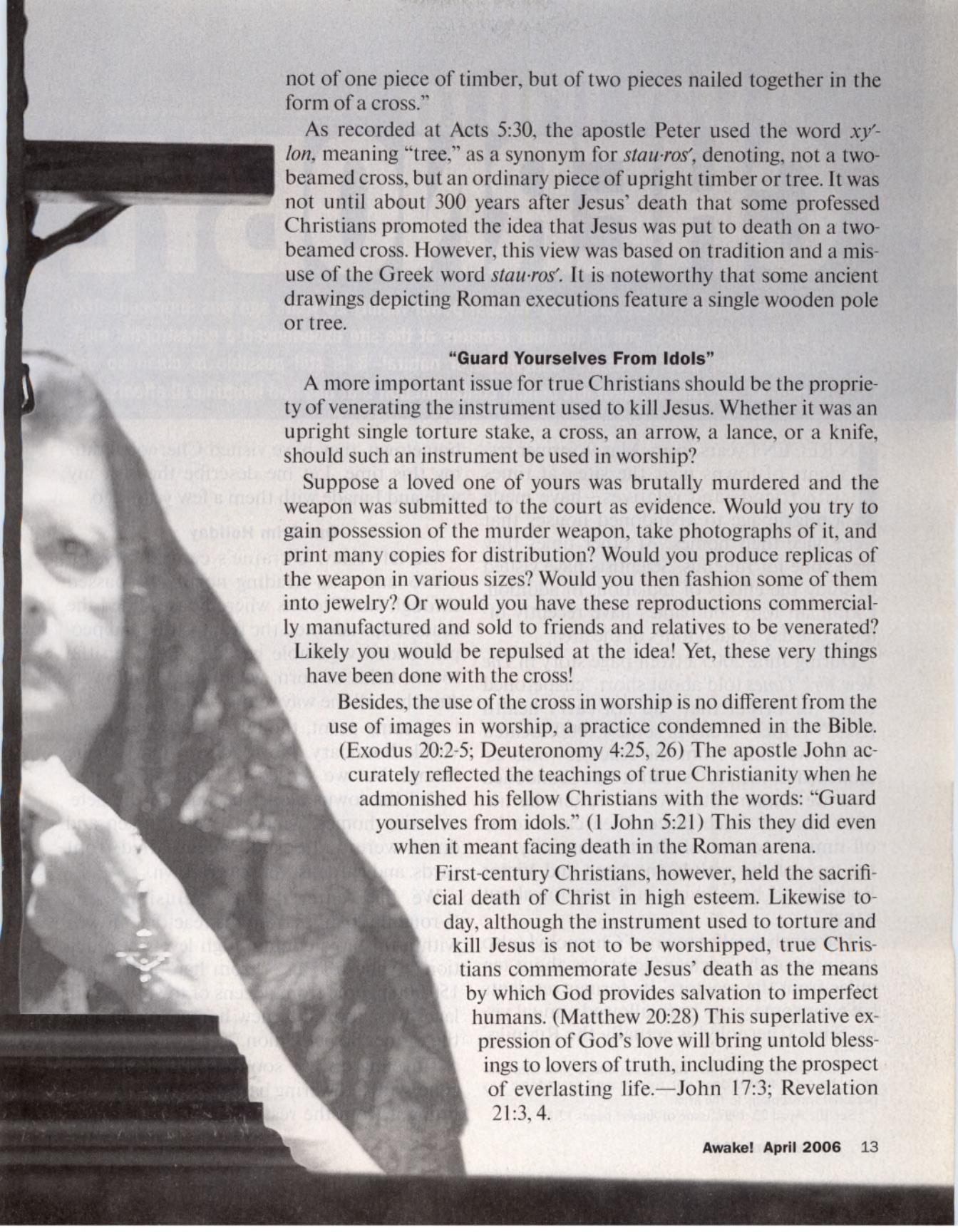
The Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John use the Greek word *stauros* when referring to the instrument of execution on which Jesus died. (Matthew 27:40; Mark 15:30; Luke 23:26) The word *stauros* refers to an upright pole, stake, or post. The book *The Non-Christian Cross*, by J. D. Parsons, explains:

"There is not a single sentence in any of the numerous writings forming the New Testament, which, in the original Greek, bears even indirect evidence to the effect that the stauros used in the case of Jesus was other than an ordinary stauros; much less to the effect that it consisted,

**Some ancient drawings depict the use of a single wooden pole in Roman executions**

Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations





not of one piece of timber, but of two pieces nailed together in the form of a cross."

As recorded at Acts 5:30, the apostle Peter used the word *xy-lon*, meaning "tree," as a synonym for *stau·ros'*, denoting, not a two-beamed cross, but an ordinary piece of upright timber or tree. It was not until about 300 years after Jesus' death that some professed Christians promoted the idea that Jesus was put to death on a two-beamed cross. However, this view was based on tradition and a misuse of the Greek word *stau·ros'*. It is noteworthy that some ancient drawings depicting Roman executions feature a single wooden pole or tree.

#### **"Guard Yourselves From Idols"**

A more important issue for true Christians should be the propriety of venerating the instrument used to kill Jesus. Whether it was an upright single torture stake, a cross, an arrow, a lance, or a knife, should such an instrument be used in worship?

Suppose a loved one of yours was brutally murdered and the weapon was submitted to the court as evidence. Would you try to gain possession of the murder weapon, take photographs of it, and print many copies for distribution? Would you produce replicas of the weapon in various sizes? Would you then fashion some of them into jewelry? Or would you have these reproductions commercially manufactured and sold to friends and relatives to be venerated?

Likely you would be repulsed at the idea! Yet, these very things have been done with the cross!

Besides, the use of the cross in worship is no different from the use of images in worship, a practice condemned in the Bible. (Exodus 20:2-5; Deuteronomy 4:25, 26) The apostle John accurately reflected the teachings of true Christianity when he admonished his fellow Christians with the words: "Guard yourselves from idols." (1 John 5:21) This they did even when it meant facing death in the Roman arena.

First-century Christians, however, held the sacrificial death of Christ in high esteem. Likewise today, although the instrument used to torture and kill Jesus is not to be worshipped, true Christians commemorate Jesus' death as the means by which God provides salvation to imperfect humans. (Matthew 20:28) This superlative expression of God's love will bring untold blessings to lovers of truth, including the prospect of everlasting life.—John 17:3; Revelation 21:3, 4.

# A Day Trip to CHERNOBYL

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN UKRAINE

The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power facility 20 years ago was unprecedented. On April 26, 1986, one of the four reactors at the site experienced a catastrophic meltdown. After most disasters—man-made or natural—it is still possible to clean up and rebuild. Yet, this accident left behind contamination that has had longtime ill effects.

In RECENT years, every May 9, former residents of towns near the site—at times with friends and relatives—have made a pilgrimage to abandoned houses that were once their homes. At other times they have gone for funerals. Scientists have visited to study the effects of radiation. In addition, Ukrainian tour companies have recently offered one-day guided tours of the area.

During June 2005 a front-page story in *The New York Times* told about short “chaperoned tours” of Pripyat that “do not carry health risks.”\* Pripyat—a city of some 45,000, located about two miles from the reactors—was established in the 1970’s. But it was abandoned—as were many other cities—after the nuclear disaster. Such places then came to be off-limits because of the radioactivity. At the time of the meltdown, Anna and Victor Rudnik had been living in Pripyat for about a year.<sup>#</sup>

The much smaller town of Chernobyl (also the name of the nuclear facility) is about ten miles from the reactors. Its former residents have for some years been allowed annual visits. Since Chernobyl is actually the Rudniks’

hometown, they have visited Chernobyl during this time. Let me describe the visit my wife and I made with them a few years ago.

## Our Grim Holiday

We left Kiev, Ukraine’s capital city, on a two-lane road heading north. We passed through small towns where houses lined the road, tulips adorned the front yards, and people tended vegetable gardens. Between the towns, fields of corn, wheat, and sunflowers stretched all the way to the horizon.

At some point, though, we crossed an invisible boundary. No road sign marked the change, but we sensed it. Eerie silence pervaded the towns along the way. In the deteriorating homes, windows were broken and doors were padlocked. Weeds filled front yards, and gardens were overgrown.

We had entered the exclusion zone—roughly 20 miles from the reactors. “Towns within this area contain high levels of radiation,” Anna told us. “From here more than 150,000 people from dozens of towns and villages were moved to new homes throughout the former Soviet Union.”

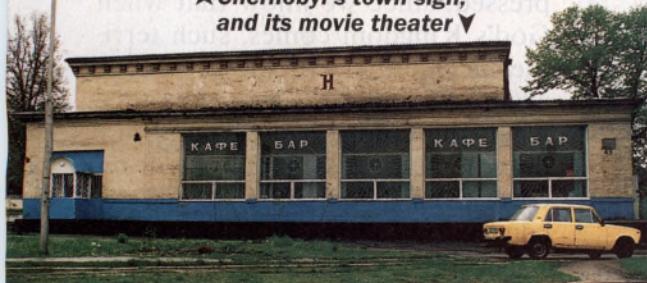
Traveling on, we soon arrived at another zone, with a towering barbed-wire fence separating it from the rest of the world. Nearby,

\* While various authorities have pronounced such short visits to be safe, *Awake!* does not recommend or endorse any personal travel plans to the area.

<sup>#</sup> See the April 22, 1997, issue of *Awake!* pages 12-15.



▲ Chernobyl's town sign,  
and its movie theater ▼



guards in a wooden station—resembling a customs control point—monitored all traffic. A guard checked our passports, registered our vehicle, and then opened the gate.

We were now inside the restricted zone. Trees, fresh with new leaves, formed a green canopy over the road. Dense underbrush covered the forest floor—certainly not the image of burned trees and shriveled shrubbery that I had imagined. Ahead, a white brick sign with blue letters identified the town Chernobyl.

On Chernobyl's border sat a drugstore. Victor's mother once worked there. A faded sign listing store hours still hung in the dusty,

smudged window. Near the town's central park stood the culture building. Anna reminisced about how she and other residents used to relax there after work, watching performances by various artists. The movie theater, named Ukraina, was nearby, where children once escaped the sweltering heat to watch the latest films in cool comfort. Sounds of laughter from a dark auditorium had long since ceased. Anna and Victor led us to their home—a short walk from the town center. Untended trees blocked access to the front door, so we made our way single file through the overgrown weeds to the back door—by then just a jagged hole in the wall.

Inside, utter devastation reigned. A mildewed mattress sagged in a rusting bed frame. Strips of wallpaper hung like dirty icicles. Anna stooped to rescue an old photograph from the rubbish strewn across the room. "I always wanted to return and find everything waiting for us just as it was," she said, with sadness in her voice. "What pain it gives me to see our house turned to junk; our possessions stolen over the years!"

We left the Rudnik home and walked down the street. At one corner a group of people were engaged in animated conversation. We walked a quarter of a mile to where the road ended at a park on a bluff overlooking a calm expanse of river. The white flowers of chestnut trees fluttered in the breeze. There on the stairs winding down to the pier, hundreds once waited in 1986 to be evacuated by boat.

The Rudniks and their home in Chernobyl





*The power plant where the meltdown occurred, some two miles from the Rudniks' apartment in Pripyat (inset)*

Last year the Rudniks for the first time visited their former residence in Pripyat. They had fled the city following the nuclear meltdown 19 years earlier.

#### A Time for Reflection

During April 2006, the 20th anniversary of the nuclear disaster is being commemorated by various kinds of observances. For many people these serve as a solemn reminder of man's inability—despite his sincere efforts—to manage earth's affairs successfully without divine supervision.—Jeremiah 10:23.

Last September the results of a scientific report that reevaluated the tragedy were released. The report, which had been commissioned by the United Nations, said that the accident initially killed 56 people and predicted that only 4,000 deaths would ultimately be attributed directly to radiation sickness. Earlier predictions of deaths generally num-

bered between 15,000 and 30,000. A *New York Times* editorial of September 8, 2005, noted that the UN report "was attacked by several environmental groups as a biased attempt to whitewash the potential dangers of nuclear power."

Victor, who learned about his Creator, Jehovah God, after the disaster, observed: "We are no longer depressed, since we know that when God's Kingdom comes, such terrible accidents will never occur again. We look forward to the time when the countryside around our dear home near Chernobyl will recover from its present state and become part of a wonderful paradise."

The Bible's promise that earth's original Paradise will be reestablished and expanded earth wide has become the firm conviction of millions of people since the Chernobyl disaster. (Genesis 2:8, 9; Revelation 21:3, 4) In Ukraine alone over 100,000 individuals have come to embrace that hope during the past 20 years! May you too be moved to consider the bright future that is promised for those who seek to learn of God's purposes.

#### MONUMENT TO THE LIQUIDATORS

This larger-than-life monument honors the Chernobyl disaster cleanup workers, known as liquidators. These put out the fire, entombed the smoldering nuclear plant, and removed contamination. Eventually, these workers numbered into the hundreds of thousands.



It is predicted that some 4,000 deaths would be attributed directly to the accident and that most of them will be from among these workers.

# School friendships —How close is too close?

*"The kids at school would talk about all the fun they had together on the weekend. I felt totally left out." —Michelle.\**

*"Sometimes I'd see a group of kids and think, 'Wow, they're really good friends. I want to be part of that.' " —Joe.*

*"I didn't have a problem making friends at school. It was easy. That was my problem." —Maria.*

**Y**OU are around your schoolmates for a large part of your waking hours. You face many of the same challenges, frustrations, and achievements. In some ways, you may feel that you have more in common with them than you do with your parents, your siblings, or your fellow Christians. Understandably, you might feel pulled into a friendship. Is that wrong? Are there dangers? When it comes to friendships at school, how close is too close? Where should you draw the line?

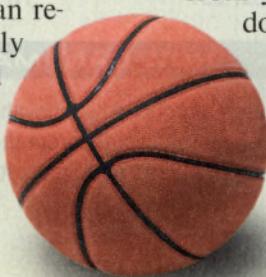
## You Need Friends

Everyone needs friends—people they can relax with during the good times and rely on during the bad. Jesus had friends, and he enjoyed socializing with them. (John

15:15) Then, when he faced death on a torture stake, Jesus' close friend John, "the disciple whom he [especially] loved," was nearby. (John 19:25-27; 21:20) You need friends like that—people who will stick with you through thick and thin. A Bible proverb states: "A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress." —Proverbs 17:17.

Perhaps you feel that you have found someone like that at school, one of your classmates with whom you have hit it off well. You share some similar interests and enjoy conversing together. True, the person may not be a fellow believer; yet, from your standpoint, he or she does not seem to fit the category of 'bad association' either. (1 Corinthians 15:33) Admittedly, some youths who do not share your Bible

\* Some names have been changed.





**Some of your classmates  
may be curious about  
your beliefs**

beliefs adhere to decent principles. (Romans 2:14, 15) But does that mean that you should become close friends with them?

#### **Christians Are Not Antisocial**

True Christians obviously do not shun non-believers. Why, to fulfill their commission to “make disciples of people of all the nations,” Christians speak with men and women of all races, religions, and cultures. (Matthew 28:19) They are not aloof when dealing with neighbors, workmates, or schoolmates, nor are they antisocial. Rather, Christians show keen interest in others.

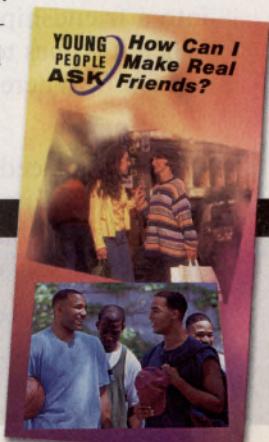
The apostle Paul set an excellent example in this regard. He knew how to converse with “people of all sorts,” even though they did not share his beliefs. Of course, Paul’s purpose was not to socialize with them. Rather, he said: “I do all things for the sake of the good news, that I may become a sharer of it with others.”—1 Corinthians 9:22, 23.

You can follow Paul’s example. Be cordial with your peers. Learn to communicate well with them. Some of your schoolmates may be searching for the Bible-based hope that you possess. Consider the case of a Christian girl named Janet. She and her classmates were assigned to write a brief remark about each fellow student, and then each of the students was able to read the comments that pertained to him or her. One of the notes that Janet received read: “You seem to be a very happy person all the time. Please tell us *why!*”

As this experience illustrates, some of your classmates may be open to learning about your beliefs. Surely, it is advantageous for you to be friendly with such ones. Undoubtedly, this will provide you with opportunity to explain your convictions. Allow your classmates to express their views too, and genuinely listen as they do so. The experience you gain in communicating with

#### **HOW CAN I MAKE REAL FRIENDS?**

This video, produced by Jehovah’s Witnesses, features candid interviews with youths from the United States, Italy, France, and Spain. It is available in 36 languages.



your peers will prove invaluable should you enter the secular workforce one day and face similar situations. At school and in the workplace, a friendly demeanor will help you to “adorn the teaching of our Savior, God, in all things.”—Titus 2:10.

### **“Unevenly Yoked” Friendships**

Of course, there is a difference between being *pleasant* to a classmate and being that one’s *intimate companion*. Paul wrote: “Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers.” (2 Corinthians 6:14) To be a close friend to someone, you must share that one’s values and goals. That simply is not possible with a person who does not adhere to your Scriptural beliefs and standards. Becoming unevenly yoked with an unbelieving classmate will likely either induce you to get involved in wrong practices or spoil your useful habits.

Maria found this out the hard way. Her outgoing nature made it easy for her to attract friends but difficult for her to know where to draw the line. “I liked being liked, by both girls and boys,” she admits. “As a result, I found myself sliding deeper and deeper into the quicksand of this world.”

Like Maria, you might find it hard to recognize when a friendship with someone who does not share your beliefs has become too close. Nevertheless, you can protect yourself from heartache by setting clear boundaries as to whom you will accept as an acquaintance and whom you will choose as a close friend. How can you do so?

### **How to Choose Good Friends**

As mentioned earlier, Jesus formed close friendships while he was on earth. Jesus did so by living an upright life and by speaking about spiritual things. If people

accepted his teachings and lifestyle, they drew close to him. (John 15:14) For example, after hearing Jesus speak, four men were so moved that they “abandoned everything and followed him.” These men—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—became Jesus’ close friends.—Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22.

Jesus’ speech and actions made it clear that he was serious about what he believed and his stand was nonnegotiable. Those who did not want to accept him on his terms withdrew, and Jesus let them go.—John 6:60-66.

For instance, one young man’s sincerity deeply touched Jesus. The Bible says: “Jesus looked upon him and felt love for him.” But when the man learned what Jesus expected of his friends, he “went away.” The man seemed to be a good person—indeed, Jesus “felt love for him.” Yet, Jesus required more of his friends. (Mark 10:17-22; Matthew 19:16-22) What about you?

You may get along well with a particular schoolmate. But ask yourself: Is this person willing to do what Jesus commands? Does he or she want to learn about Jehovah, the one whom Jesus instructed us to worship? (Matthew 4:10) As you talk with your classmates and as you live by Bible standards, the answers to these questions will be evident.

It is good to be pleasant to your classmates, just as Jesus was friendly with all sorts of people. But Jesus made sure that his close friends loved his heavenly Father, Jehovah. You can do the same. “Maintain your conduct fine” at school, and tactfully speak to others about your beliefs. Above all, make sure that you choose the best kind of friends.—1 Peter 2:12.

### **TO THINK ABOUT**

- What dangers are there in spending leisure time with an unbelieving classmate after school hours? Is such a course wise?
- After reading this article, do you feel that your relationship with a classmate has become too close? If so, what can you do about it?



# *I Learned to Trust in God*

AS TOLD BY ELLA TOOM

**O**UR family lived near the small town of Otepää, in southern Estonia, about 40 miles from the Russian border. In October 1944, a few months after my high school graduation, World War II was nearing its end. As the Russian army drove the Germans back through Estonia, we and our neighbors—about 20 of us—hid in the forests together with our farm animals.

For two months while bombs fell all around, we were caught in the middle of the battlefield. We would sit together, and I would read portions of the Bible, especially from Lamentations. This was the first time that I had ever read the Bible. One day I climbed a high hill, knelt, and prayed, "When the war ends, I promise to go to church every Sunday."

Soon the battlefield moved westward. Finally, with Germany's surrender in May 1945, World War II ended in Europe. In the meantime I fulfilled my promise to God and went to church every week. But only a few older women were in attendance. I was embarrassed to be there. When someone dropped by our home for a visit, I hid the Bible under the table.

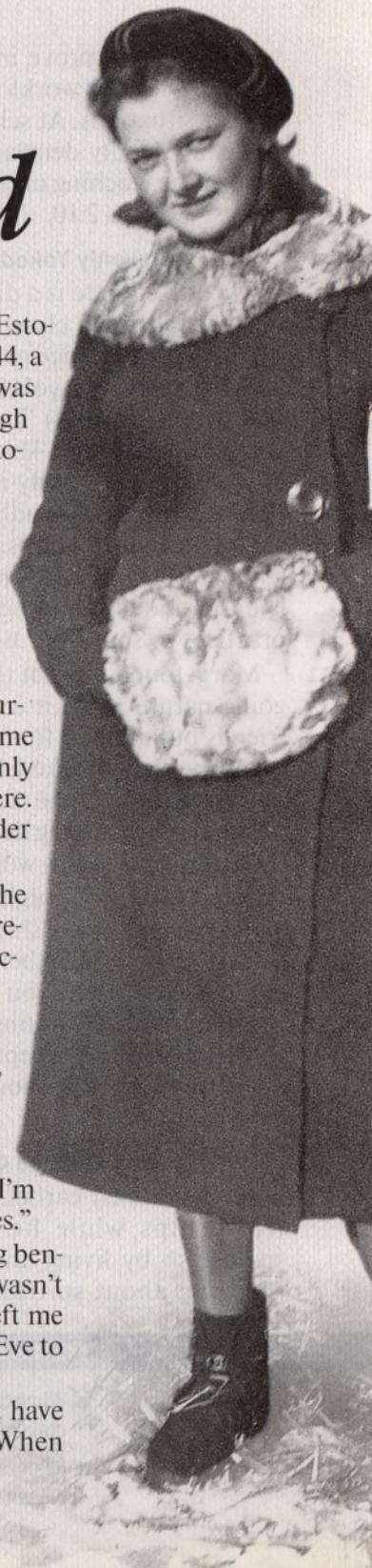
Soon I got a job as a teacher at the local school. By this time, the Communist regime had taken over and atheism prevailed. Yet, I refused to join the Communist Party. I kept busy with many social functions, such as organizing folk dancing for children.

### **Introduced to the Witnesses**

Stage costumes were needed for the children, so in April 1945, I went to see Emilie Sannamees, a skilled seamstress. Unknown to me, she was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. She asked, "What do you think about the world situation?" Since a peace conference was being held in San Francisco, U.S.A., I said, "Soon this government will end, and I'm sure that this peace conference is being held in order to see that it does."

Emilie said that the peace conference wouldn't produce any lasting benefit, and she offered to show me from the Bible why it wouldn't. I wasn't ready to listen to this mild-mannered, middle-aged woman, so she left me with the question "Do you know where God intended for Adam and Eve to live?" Since I couldn't answer, she simply said, "Ask your father."

I did so when I got home. He couldn't answer and said we didn't have to concern ourselves with Bible study; we just had to believe. When



I returned to pick up the costumes, I mentioned that Father didn't know the answer to her question. She and her sister brought out their Bibles and read to me God's instructions to Adam and Eve—about caring for their garden home and living there in happiness forever. They showed me from the Bible that it was God's purpose that Adam and Eve have children and extend their Paradise home earth wide. I was fascinated by the Scriptural evidence!—Genesis 1:28; 2:8, 9, 15; Psalm 37:29; Isaiah 45:18; Revelation 21:3, 4.

### My First Christian Meeting

Since I had a three-month teachers' course to attend that summer in Tartu, Emilie gave me the address of a Witness in that city. She also gave me the book *Creation*, which impressed me with its clear presentation of basic Bible truths. So on August 4, 1945, I went to the address that had been given me.

When no one answered, I knocked again so loud that a neighbor opened his door and gave me a forwarding address—56 Salme Street. There I inquired of a woman who was peeling potatoes in a workshop, "Is a religious meeting being held here?" Angrily she told me to go away, saying that I was unwelcome. Since I insisted, I was invited upstairs to join a Bible study group. Soon there was a break for lunch, and I prepared to leave. But others urged me to stay.

As I looked around during the noon break, I saw two young men, unusually pale and thin, sitting close to the window. I later learned that during the war they had spent over a year in various hideouts to avoid capture.\* During the afternoon session, Friedrich Altpere used the word "Armageddon" in a talk. Since the term was unfamiliar to me, I asked him about it afterward, and he showed it to me in the Bible. (Revelation 16:16) When he saw my

surprise, he seemed just as surprised that this was new to me.

I began to understand that this meeting had been arranged for only the known, trusted Witnesses. Later I learned that it was their first meeting after the war! From that time on, I was very aware of the need to trust in God. (Proverbs 3:5, 6) A year later, in August 1946, at age 20, I was baptized in symbol of my dedication to the true God, Jehovah.

### Dealing With Family Opposition

The government insisted that atheism be taught in school, so that challenged my Bible-trained conscience. I wanted to change my profession. When I mentioned this to Mother, she attacked me in a rage, pulling out some of my hair. I decided to leave home. But Father encouraged me to be yielding, saying that he would help me.

My brother Ants joined Mother in opposing me. Then one day he asked me for some literature, which he read and liked very much. Mother became hysterical. Ants even began speaking about God in school, but when some persecution arose, he stopped associating with the Witnesses. Shortly afterward, he suffered a head injury in a diving accident. He lay on a stretcher, paralyzed, yet his mind was still clear. "Will Jehovah forgive me?" he asked. "Yes," I said. Ants died a few days later. He was only 17.

In September 1947, I left my job at the school. Mother remained very hostile toward me. When she threw all my clothes out of the house, I left home and was taken in by the Sannamees sisters. Their reminders that Jehovah never abandons his servants were an encouragement to me.

### Trials in Postwar Estonia

The Sannamees sisters let me work with them doing sewing for farm families. We were often able to share Bible truths with them. That was a happy time, for not only did

\* One of these men was Lembit Toom, whose first-person story appears in the February 22, 1999, issue of *Awake!*

1. Simon, also named Peter, Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip, Bartholomew (Nathanael), Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who is called the zealous one, Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who turned traitor.—Luke 6:14-16.
2. Nathanael.
3. Simon.
4. Thomas.
5. Moses—1593 B.C.E.
6. Adam—4026 B.C.E.
7. Noah in the ark—2370 B.C.E.
8. Mahlon.—Ruth 4:9,
10. Jael.—Judges 5:24-27.

The Witnesses organized a convention for July 24, 1950, in the large hay barn of a Bible believer living on farms. Linda urged me, "Let's start preaching now and cover all of Tartu with the good news." Metta immediately heated the sauna for me so that I could warm up. The next day she went to Tartu and contacted Linda Mette. Metta immediately started the sauna for Linda and urged her to preach in Tartu.

Several hours passed, and my bones became numb with the cold. Finally I made my way along the cobblestone streets carrying my shoes so as not to make noise. Leaving the city, I walked in the ditch along the highway. When cars approached, I lay down. At five o'clock in the morning, I reached the home of Juri and Meeta Toolme, not far from Tartu.

Several hours passed, and my bones became

plans for the gathering had been discovered. The Witnesses organized a convention for July 24, 1950, in the large hay barn of a Bible believer living on farms. For three days, I was prevented from fall- ing asleep between the repeated interrogations. Mediation on Bible principles helped me to sign a document stating that I would discontinue preaching. "I have given this matter much thought," I said, "and I would rather live in prison with my relationship with God intact than be free and lose his approval." After three days, I was prevented from falling asleep because the interrogator shouting, "You fool! All of you will be arrested and sent to Siberia!"

For three days, I was prevented from falling asleep because the interrogator shouting, "You will want to die with your God on the fields would threaten: "Do you want to live? Or do you have a promising future?" And they can stop your stupid preaching! You can't ask me to deny the existence of God. Just stop your stupid preaching! You aren't asking you to do even lie down. I was taken out only for interrogations. The officers would say: "We aren't asking you to do even lie down. I was taken out only for interrogations. Next, I was put in a tiny cell, where I could not even lie down. I was put in a tiny cell, where I could and calmness of heart came over me.

They arrested me and took me in for questioning. Forced to remove all my clothing and gawked at by young police officers, I felt humiliated. Yet, after I prayed to Jehovah, peace came over them. After I prayed to Jehovah, peace was restored to my heart, and calmness of heart came over me.

Later I moved from farm to farm, working at my sewing and continuing in the preaching. I had done sewing invited me to stay with her. Brother Hugo Suur's farm, I learned that he had just been arrested. A woman for whom the authorities had gone to the Samnaemets home to arrest me. When I sought refuge at the following year, in October, I happened to be working at a farm when I was told that the authorities had gone to the Samnaemets home to arrest me.

The following year, in October, I became more experienced in the Christian ministry. In addition to sewing, I also obtained work as a mathematician for. In 1948, however, the authorities began to interrogate me to take my things and go. Since I knew I would be followed, I did not go to the homes of fellow Christians because that would result in their betrayal. As I made my way through the streets, three men did follow me. Praying to Jehovah for direction, I turned onto a dark street and ran quick. I slipped onto a garden. Lying down on the ground, I scraped leaves over me. I could hear the rustling sound of the men walking, and I could see beams of light from their flashlights.

Surprisingly, just before midnight, the in-

Unexpectedly Set Free

terrogators told me to take my things and go. I learned to sew but I became more experienced in the Christian ministry. In addition to sewing, I also obtained work as a mathematician for. In 1948, however, the authorities began to interrogate me to take my things and go.



***"Let's start  
preaching now  
and cover  
all of Estonia  
with the  
good news."***

—Linda Mettig

by the KGB, we were able to warn most of the Witnesses who were en route. Another location was arranged for the following day, and about 115 were in attendance. Each one went home filled with joy and more determined than ever to maintain loyalty in the face of tests.\*

Afterward, Linda and I carried on with preaching and encouraging fellow Christians. Later that year we took part in the potato harvest and shared the Kingdom message with fellow workers. The owner of one farm even stopped and listened to us for an hour, remarking, "You don't hear news like this every day!"

Linda and I returned to Tartu, where we learned that more Witnesses had been arrested, including Linda's mother. Most of our friends had now been arrested, including the Sannamees sisters. Since we knew the KGB was looking for us, we obtained a couple of bicycles and continued preaching outside Tartu. One night the KGB found me at the home of Alma Vardja, a recently baptized Witness. Checking my passport, one of them exclaimed: "Ella! We have been searching everywhere for you!" That was December 27, 1950.

#### **Imprisoned and Then On to Siberia**

Alma and I calmly packed a few things,

\* See *Awake!* of February 22, 1999, pages 12-13, for a more detailed description of this convention.

and then we had something to eat. The KGB agents were amazed and said, "You don't even cry. You just sit there eating." We replied, "We are going to our new assignment, and we don't know when our next meal will be." I took along a blanket from which I later made warm socks and mittens. After months of imprisonment, in August 1951, I was exiled, along with other Witnesses in Estonia.\*

From Estonia we were sent by train to Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Russia, and from there on to the infamous slave-labor camps in Vorkuta, Komi, above the Arctic Circle. There were three Witnesses in our group. In school I had studied Russian and had been practicing the language since my arrest. So I could speak Russian well by the time we arrived at the camps.

In Vorkuta we met a young Ukrainian woman who had become a Witness while in a Nazi concentration camp in Poland. In 1945 she and 14 other Witnesses were put on a ship that the Germans intended to sink in the Baltic Sea. However, the ship made it safely to Denmark. Later, after her return to Russia, she was arrested for preaching and was sent to Vorkuta, where she became a source of encouragement to us.

We also met two women who asked in Ukrainian, "Who here is a Witness of Jehovah?" Right away we recognized that they were our Christian sisters! They encouraged us and cared for us. Other prisoners remarked that it was as though we had a family waiting for us upon arrival.

#### **Transfer to Mordovian Camps**

When in December 1951 a medical examination showed that I had a thyroid disorder, I was transferred nearly a thousand miles southwest to the huge Mordovian prison complex about 250 miles southeast of Moscow. During the following years there,

\* Most Witnesses in Estonia, however, had been exiled in early April 1951. See *Awake!* of April 22, 2001, pages 6-8, and the video *Faithful Under Trials—Jehovah's Witnesses in the Soviet Union*.



I met German, Hungarian, Polish, and Ukrainian Witnesses in the camps for women in which I was incarcerated. I also met Maimu, a political prisoner from Estonia.

While in prison in Estonia, Maimu had given birth, and a kindly guard gave the baby to Maimu's mother. In the Mordovian prison, we studied the Bible with Maimu, and she accepted what she was learning. She was able to write to her mother, who also accepted Bible truths and taught them to Maimu's little girl, Karin. Six years later Maimu was released from prison and was reunited with her child. When Karin grew up, she married a fellow Witness. They have served together for the past 11 years in the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Tallinn, Estonia.

A prison camp within the huge Mordovian complex had what was called the cage. It was a small, closely guarded barracks within the walled camp. Six other Witnesses and I were put there because of our Christian activity. But even while there, we made miniature handwritten copies of *Watchtower* articles and smuggled them to others in nearby camps. One of our methods was to hollow out a bar of soap, put the article inside, and reseal the bar.

During my years in the Mordovian camps, I was able to help more than ten persons take their stand to serve God. Finally, on May 4, 1956, I was told, "You are free to go and to believe in your God, Jehovah." Within the month, I made my way home to Estonia.

#### Nearly 50 Years Back Home

I had no job, no money, and no home. But within a couple of days after arriving, I met

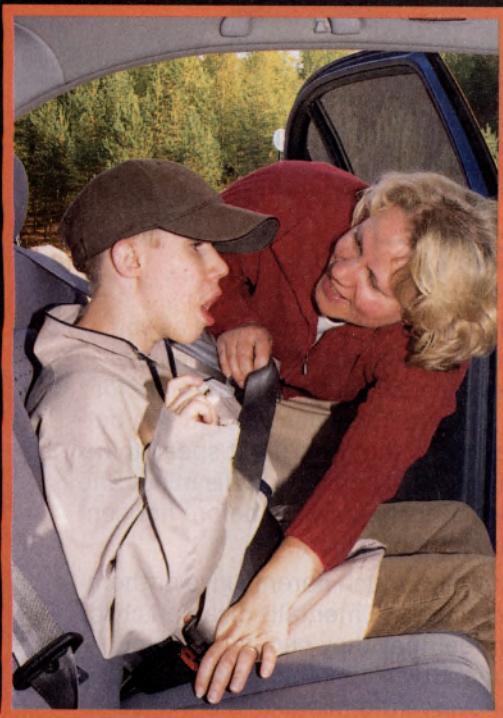
#### With nine other Witnesses inside the Mordovian prison

a lady who showed interest in Bible teachings. She let me live for a while with her and her husband in their one-room flat. I bought some wool with borrowed money and knitted sweaters, which I sold at the market. I was later offered work in the Tartu Cancer Hospital, where I had various jobs for the next seven years. In the meantime, Lembit Toom also returned from exile in Siberia, and in November 1957 we were married.

The KGB kept us under surveillance, and we were constantly harassed, since our preaching work was still under ban. Yet, we did what we could to share our faith. Lembit described this portion of our life in the February 22, 1999, issue of *Awake!* In the late 1950's and throughout the 1960's and 1970's, exiled Witnesses continued to return home. By the late 1980's, we had more than 700 Witnesses in Estonia. In 1991 our Christian activities were legalized, and since then we have increased to over 4,100 Witnesses in Estonia!

It is now over 60 years since I attended that first secret meeting of the Witnesses in Estonia after World War II. Ever since, my determination has been to heed the Bible admonition: "Trust in Jehovah and do good." I have learned that doing this leads to receiving "the requests of your heart."—Psalm 37:3, 4.





# Raising Children With Special Needs

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN FINLAND

Twenty-year-old Markus (left) cannot eat, drink, or bathe without help. He sleeps poorly and needs attention throughout the night. Being accident-prone, he regularly needs first aid. But Markus' parents love him dearly. They cherish his mild, kind, affectionate ways. They feel proud of their son despite his disabilities.

**T**HE World Health Organization estimates that up to 3 percent of earth's population have some form of mental retardation. Impaired mental ability can result from genetic problems, birth injuries, early brain infections, and dietary deficiencies, as well as drug, alcohol, or chemical exposure. In the majority of cases, the cause is unknown. What is it like to be parents of children having special needs? How can such parents be encouraged?

## When the Bad News Breaks

The challenge begins when parents find out that their child has a mental disability. "When my husband and I learned that our daughter had Down syndrome, it felt as though our house had collapsed on us and buried us," recalls Sirkka.

Markus' mother, Anne, says: "When I was told that he would be mentally disabled, I wondered how others would view him. But I soon passed that

stage and concentrated on his needs and on what I could do for him." Irmgard reacted similarly. "When the doctors informed us about our daughter Eunike's limiting condition," she says, "I could think only of how I could help my little girl." Following such a diagnosis, what course is open to parents like Sirkka, Anne, and Irmgard?

"One of the first things that you can do," advises the U.S. National Dissemination Center for Children With Disabilities, "is to collect information—information about your child's disability, about the services that are available, and about the specific things you can do to help your child develop to the fullest extent possible." Applying this information can add a sense of purpose and direction to your caregiving. It is much like charting the progress of a journey on a map, noting the distance traveled and the landmarks reached.



(Continued on page 27)



## How Others Can Help

Just as onlookers admire the endurance of marathon runners, you may marvel at the stamina of parents who care for a disabled child—24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Spectators along a marathon route traditionally offer runners bottles of water to sustain them. Can you offer refreshment to parents engaged in the lifelong care of a special child?

One way you can help is simply by talking to their son or daughter. You may feel uneasy at first, for the child may respond very little or not at all. Keep in mind, though, that many such children enjoy listening and may well think deeply about what you say. In some cases their minds are like icebergs that lie largely below the surface, and their faces may not express their deep feelings.\*

Pediatric neurologist Dr. Annikki Koistinen suggests how you can make conversation easier: "At first you might talk about their family or pastimes. Speak to them according to their actual age, not as if you were speaking with someone younger. Talk about one subject at a time, using short sentences. Give them time to think about what you are saying."

Parents too need your conversation. Your

\* See "Loida's Journey out of Silence," in the May 8, 2000, issue of *Awake!*

empathy for them will be enhanced as you become more aware of the emotional challenges they face. Markus' mother, Anne, for instance, longs to know her beloved son better. She feels sad that he cannot speak to her and explain what is going on in his mind. She also worries that she may die before her son, leaving him without a mom.

No matter how much parents give of themselves in caring for a mentally disabled child, they often feel that they should be doing more. Laurie, Bryan's mother, takes herself to task for every little mistake she makes in looking after him. She also feels guilty for not having been able to give more attention to her other children. Your interest in and respect for such parents and their feelings dignifies and supports them and their children. In this regard Irmgard says: "I welcome conversations about my daughter. I feel warmth for those who are willing to share the smiles and tears of my life with Eunike."

And there are many other ways—large and small—in which you can help. Perhaps you can invite the parents and their child to your home or ask them to join in your family activities. It may also be possible for you to spend a few hours with the child while the parents rest.



**Showing genuine concern dignifies parents and child**

### A Silver Lining

Despite the challenges, the dark cloud of childhood mental disability can have a silver lining. How?

First, parents can feel comforted knowing that most such children are not suffering. Dr. Robert Isaacson writes in his book *The Retarded Child*: "Most are able to be happy, to enjoy the company of others, music, some sports, good food, and friends." Though they may achieve less and live in a smaller world than normal children, they often feel happier in their "cottage" than do normal children in their "castle."

Second, parents can feel proud of their child's hard-won accomplishments. Every new task learned is like a high hill climbed, and the view from the top is rewarding for parents as well as for the child. Bryan, for example, suffers from tuberous sclerosis, seizures, and autism. Though intelligent, he cannot speak and has little control of his hands. Yet, he has gradually learned to drink from a half-full cup without spilling its contents. Attaining this much coordination of mind and body permits Bryan to drink his favorite beverage—milk—all by himself.

Bryan's father and mother see this achievement as another small victory over his disabilities. "We view our son as a hardwood tree in a forest," says his mother, Laurie. "Though a hardwood does not grow as fast as other trees, it produces timber of great worth. Similarly, children with disabilities also develop slowly. But to their parents they become like little oaks and teaks of lasting value."

Third, many parents' hearts are warmed by their child's affectionate nature. Irmgard says: "Eunike likes to go to bed early and always kisses each family member before retiring. If she goes to bed before we return home, she will write a little note apologizing for not staying up. She will add

**Like Eunike, mentally disabled children continue to need affection as they grow older**

that she loves us and that she looks forward to seeing us in the morning."

Markus cannot speak, yet he laboriously learned a few words in sign language to tell his parents that he loves them. The parents of Tia, a developmentally disabled child, expressed their feelings this way: "She has filled our life with love, warmth, affection, hugs, and kisses." It should go without saying that all such children need to have their parents express lots of love and affection to them—both verbally and physically.

Fourth, Christian parents feel deeply satisfied when their child expresses belief in God. A case in point is Juha. At his father's funeral, he surprised everyone by asking if he could offer a prayer. In his short prayer, Juha expressed his belief that his father is in God's memory and that God would in due time resurrect him. He then asked God to help his family members, mentioning each by name.

Eunike's trust in God likewise makes her parents happy. Eunike cannot understand everything she learns. For instance, she knows many Bible characters, but they are unrelated in her mind—parts of a puzzle that do not form a complete picture. Nevertheless, she grasps the idea that Almighty God will one day rid the earth of problems. Eunike looks forward to living in God's promised new world, where she will have her complete mental faculties.





Laurie has helped her son, Bryan, learn to type, encouraging his independence

e-mails to his friends and family. But he needs someone to support his wrist as he types. His parents are helping him progress to the point where he will need support only at the elbow. They know that those few inches from wrist to elbow represent a huge measure of increased independence.

Still, parents should not expect too much or push their child too hard. Each child has different potential. The book *The Special Child* suggests: "A good rule of thumb is to try to maintain a balance between encouraging independence and providing enough assistance to prevent frustration."

#### The Greatest Source of Help

Parents of disabled children all need great patience and endurance. With problem piling upon problem, many parents experience times of despair. Exhaustion often takes its toll. Tears fall, and self-pity may sometimes surface. What can be done?

Parents can call upon God, the "Hearer of prayer." (Psalm 65:2) He gives courage, hope, and strength to endure. (1 Chronicles 29:12; Psalm 27:14) He comforts our aching hearts, and he wants us to "rejoice in the hope" that the Bible provides. (Romans 12:12; 15:4, 5; 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) Godly parents can be confident that in the future, when 'the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the speechless shout for joy,' their precious child too will enjoy perfect mental and physical health.—Isaiah 35:5, 6; Psalm 103:2, 3.

#### Encouraging Less Dependence

Mentally disabled children do not simply remain children—they grow into mentally disabled adults. Parents therefore do well to help children with special needs not to be more dependent than necessary. Markus' mother, Anne, says: "It was easier and faster for us to do everything for Markus. But we made every effort to help him to do as much as he could for himself." Eunike's mother adds: "Eunike has many delightful qualities, but she can be stubborn. To get her to do something she doesn't want to do, we have to appeal to her desire to please us. And even after she has agreed to undertake a task, we have to follow through and encourage her all the way."

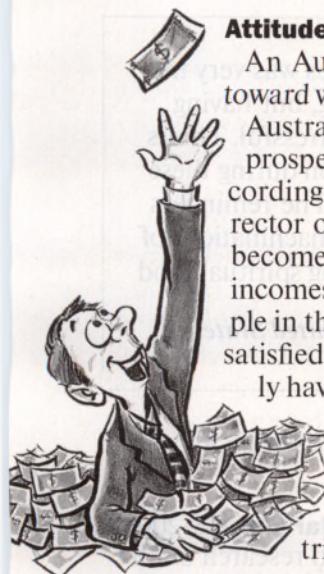
Bryan's mother, Laurie, constantly searches for ways to make his life more fulfilling. Over a period of three years, Laurie and her husband have helped Bryan learn to type. With immense satisfaction Bryan now sends

#### WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Educate and inform yourselves about your child's disability.
- Try to maintain a positive attitude.
- Help your child to achieve his or her potential level of independence.
- Seek courage, hope, and strength from God.

#### WHAT OTHERS CAN DO

- Speak intelligently and sincerely with the child.
- Talk with the parents about their child and commend them.
- Be sensitive to and considerate of feelings.
- Share in activities with parents and families of special children.



### Attitudes Toward Wealth

An Australia Institute study on attitudes toward wealth has found that only 1 in 20 of Australian millionaires considers himself prosperous, reports *ABC News Online*. According to Clive Hamilton, executive director of the Institute, "the richer that we become, the less satisfied we are with our incomes." In fact, only 13 percent of people in the highest income group feel totally satisfied with life. Says Hamilton: "You real-

ly have to ask why it is in our society that we pursue financial success more than anything else, when all of the evidence suggests that it is other aspects of life which really contribute to our sense of well being."

### Orbiting Junk

"Imagine the outrage if drivers abandoned their cars on city streets after they ran out of fuel," says *New Scientist* magazine. Yet, this is similar to what is happening to defunct satellites, increasing the risk that newer spacecraft will collide with orbiting junk. It is estimated that some 1,120 objects larger than 20 inches across are close to the geostationary ring, the favored position for communications equipment, but only 300 or so of these are operational satellites. Among the hazardous materials abandoned in orbit at various altitudes are 32 defunct nuclear reactors.

### Weapons and War

When the Cold War ended, the arms business took a downturn. In the past few years, however, business has prospered. In 2004, according to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), global military spending reached one trillion dollars. This figure is the equivalent of \$162 for each man, woman, and child on the planet. According to SIPRI, 19 conflicts causing more than 1,000 deaths each were fought in 2004. Of those conflicts, 16 had already been raging for more than ten years.

### Dual-Fuel Cars

One third of new cars leaving Brazilian showrooms are now dual-fuel, reports *Véja* magazine. These ve-

■ "About one in four people" in the United States "develops at least one mental disorder in any given year, and nearly one in two people does so at some time in their lives."—*SCIENCE NEWS*, U.S.A.

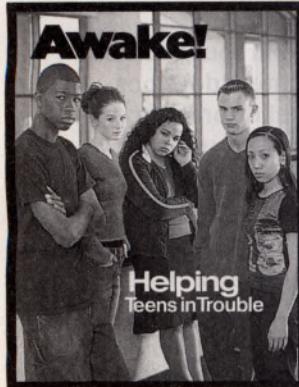
■ In September 2004, Hurricane Ivan generated at least 24 waves over 50 feet high in the Gulf of Mexico. The largest measured 91 feet.—*SCIENCE MAGAZINE*, U.S.A.

■ Use of cell phones while driving results in a fourfold increase in the likelihood of crashes requiring hospital visits, whether drivers use a hands-free device or not.—*BMJ*, BRITAIN.

■ A new edition of a catalog designed to aid Bible translators lists 6,912 living languages.—*THE NEW YORK TIMES*, U.S.A.

■ Despite warnings of harm to their children, 30 percent of women in Poland smoke during pregnancy or breast-feeding years.—*ZDROWIE MAGAZINE*, POLAND.

hicles run on gasoline, sugarcane-derived alcohol, or a mixture of the two in any proportion. From 2003 to 2004, sales of the alcohol fuel increased by 34 percent. The trend has little to do with environmental concerns. It simply is cheaper for most motorists to run on alcohol. The dual-fuel cars can help to protect "the consumer against fuel crises and fluctuations in price," explains Rafael Schechtman, director of the Brazilian Center of Infrastructure. "If the price of alcohol increases, you turn to using gasoline, and vice-versa."

**A Clean Home—The Part We All Play**

(June 8, 2005) When I was growing up, both my parents worked and the three of us children were always playing in the house. It was a big mess. To this day I hate to clean. But reading this article made me feel as if my mother were kindly teaching me how to clean. I now have grown children, and they dislike cleaning. There are many things I have to teach them. I was encouraged by the article.

*Y. E., Japan*

**For Family Review** (May 8, 2005)

When I saw this article, tears came to my eyes. I showed it to my daughter. Then she told me that she had already read the article about the injured sparrow and had answered both questions in "For Family Review."

*L. S., United States*

**Libraries—Gateways to Knowledge**

(May 22, 2005) Kindly allow me to point out that the picture on page 18 is incorrectly described as King Ashurbanipal of Assyria. In fact, the picture shows Assyrian King Esar-haddon.

*A. W., Germany*

**"Awake!" responds:** Thank you for bringing this to our attention. As pointed out in the Biblical reference work "Insight on the Scriptures," Volume 1, page 757, Esar-haddon was a

**Helping Teens in Trouble** (April 8, 2005) This series was very informative. At times, being a teenager is challenging, but having encouraging articles like these makes it a little less stressful. This is exactly the kind of information we need to spur us on during these "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1) The reminders in these articles will help us not to fall prey to "the machinations of the Devil." (Ephesians 6:11) Thank you for providing spiritual food at the proper time.

*K. S., United States*

younger son and successor of Assyrian King Sennacherib.\*

**The Amazing Maya Calendar** (April 8, 2005) This article moved me to do research on the Internet. I found that there is a close connection between the Maya calendar and astrology. I feel that publishing articles such as this could induce readers to become interested in astrology and the magical arts.

*J. K., Poland*

**"Awake!" responds:** As stated on page 4 of "Awake!" this journal "reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science." This certainly does not imply that we endorse all that takes place in these fields. In the brief article to which you refer, we reported on the ancient Maya, whose skillful calculation of time helped produce an amazingly accurate calendar. The fact that this calendar was used in divination—which is acknowledged in the article—should in no way induce our readers to become interested in a study of astrology.

Occasionally we receive similar questions regarding artwork that appears in our publications. Depictions of idols, religious symbols, or spiritistic objects are not meant to arouse curiosity but to remove any mystique that surrounds these things and to caution our readers not to have anything to do with them. Many of the comments we have received indicate that our articles and artwork have had such a beneficial effect.

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?



### 1. Name the 12 apostles.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Draw a line connecting the name of the apostle to the quality for which he became known.



### 2. He had no deceit (John 1:47)

### 3. He was zealous (Luke 6:15)

### 4. He doubted (John 20:24, 25)

#### ■ For Discussion:

Who is your favorite apostle?  
Why do you especially like him?

(Answers on page 22)

## WHEN IN HISTORY?

Draw a line from the picture to the correct date.



4216

4026

3375

2370

1593 1513 B.C.E.

### WHO AM I?

8. I was an Israelite but was not an ancestor of the Messiah. My wife was not an Israelite but was an ancestress of the Messiah.

### WHO AM I?

9. I was called "most blessed among women" for removing an enemy of Israel.

## FROM THIS ISSUE

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

**Page 3** What did Jesus say is the key to happiness?  
(Matthew 5:\_\_\_\_)

**Page 5** What did Solomon say about lovers of money?  
(Ecclesiastes 5:\_\_\_\_)

**Page 11** How was Paul persecuted for his faith?  
(2 Corinthians 11:\_\_\_\_)

**Page 28** What hope does the Bible hold out to parents of disabled children? (Isaiah 35:\_\_\_\_)

Bottom circle: Rare Books Division,  
The New York Public Library, Astor,  
Lenox and Tilden Foundations

## Children's Picture Search

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



# Help for Protecting Our Children

Last year a woman in Virginia, U.S.A., wrote to express appreciation for the book *Learn From the Great Teacher*, saying: "Before my grandsons go to bed, they say: 'Nanny, read us a story from the Jesus book.' Their ages are 4, 6, and 7, and they enjoy the stories very much."

The grandmother explained: "I read chapter 32 entitled 'How Jesus Was Protected.' I was really impressed because after talking about how Jehovah protected Jesus, the lesson helps young ones to protect themselves by giving them practical advice. It says: 'If someone tries to do this, say firmly in a loud voice: 'Stop that! I'm going to tell on you!''"



In Mexico a mother of a five-year-old girl named Betsaida said that she has been reading through the *Teacher* book with her daughter for the second time. The mother noted: "The world is becoming more decadent, and our little ones face ever more pressures. My daughter says that she is grateful for the instruction on how to protect herself from improper influences, such as those mentioned in chapter 32."

