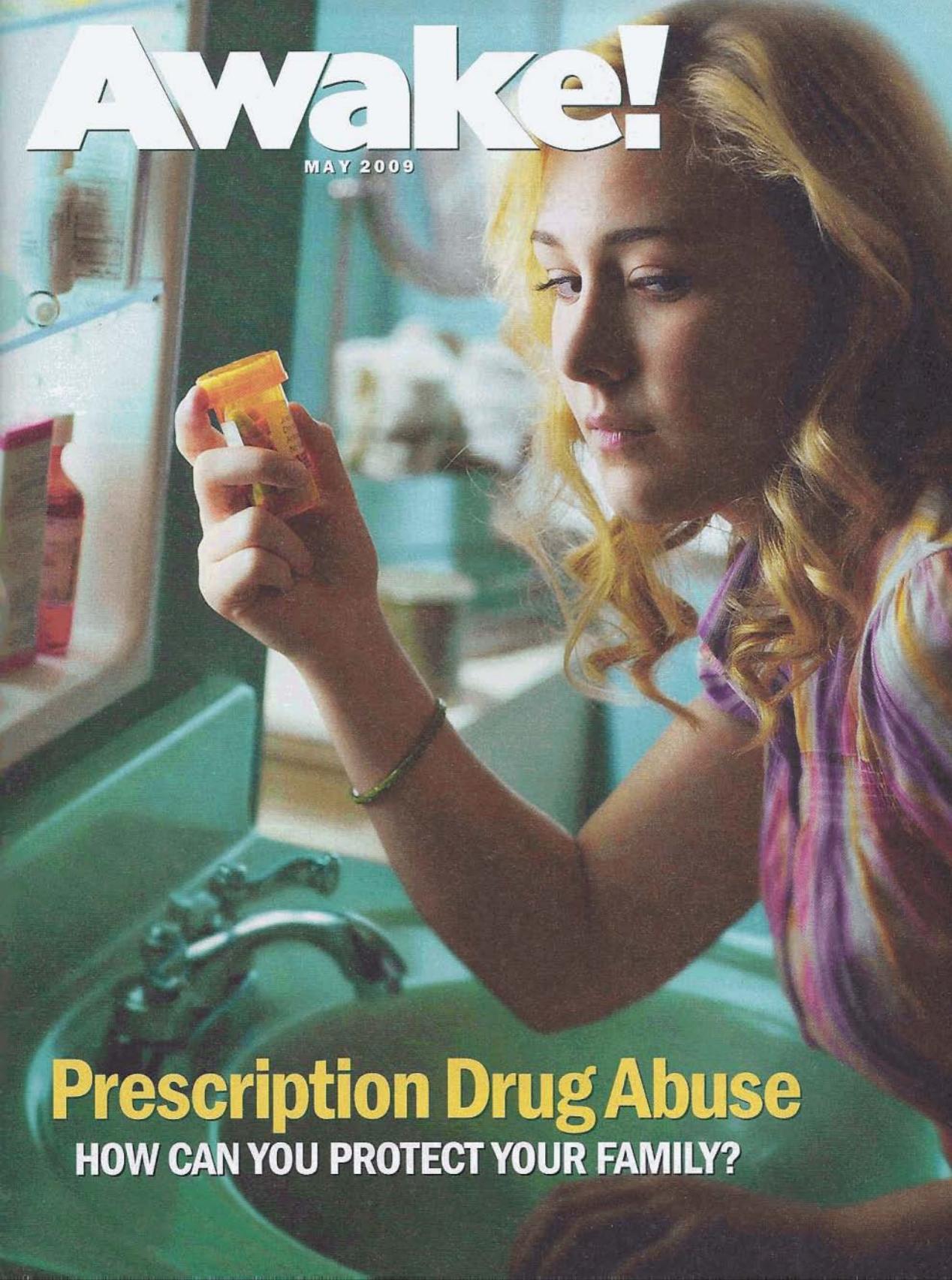


Awake!

MAY 2009



Prescription Drug Abuse

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOUR FAMILY?



Prescription Drug Abuse

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOUR FAMILY? 3-10

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RAIDING THE Medicine Cabinet

"I STARTED taking prescription drugs when I was 14 years old," said a woman named Lena.* "I felt that I had to be thin and attractive, so our family doctor prescribed diet pills for me. The only time I felt good was when it seemed that boys admired me. Eventually, I moved on to hard drugs and the immoral lifestyle that went with them. I was always trying to reach the ultimate high."

A woman named Myra suffered from migraine headaches, so her doctor prescribed a pain reliever. In time, she began taking more and more pills—not just for headaches but also to satisfy her growing addiction. Moreover, she began taking pills prescribed for other members of her family.

Yes, reports indicate that a growing number of youths and a surprising number of older people are misusing

* Names in this series have been changed.

prescription drugs in an effort to calm down, cope with anxiety, stay alert, lose weight, or experience a high. Some of the most frequently abused drugs are those found in many homes: pain relievers, sedatives, stimulants, and tranquilizers.* Abused products also include such over-the-counter drugs as sleeping aids, decongestants, and allergy pills.

The problem is both widespread and growing. In parts of Africa, Europe, and South Asia, for example, the abuse of prescription drugs is overtaking that of street drugs. In the United States, prescription-drug abuse exceeds that of virtually all illicit products except cannabis. According to a recent newspaper report, more 12- to 17-year-olds "abuse prescription drugs than cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines combined." Indeed, the demand is so high that it has given rise to a counterfeit-prescription-drug industry.

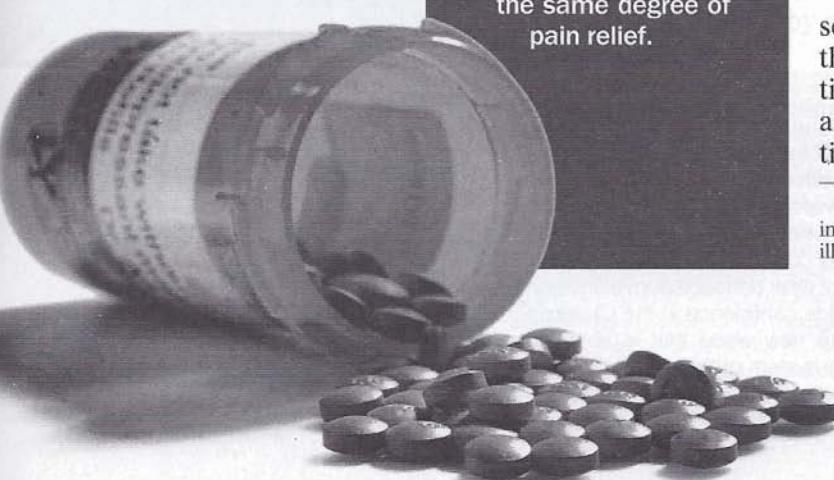
How can you protect yourself and your children from the abuse of drugs—prescription or illicit? The following articles examine these questions.

* Many of the principles discussed in these articles also apply to the use of illicit drugs and to the abuse of alcohol.

"Drug addiction is characterized by compulsive use, use for non-medical purposes, and continued use despite harm or risk of harm," says the *Physicians' Desk Reference*. Addiction is characterized by a lack of control and an obsession with the drug.

Physical dependence is evident when patients develop withdrawal symptoms when they stop taking a certain prescribed drug, such as an opioid. This is a normal reaction and is not the same as addiction.

Tolerance refers to the need for an increased dosage in order to obtain the same degree of pain relief.



PRESCRIPTION DRUGS Use and Abuse



AGIRL named Angie overheard her parents saying that her brother's medicine curbed his appetite. Because Angie was concerned about her weight, she started sneaking her brother's pills, taking one every few days. To reduce the risk of her parents' finding out, she asked a friend who was using the same medication to give her some of his pills.*

Why the fascination with prescription drugs? One reason is availability—they may be right there in the home. Second, many young people wrongly assume that they are not doing anything illegal when they take medicinal drugs without a prescription. And third, prescription drugs seem less toxic than their illicit counterparts. ‘After all,’ some youths reason, ‘if a child can take certain prescribed products, the products must be safe.’

Granted, when properly used, prescribed medication may improve health and the quality of life and even save lives. But misused, it can be

as unsafe as street drugs. For example, when a person abuses certain prescription stimulants, he may bring on heart failure or seizures. Other products can lower a person’s breathing rate and ultimately cause death. A drug may also have a harmful effect if it is taken with certain other drugs or with alcohol. Early in 2008, a popular actor died “from a deadly mix of six tranquilizers, sleeping pills and painkillers,” said the *Arizona Republic* newspaper.

Another potential danger is addiction. When taken in excessive amounts or for

ANYTHING FOR A HIGH

Some people will try almost anything to get a high. Particularly harmful practices include the sniffing of cleaning fluids, fingernail polish, furniture polish, gasoline, glue, lighter fluid, spray paint, and other volatile substances. Sniffed fumes are rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream, giving an almost instant reaction.

Another harmful practice is the abuse of over-the-counter medications that contain alcohol or induce sleepiness. When taken in high doses, these products interfere with the senses, especially hearing and vision, and may cause confusion, hallucinations, numbness, and stomach pain.

* From TeensHealth Web site.

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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"DRUG-SEEKING TACTICS"

"Drug-seeking" behavior is very common in addicts and drug abusers," says the *Physicians' Desk Reference*. "Drug-seeking tactics include emergency calls or visits near the end of office hours, refusal to undergo appropriate examination, testing or referral, repeated 'loss' of prescriptions, tampering with prescriptions and reluctance to provide prior medical records or contact information for other treating physician(s). 'Doctor shopping' to obtain additional prescriptions is common among drug abusers and people suffering from untreated addiction."

The drugs most often abused are the following three kinds:

- **Opioids**—prescribed for pain relief
- **CNS (central nervous system) Depressants**—barbiturates and benzodiazepines prescribed for anxiety or sleep problems (often referred to as sedatives or tranquilizers)
- **Stimulants**—prescribed for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), the sleep disorder narcolepsy, or obesity*

* Information supplied by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

the wrong reason, some substances act like street drugs—they stimulate pleasure centers in the brain, which can lead to a craving for the substance. But instead of providing ongoing excitement or helping people cope with life, drug abuse only makes matters worse. It may heighten stress, deepen depression, ruin health and the ability to function normally, lead to addiction, or do all of these things. Inevitably, victims have problems at home, at school, or at work. Where, then, is the line be-

have a legitimate need, and carefully follow the instructions on the label.

People step into dangerous territory when they take medication for the wrong reason, take liberties with the dosage, use products meant for someone else, or take the drug in the wrong way. For example, some pills have to be swallowed whole so that the active ingredient is released into the system slowly. Abusers often disrupt the process by crushing or chewing pills, by crushing and sniffing them,

Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bislam, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese^o (audio Mandarin only), Chinese (Simplified), Chitonga, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,^o Danish,^o Dutch,^o 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,^o, Kannada, Kirghiz, Korean,^o, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy,^o, Malayalam, Maltese, Myanmar, Norwegian,^o, Polish,^o, Portuguese,^o, Punjabi, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian,^o, Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,^o, Swahili, Swedish,^o, Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

^o Audio cassettes also available.

^o CD also available.

^o MP3 CD-ROM also available.

^o Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

tween the proper use of prescribed products and their wrongful use?

Use or Abuse?

Simply put, you use a prescription drug properly when you take it according to the directions of a physician who is fully aware of your medical history. That would include taking the correct dosage at the right times, in the proper manner, and for the right medical reason. Even so, undesirable or unexpected symptoms may appear. If that happens, tell your doctor immediately. He or she may change your prescription or cancel it altogether. The same principles apply to over-the-counter products: Use them only when you

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 Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

GUIDELINES FOR THE SAFE USE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

1. Follow directions carefully.
2. Don't change doses without consulting your doctor.
3. Don't stop taking prescribed medication on your own.
4. Don't crush or break pills unless specifically instructed to do so.
5. Be aware of the effect the drug may have on your driving and other activities.
6. Find out how the drug may interact with alcohol and with other medications—prescribed or over the counter.
7. If you have a history of substance abuse, tell your doctor.
8. Do not use drugs prescribed for someone else, and do not share yours.*

* Based on recommendations provided by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

or by dissolving them in water and injecting them. The result may be a high, but it could also be a first step toward addiction. Worse still, it could be lethal.

On the other hand, if someone is taking a prescribed drug in the proper manner but suspects that he may be developing an addiction, he should inform his doctor without delay. The doctor should know the safest way to address the matter without neglecting the original health problem.

The pandemic of drug abuse—in all its forms—is a reflection of our times. The family, which should be a haven of love and a refuge from daily stresses, is in trouble. Whole-some moral and spiritual values are on the wane, as is respect for life. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Another factor is a lack of hope for a better future. Many people see nothing but gloom and doom on the horizon. Hence, they live for the moment and pursue whatever pleasures they can, sometimes recklessly. The Bible says: “Where there is no vision the people go unrestrained.”—Proverbs 29:18.

If you are a parent, no doubt you want to protect your family from the moral and spiritual ills that plague the world. But how can you do that? And where can you turn for sound guidance and a reliable hope for a better tomorrow? The following articles address these questions.

Parents PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN!

CONCERNED parents rightly ask, “Why are more and more teens sneaking into the medicine cabinet?” The answers are varied. Some young ones seek excitement. Others want to study more effectively or numb anxiety. Still others may be suffering physically or emotionally and simply want to feel better. Indeed, children as young as 12 years of age have become full-fledged abusers of prescription drugs, perhaps ordering them from one or more of literally hundreds of thousands of Web sites that readily provide such drugs—no questions asked. Others have pur-

chased pills from so-called friends. If you are a parent, what can you do to protect your children?

For one thing, talk openly to them about the dangers of taking drugs—prescribed or illicit. Also, keep prescriptions in a safe place—perhaps even locking the medicine cabinet. Know what you have on hand, and monitor usage. If a drug is no longer needed, safely discard it. If a teen is over his cough but is still taking medicine, ask him about it. And keep an eye on your child’s Internet and credit-card activity and mail deliveries. Finally, be alert

to any changes in his or her associations, appearance, or behavior or to any sudden drop in school grades.

If a Child Has a Drug Problem

If your child has a drug problem or you seriously suspect one, what can you do? You need to discuss your concerns with your child, doing so in a loving and kind manner. "The intention in the human heart is like water far below the surface," the Bible says, "but the man [or woman] of intelligence draws it forth." (Proverbs 20:5, *The New American Bible*) Drawing the truth from a child with a suspected drug problem may be like lifting a bucket of water with a frail rope. If you pull too hard by being accusatory or bitterly an-

gry, you might break the rope of communication. Remember, your goal is two-fold. First, you want to find out whether there is a problem. And second, if there is a problem, what the underlying reasons are for it. Often those reasons involve one or more of the following.

■ Unwholesome associates and peer pressure.

"Make no mistake," says 1 Corinthians 15:33, "bad company is the ruin of a good character." (*The New English Bible*) Wise parents, therefore, will help their children see the danger of bad associates, who may have considerable influence. On the positive side, such parents will help their children choose wholesome companions. (Proverbs 13:20) Perhaps Dad and Mom could help by inviting such to their home or on family outings.

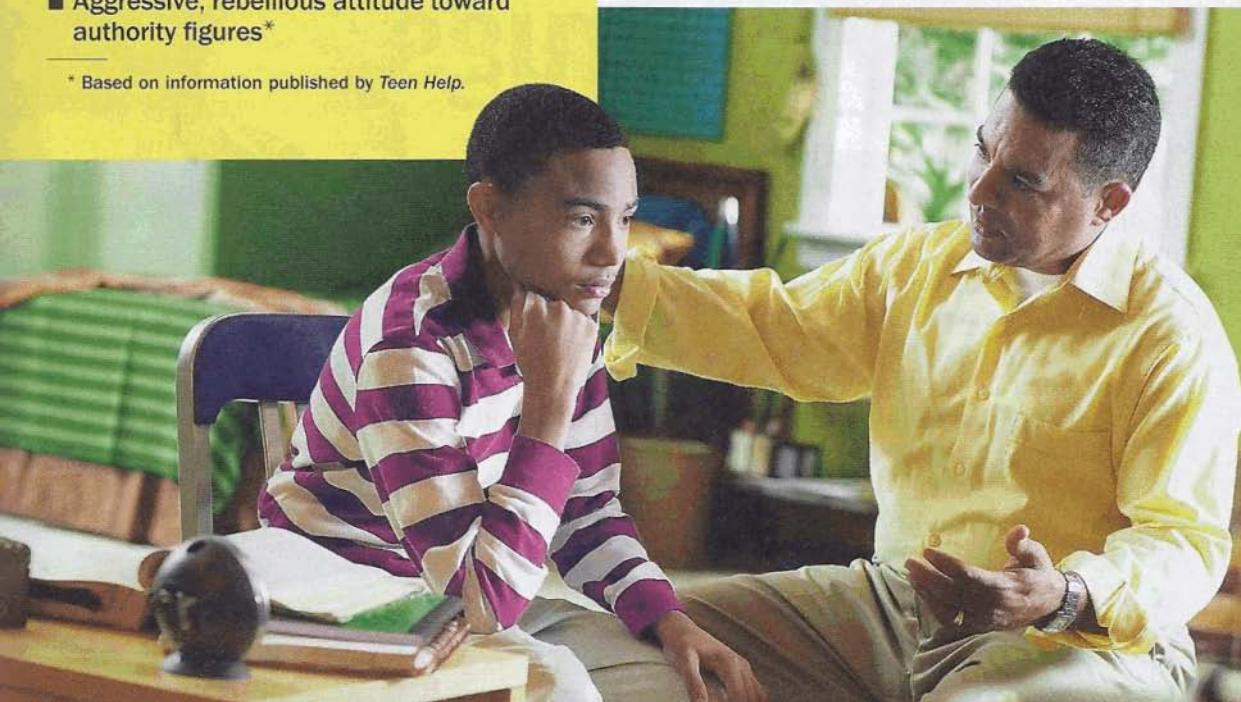
■ Stress. The pressure to succeed in today's world is intense, and parents sometimes make matters worse by driving their children

WARNING SIGNS OF TEENS AT RISK

- A family history of substance or alcohol abuse
- Depression or low self-esteem
- Feel that they do not fit in with others and that they are not popular
- Frequently feel sluggish; have difficulty sleeping
- Aggressive, rebellious attitude toward authority figures*

* Based on information published by *Teen Help*.

"The intention in the human heart is like water far below the surface, but the man of intelligence draws it forth."—Proverbs 20:5, *New American Bible*



too hard.* Are you aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your children? Do you set reasonable goals for them and help them to reach those goals? Do you strictly avoid making disparaging comparisons that can crush a child and sow the seeds of depression? To be sure, if children's emotional needs are not met at home, they will go elsewhere for the affection and recognition they crave. Wise parents also strive to foster a spiritual environment in the home, perhaps by reading the Bible with their children. "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need," said Jesus Christ.—Matthew 5:3.

■ **A lack of behavioral boundaries.** Some young people take drugs because their parents simply let them run wild. "A boy [or girl] left on the loose will be causing his mother shame," says Proverbs 29:15. The fact is, children appreciate clear behavioral boundaries, which make them feel more secure and

loved—despite outward protestations. Hence, the Bible encourages parents to set wholesome guidelines for their children, as well as a good example. (Ephesians 6:4) The Bible also encourages consistency and firmness when needed. "Let your Yes mean Yes, and your No, No."—James 5:12.

Of course, if you learn that your child has a drug problem, you would be wise to discuss the matter with a health professional. Breaking an addiction can be difficult and may require expert guidance. Also, if your family is part of the Christian congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, you should seek the support of the local elders. (James 5:13-16) These spiritually mature men may be able to assist you to apply Bible principles that will help speed recovery.

The following article will consider some additional principles and will also discuss the wonderful hope we can have for a much better future.

* See the article "Stressed-Out Children," on page 14.

SOMETHING BETTER THAN Drugs

WHEN Lena, mentioned in the first article, was 32 years of age, she was "consumed with guilt, doom, and death," largely because of her drug problem. "As a wife and mother, I wanted to be good," she wrote, "but everything in my life and in the world was so sad and pathetic that there seemed to be no reason to be good. And the few times I tried, I failed."

Then Lena began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Before long, Bible truth gave her inner peace and relief, which she described as "the most tremendous feeling I have ever had." Insight into Bible principles and a wonderful hope for the future motivated her to clean up her life and conquer her addiction.



Principles for Life

The laws and principles found in the Bible were tailor-made for us by our Creator, Jehovah God. Says Psalm 19:7, 8: "The law of Jehovah is perfect, bringing back [reviving] the soul. . . . The orders from Jehovah are upright, causing the heart to rejoice; the commandment of Jehovah is clean, making the eyes shine."

For instance, 2 Corinthians 7:1 exhorts us to "cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit." Lena took that Bible verse to heart, and this helped her to break her defiling habit. The same was true of Myra, also mentioned in the first article in this series. You may recall that she became addicted to the drugs prescribed for her headaches. How did Myra address her problem? She discussed it frankly with her doctor, who then helped her to pursue other medical treatment.* Additionally, she took advantage of the spiritu-

* Not all situations are the same as Myra's. For example, some people may be enduring a painful disease for which relief can be found only through strong, potentially addictive drugs administered under medical supervision. Such a patient is not seeking a euphoric high, nor is he indulging an addiction.—See Proverbs 31:6.

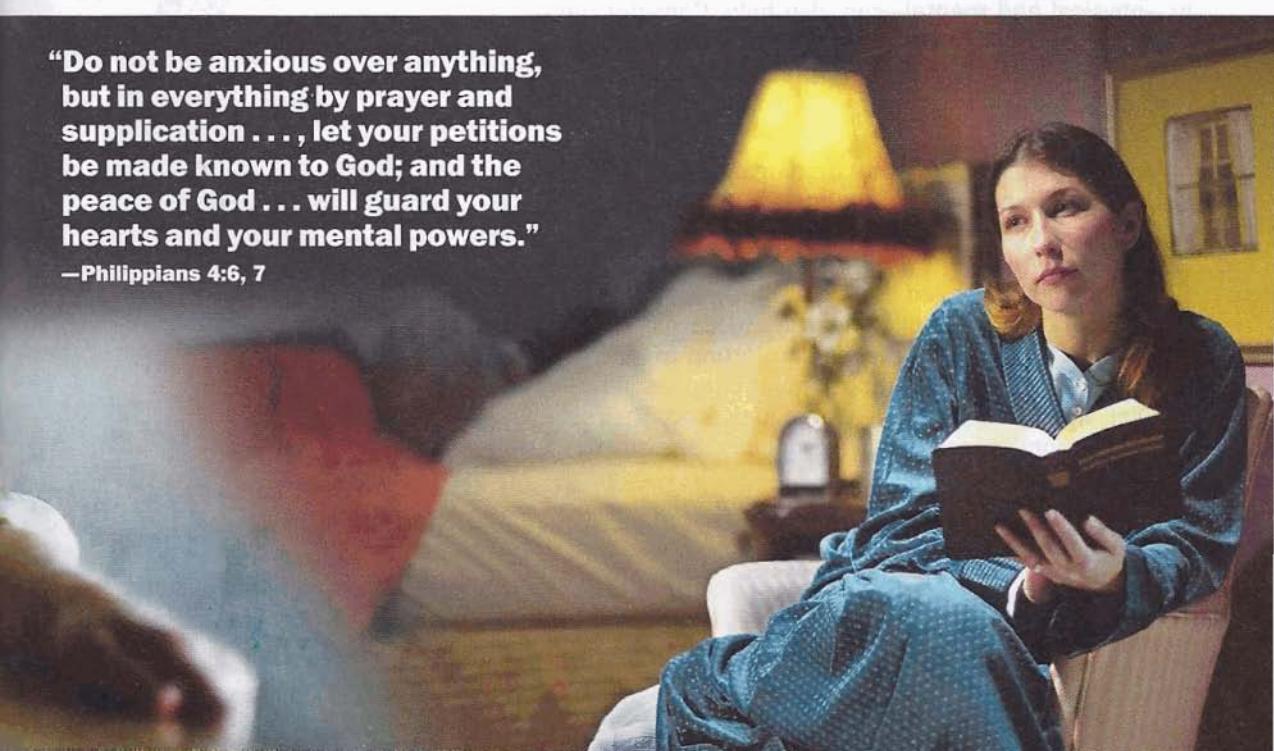
al encouragement provided by the Christian congregation.

Both Lena and Myra also sought help through prayer. Says Philippians 4:6, 7: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers." A servant of God in ancient times who experienced that inner peace wrote that when his "disquieting thoughts became many," God's reassuring words gave him calmness, consolation, and inner joy. (Psalm 94:19) Comforting words like those can be found in the pages of the Bible and in the personal encouragement and support of wholesome Christian associates, including Christian elders.

Sometimes, though, because of a drug problem, a person may feel totally unworthy. Janice, a Christian who had been addicted to prescription drugs for many years, wrote: "Addicts may be so spiritually bankrupt and so full of self-hatred that on their own they

"Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication . . . , let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God . . . will guard your hearts and your mental powers."

—Philippians 4:6, 7



find it difficult, if not impossible, to turn to Jehovah for help." Under such circumstances, it is especially important for them to seek the aid of mature Christians. Their loving, patient encouragement and their prayers of faith can "make the indisposed one well." (James 5:15) Of course, if the addict is a child, the parents should take an active interest—spiritually and medically—in his recovery, lest he relapse.

Janice entered a treatment center, overcame her habit, and has remained drug free ever since. "I rely on Jehovah to get me through the rough times," she wrote. "I now have serenity, and my old fun-loving personality is coming back."

When Our Problems Will Be Gone

The day is coming when drugs of any kind will be a thing of the past. How so? Revelation 21:3, 4 answers: "The tent of God is with mankind . . . And 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 [which include today's problems] have passed away."

The Bible likens the Christian hope to "an anchor for the soul, both sure and firm." (Hebrews 6:18, 19) When beset by a storm, sailors in ancient times would lower the ship's anchor. If the anchor took hold of the seabed, it would help the ship ride out the storm, away from dangerous reefs or shorelines. Similarly, the "sure and firm" hope set out in the Bible can help us to keep our emotional, mental, and spiritual equilibrium when stormy trials arise—as they undoubtedly will!

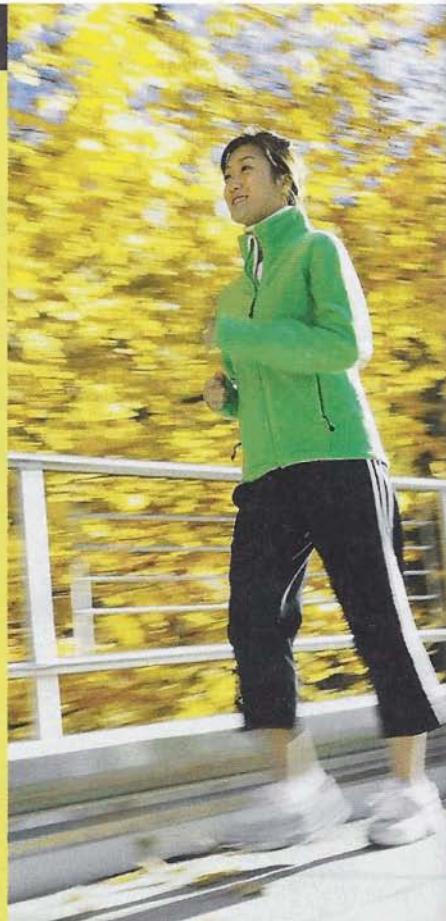
Why not examine the Bible and see how relevant and encouraging its advice and teachings are? Jehovah's Witnesses would be delighted to help you, and you will not be disappointed.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO ENHANCE WELL-BEING

Exercise can "temporarily lift your mood and provide a brief respite from depression," says the book *Managing Your Mind—The Mental Fitness Guide*. A change in diet and habits—physical and mental—can also help. Consider the example of Valerie, who was abused as a child. She became addicted to at least 12 different prescription drugs. Nevertheless, she was able to overcome her habit and lead a relatively normal life. Her secret?

Instead of watching TV and reading questionable novels, Valerie established a good routine of Bible study and made time to read Bible study aids published by Jehovah's Witnesses, including this magazine. Also, she prayed incessantly to God for strength, availed herself of the support of the Christian congregation, and filled her days with such wholesome activities as sharing the Bible's comforting message with others. Besides that, she made major changes in her physical diet, which had included a lot of junk food. The result was a recovery that amazed even her doctors. She has now been drug free for many years.*

* If you take prescribed medication for clinical depression, bipolar disorder, or some other mental condition, your situation is likely not the same as Valerie's. So do not make any changes without consulting your doctor.



A RECEIPT THAT CORROBORATES THE BIBLE RECORD



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■ A two-inch-wide clay tablet was unearthed in the 1870's near modern-day Baghdad, Iraq. In 2007, Michael Jursa, a professor at the University of Vienna, in Austria, came across the tablet while doing research at the British Museum. Jursa recognized the name Nebo-sarsechim (Nabu-sharrussu-ukin, in its Babylonian form), a Babylonian official mentioned in the Bible at Jeremiah 39:3.*

Nebo-sarsechim was one of King Nebuchadnezzar's commanders at the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E., and according to the tablet, he is called "the chief eunuch." Moreover, the title chief eunuch was held by only one man at any given time, providing strong evidence that the Sarsechim in question is the same man mentioned in the Bible.

The tablet records a gold delivery that Nebo-sarsechim made to the temple of Marduk, or Merodach, the chief god of Babylon, whose name is also mentioned in the Bible. (Jeremiah 50:2) The receipt is dated the 10th year, 11th month, and 18th day of

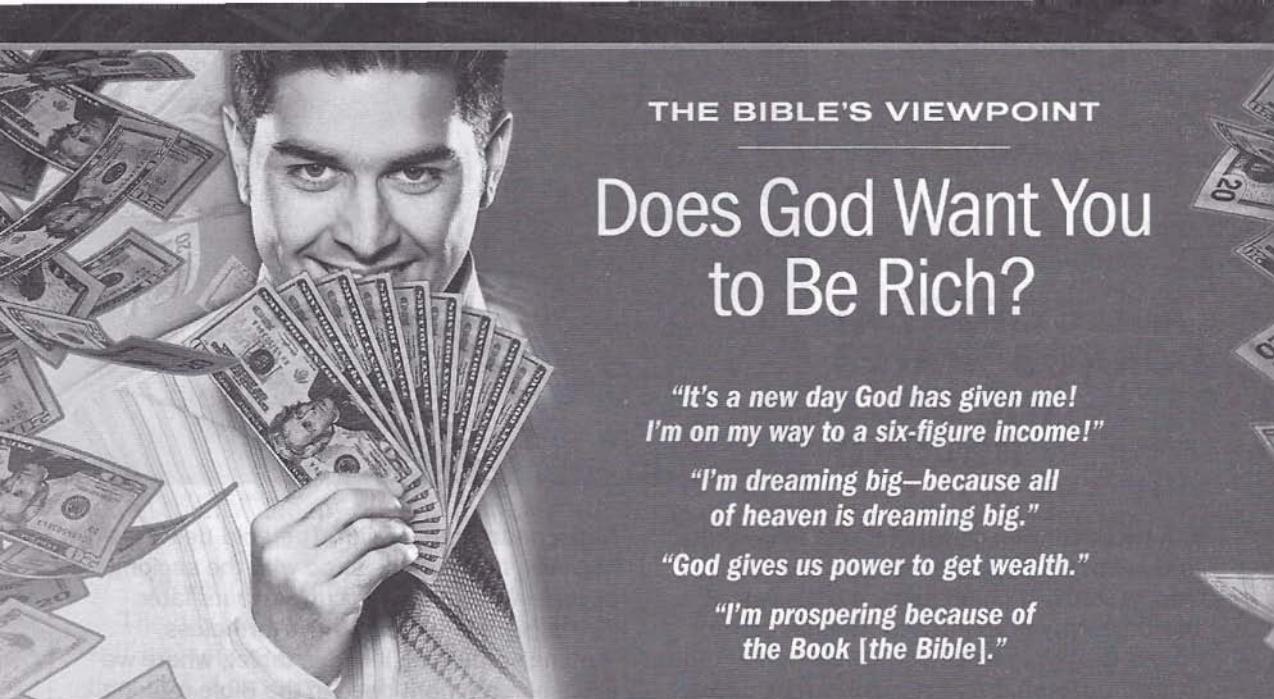
Nebuchadnezzar's reign. The gold delivery, however, had nothing to do with the sacking of Jerusalem, which occurred years later. (2 Kings 25:8-10, 13-15) Nevertheless, "finding something like this tablet, where we see a person mentioned in the Bible making an everyday payment to the temple in Babylon and quoting the exact date, is quite extraordinary," said Professor Jursa. Acclaimed as one of the most significant discoveries in modern Biblical archaeology, the tablet "supports the view that the historical books of the Old Testament are based on fact," says Britain's *Telegraph* newspaper.

The Bible's veracity, however, does not depend on archaeology. Far more powerful evidence can be found within the Bible itself, especially in its prophecies. (2 Peter 1:21) For example, more than 100 years in advance, Jehovah God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, foretold that all the treasures in Jerusalem would "be carried to Babylon." (Isaiah 39:6, 7) Likewise, through the prophet Jeremiah, God foretold: "I will give all the stored-up things of this city [Jerusalem] . . . into the hand of their enemies. And they will certainly plunder them and take them . . . to Babylon."—Jeremiah 20:4, 5.

Nebo-sarsechim was one of those enemies, and as such, he was also an eyewitness of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. In fact, whether he knew it or not, he actually shared in that fulfillment.

* At Jeremiah 39:3, the *New World Translation* reads: "Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris," following the punctuation in the Hebrew Masoretic text. But the Hebrew consonantal text could be rendered: "Samgar, Nebo-sarsechim the Rabsaris [or, the Chief Court Official]," which agrees with the cuneiform tablet.

1. Kadesheh. ■ Moses spoke rashly, and he and Aaron did not sanctify Jehovah, so they were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. 2. Conspiracy against the King. 3. Humility and courage.



Does God Want You to Be Rich?

*"It's a new day God has given me!
I'm on my way to a six-figure income!"*

*"I'm dreaming big—because all
of heaven is dreaming big."*

"God gives us power to get wealth."

*"I'm prospering because of
the Book [the Bible]."*

THESE statements reflect the view of a number of religious groups that attribute material wealth to the blessing of God. If you do the right thing by God, they preach, he will empower you to gain the good things of *this* life and reward you afterward as well. The theology has wide appeal, and books promoting it are best sellers. But does this “prosperity theology” harmonize with the Bible?

To be sure, our Creator, whom the Bible calls “the happy God,” wants us to lead happy, successful lives. (1 Timothy 1:11; Psalm 1: 1-3) Moreover, he blesses those who please him. (Proverbs 10:22) But for us today, is that blessing merely a form of material prosperity? The answer becomes clear when we understand where we are in the stream of time according to God’s purpose.

A Time to Get Rich?

In the past, Jehovah God blessed some of his servants with material wealth, the patriarch Job and King Solomon being good examples of that. (1 Kings 10:23; Job 42:12) Yet, many other God-fearing men had little,

including John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. (Mark 1:6; Luke 9:58) The point? According to the Bible, God deals with his servants in harmony with his purpose for them at the time. (Ecclesiastes 3:1) How does that principle apply to us today?

Bible prophecy reveals that we are living in “the conclusion of the system of things,” or “the last days” of the present world. This era would be marked by warfare, disease, famines, earthquakes, and a breakdown in society—conditions that have plagued mankind on an unprecedented scale since the year 1914. (Matthew 24:3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Luke 21:10, 11; Revelation 6:3-8) In short, this world, like a foundering ship, is about to sink! In view of those facts, would it make sense for God to bless each of his servants with material riches, or would God have other priorities for us?

Jesus Christ compared our time with the days of Noah. Jesus said: “As they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, men marrying and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into

the ark; and they took no note until the flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be." (Matthew 24:37-39) Jesus also compared our days with the days of Lot. Lot's neighbors in Sodom and Gomorrah were 'eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, and building.' "But on the day that Lot came out of Sodom it rained fire and sulphur from heaven and destroyed them all," Jesus said, adding: "The same way it will be on that day when the Son of man is to be revealed."—Luke 17:28-30.

To be sure, there is nothing wrong with eating, drinking, marrying, buying, and selling. The danger lies in being so absorbed in those things that we take no note of the urgency of the times. So ask yourself, 'Would God be doing us a favor if he were to bless us with the very things that would fill our lives with distractions?*' On the contrary, he would be doing us a great disservice. That is not the way of the God of love!—1 Timothy 6:17; 1 John 4:8.

A Time to Save Lives!

At this critical time in human history, God's people have an urgent work to do. Jesus said: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) Jehovah's Witnesses take those words very seriously. Hence, they encourage their neighbors

* As in the first century, some faithful Christians today are wealthy. However, God warns them not to trust in their riches nor be distracted by them. (Proverbs 11:28; Mark 10:25; Revelation 3:17) Rich or poor, all should focus on doing God's will. —Luke 12:31.

to learn about that Kingdom and God's requirements for everlasting life.—John 17:3.

However, God does not expect his faithful servants to be ascetics. Rather, he wants them to be content with life's necessities so that they can focus on serving him. (Matthew 6:33) He, in turn, will see that their material needs are filled. Says Hebrews 13:5: "Let your manner of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things. For [God] has said: 'I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you.'"

God will prove true to those words in an outstanding way when he preserves "a great crowd" of true worshippers through the end of the present system of things and into a

So-called prosperity theology is, in reality, distraction theology

new world of peace and true prosperity. (Revelation 7:9, 14) Jesus said: "I have come that they [his faithful followers] might have life and might have it in abundance." (John 10:10) That 'abundant life' refers, not to a life of material plenty now, but to endless life in Paradise under God's Kingdom rule.—Luke 23:43.

Do not settle for less by being deceived by so-called prosperity theology, which, in reality, is distraction theology. Instead, heed Jesus' loving but urgent words: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare." —Luke 21:34, 35.

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- For what is it now the appointed time?—Matthew 24:14.
- Jesus compared our time with the times of what Bible characters?
—Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:28-30.
- What must we avoid if we want to gain everlasting life?—Luke 21:34.

Stressed-Out Children

■ "I didn't have enough time. I'm tired," said Pablo, an eight-year-old boy, when his teacher asked him about his homework. Like this bleary-eyed boy in Spain, many children face long, tiring days that may include 12 hours or more of lessons and homework. Why such long days?

Some parents enroll their children in after-school activities to keep them busy until Mom or Dad comes home. Others impose a demanding schedule on their young ones because they want them to excel at school and pursue a successful career. To that end, many South Korean parents send their teens to "cram schools," where they endure exhausting schedules, sometimes from 7:30 a.m. until midnight or later for up to seven days a week. "Their obsession to get their children into top-notch universities is nothing short of 'a war,'" says a *New York Times* report.

The Spanish weekly *Mujer hoy* states: "'Pushy parents' want the best for their children, but they require very high performance from them." To meet their parents' expectations, children may demand too much of

themselves, which can be very stressful. "According to our observation, young ones are overloaded," says Antonio Cano, president of the Spanish Society for the Study of Anxiety and Stress. According to another authority, 40 percent of children in Spain under 15 years of age suffer from too much stress. Such pressure can exact a toll, perhaps even leading to suicide. In South Korea, for example, "among young people 10 to 19, suicide is the second most common cause of death, after traffic accidents," says *The New York Times*.

Of course, young ones should work hard at school, and parents should give them all the help they possibly can, for those years will never be repeated. But "children are not adults. They cannot cope with such long, tiring days," says Irene Arrimadas, a teacher. Aware of this, loving parents make sure that their children have adequate time for rest and wholesome family activities. Pointing to the need for balance, wise King Solomon wrote: "Better is a handful of rest than a double handful of hard work and striving after the wind."—Ecclesiastes 4:6.*

* For a detailed discussion of the pressures that many children face, see the series of articles "Under Pressure in School and Out," in the April 2009 issue of *Awake!*





BY AWAKE! WRITER IN ITALY

When Giants Roamed Europe

IN 1932 a road-construction crew was digging near the Colosseum in Rome when one of the men struck a hard object. It turned out to be the tusk and cranium of an elephant. This discovery is not an isolated case. Over the years, about 140 fossilized remains of elephants have been found in and around Rome, the first confirmed case being in the 17th century.

People thought that the bones belonged either to elephants imported into ancient Rome or to the ones that Carthaginian General Hannibal brought into Italy. G. B. Pianciani, a 19th-century priest and professor of Natural Sciences in Viterbo, challenged those assumptions. Because the bones were mostly found in alluvial deposits, he concluded that





The Polledrara
fossil deposit

Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma

they belonged to animals that had died elsewhere and were carried to their new location by floodwaters.

Many elephant fossils found in Italy are not those of the elephants we know today. Rather, they belong to an extinct species called *Elephas antiquus*, or ancient elephant. (See page 15.) This creature had almost straight tusks and grew to about 15 feet at the shoulders, making it about six feet taller than its modern-day counterparts.

How common were those giants? The fossil record indicates that they once roamed throughout Europe and England, as did their close relatives the mammoths. What is more, the elephant fossils are not always found in

isolation but, rather, in fossil beds containing the remains of numerous other species, some of which were natural enemies.

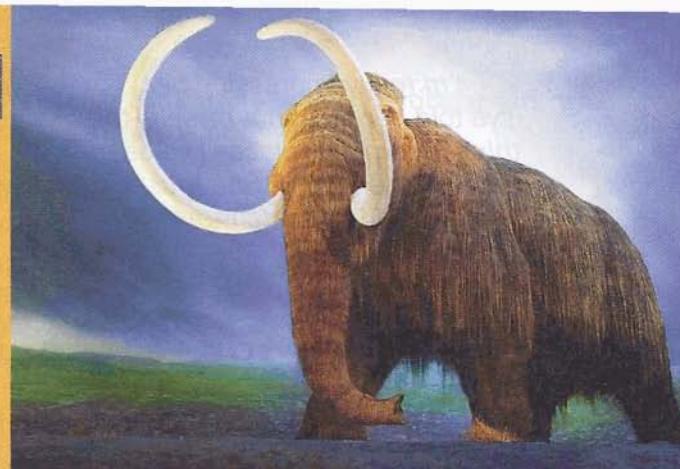
From Hyenas to Hippos

Fossils found in Lazio, a region of central Italy that includes Rome, suggest that the area at one time had a climate more like that of Africa, for hippopotamuses, gazelles, and even big cats once roamed in this region. In fact, fossils of one cat, dubbed the leopard of Monte Sacro, were found right in the heart of Rome. At the Polledrara deposit outside the city, more than 9,000 fossil remains have been unearthed, representing a diversity of animals: ancient elephants, buffalo, deer, Barbary apes, rhinoceroses, and aurochs—large

WHAT IS A FOSSIL?

At first glance a fossil might look like a normal bone. In fact, it is the result of a chemical transformation—fossilization—that takes place before the remains of dead animals can decompose.

One common form of fossilization is mineralization. In this process the original organic material is replaced, either totally or partially, by minerals present in wet sedimentary deposits. Thus, for fossilization to occur, specific environmental conditions are necessary. They include an abundant deposit of sediment and rapid burial of the remains, as well as their resistance to disintegration. Under normal circumstances, animal remains that are left uneaten are finished off by bacteria as well as mechanical and chemical agents, such as wind and water. Fossilization, therefore, is very rare.



MAMMOTHS IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

The fossil record indicates that the woolly mammoth roamed over a vast area, which included Asia, Europe, and North America. In Europe, Italy appears to have been at the southernmost extremity of the animal's range.

About the same size as present-day Asian elephants, the woolly mammoth had hair that grew up to 20 inches in length, and the males had long curved tusks that grew to about 15 feet. A particularly large amount of mammoth ivory has been found in Siberia—so much, in fact, that from medieval times it was exported to China and Europe.

oxen that were driven to extinction about four centuries ago. A museum at the site provides an elevated walkway for visitors to view the fossils in their original locations.—See page 16.

A cave near Palermo, Sicily, was filled with many tons of remains, including the fossilized bones of deer, oxen, elephants, and hippopotamuses of various ages—even a fetus. In fact, 20 tons of fossils found their way onto the market in the first six months after the site was discovered!

In Southern England, paleontologist J. Manson Valentine discovered fossil beds containing massive deposits of splintered bones of many of the same animals as well as

of hyenas and polar bears. What is the reason for these large beds of fossils in such diverse places?

Some scientists believe that the circumstances in which the animals died are consistent with a natural catastrophe. Whatever the cause or causes of such mass extinctions, their effects were felt over a large area that included mainland Europe, the British Isles, Siberia, and Alaska.

Thanks to the fossil record, we are able to imagine a world that was quite different from the one we know today. Indeed, in Italy alone, if you went back far enough in time, you could be excused for thinking that you were in the wilds of Africa.

*I'm really impressing her.
I've told her all about myself—the
things I own, the places I've been,
the people I know. She must be
dying to date me!*

*I wish the ground would
open and swallow me up! Can't
he take a hint? How can I end
this conversation without
being rude?*

YOUNG PEOPLE ASK

Why don't girls like me?

YOU'RE old enough to date. You'd like to find someone who is attractive and who shares your religious beliefs. (1 Corinthians 7:39) In the past, though, each time you tried to start a relationship, you felt as though you crashed and burned.

If you'd like to get to know a girl better, what factors do you need to consider? And what Bible principles would you do well to remember?

What to Do First

Before you decide to pursue a particular girl, there are some basic skills you need to master, and these will help you to be friends with *anyone*. Consider the following.

■ **Cultivate good manners.** The Bible says that "love is not ill-mannered." (1 Corinthians 13:5, *Today's English Version*) Good manners show that you respect others and that you're developing a mature, Christlike personality. However, good manners aren't like a suit you wear to impress others but take off when you get home. Ask yourself, 'Do I display good manners when dealing with my family members?' If not, then it will seem forced when you do so while interacting with others outside your home. Remember, to find out the type of person you really are, a discerning girl will look at the way you treat members of your family.—Ephesians 6:1, 2.

What girls say: "I definitely find it attractive if a boy displays good manners both in small things, like opening the door for me, and larger things, like being kind and considerate not only to me but also to my family."—*Tina, 20.**

"I am put off when I've just met someone but he asks questions that are too personal, such as 'Are you dating?' and 'What are your goals?' It's rude and makes me squirm!"—*Kathy, 19.*

Maintain your personal hygiene. Good hygiene shows respect not only for others but also for yourself. (Matthew 7:12) If you respect yourself, others are more likely to respect you. On the other hand, if you let your hygiene slide, you'll sabotage your efforts to impress a girl.

What girls say: "One boy who was interested in me had really bad breath. I just couldn't get past that."—*Kelly, 24.*

Cultivate conversation skills. The basis of a lasting relationship is good communication. This involves discussing not only *your* interests but also the interests of *your friend*.—*Philippians 2:3, 4.*

What girls say: "I'm impressed when a boy can converse with me naturally, when he can remember things I told him and can ask questions that keep the conversation moving."—*Christine, 20.*

"I think that boys are attracted to what they see, but girls are more attracted to what they hear."—*Laura, 22.*

"Gifts are great. But if a boy can hold a good conversation, if he can comfort and encourage you with his words . . . Wow! That's attractive."—*Amy, 21.*

"I would definitely want to get to know someone better if he had a sense of humor but could also talk about more serious things without sounding fake."—*Kelly, 24.*

Applying the above suggestions will help you to enjoy good friendships. However, once you feel that you are ready to start a seri-

ous relationship with a particular girl, what should you do?

The Next Step

Take the initiative. If you think a friend whom you admire might make a good marriage mate, let her know you are interested in her. Be clear and forthright in declaring your feelings. Yes, it can be nerve-racking. You fear rejection. But your being willing to take the initiative is a sign that you have grown up.

What girls say: "I can't read minds. So if someone wanted to get to know me better, he would have to be honest and straightforward and just tell me."—*Nina, 23.*

"It could be an awkward transition if you've been friends for a while. But I'd respect someone if he simply said that he would like to get to know me as more than just a friend."—*Helen, 25.*

Respect the girl's decision. What if your friend says that she doesn't want a more serious relationship with you? Dignify her by believing that she knows her own heart and that her no means no. It betrays a lack of maturity if you make a pest of yourself. Really, if you ignore a girl's explicit rejection of your attention—even becoming provoked by her rebuff—are you really thinking of her interests or your own?—*1 Corinthians 13:11.*

What girls say: "It irritates me when I say a definite no to a boy but he keeps on trying."—*Colleen, 20.*

"I explained to one boy that I wasn't interested in him, but he kept pressuring me for my phone number. I wanted to be nice. After all, it probably wasn't easy for him to work up

Good manners aren't like a suit you wear to impress others but take off when you get home

* Names have been changed.

the nerve to express his feelings. But eventually I had to be very firm with him.”—Sarah, 23.

What Not to Do

Some young men feel that they have little trouble getting girls to like them. They may even compete with their peers to show who can grab the attention of the most girls. However, such competition is cruel and will earn you a bad reputation. (Proverbs 20:11) You can avoid that outcome if you do the following.

■ **Don't flirt.** A flirt uses flattering speech and provocative body language. He has no intention of pursuing an honorable romantic relationship. Such actions and attitudes ignore the Bible's counsel to treat “younger women as sisters with all chasteness.” (1 Timothy 5:2) Flirts make poor friends and worse marriage mates. Discerning girls know that.

What girls say: “I think it's very unattractive when someone flatters you but you know that he has said the same things to your friend just last month.”—Helen, 25.

“This cute boy once started flirting with me, talking mainly about himself. When another girl joined our group, he did the same with her. Then a third girl joined our group, and he used the same lines on her. It was ugly!”—Tina, 20.

■ **Don't toy with a girl's feelings.** Don't expect that friendship with a member of the opposite sex will operate according to the same rules as friendship with a member of the same sex. Why? Consider: If you remarked that a male friend looked good in his new suit or you regularly talked to that friend and confided in him, it is unlikely that he would think that you are romantically attracted to him. But if you compliment a girl on her appear-

ance or you regularly talk to her and confide in her, she may well think that you have a romantic interest in her.

What girls say: “I just don't think boys understand that they can't treat girls the same way that they treat their male friends.”—Sheryl, 26.

“A boy will get my phone number, and then I get a text message from him. So, . . . what does that mean? Sometimes you can have a text-messaging relationship and get emotionally attached, but how much can you say in a text message?”—Mallory, 19.

“I don't think a boy realizes how quickly a girl can become emotionally involved, especially if he is caring and easy to talk to. It's not that she's desperate. I just think that most girls want to fall in love and that they always have an eye out for ‘Mr. Right.’”—Alison, 25.

Be Realistic

It's unrealistic, even egotistical, to think that *all* girls will like you. But some will if you remember this: How you look on the outside is less important than what you are on the inside. It's hardly surprising that the Bible emphasizes the need to cultivate “the new personality.”—Ephesians 4:24.

Kate, 21, sums up the matter this way: “Boys think that to attract girls they have to dress a certain way or have a certain look. While this is true to some degree, I think that many girls are more attracted to positive personality traits.”*

* See chapter 3 of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 2, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

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

TO THINK ABOUT

- How can you show that you respect yourself?
- How can you show that you respect a girl's thoughts and feelings?

I Fled the Killing Fields and Found Life

AS TOLD BY SAM TAN

Fleeing our homeland along with about 2,000 other Cambodians, my family and I finally reached the river that borders Thailand. We managed to squeeze onto one of the small boats carrying people to safety. Just as the last boat pulled away, Khmer Rouge soldiers appeared and shot at us.

MUCH to our relief, we all made it safely across to Thailand. Everyone was happy except us, for we were without my father and my uncle, who had been taken away from us some months earlier. Mother just sat down and wept. But before I continue the story, let me give you some background.

My Early Life as a Buddhist

One of three siblings, I was born in Cambodia in 1960. When I was nine years old, my parents and I decided that I should enter Buddhist temple service, which was not uncommon for boys. A monk begins his day at approximately six in the morning, when he leaves the temple to go from house to house collecting food. I found it difficult to ask some householders for food, for they were obviously very poor. Thereafter, we young monks prepared the meals and served the older monks. We ate afterward.

At six in the evening, the older monks gathered for prayer, using a tongue that few, if any, understood. After two years, I became what we called a small monk and enjoyed some of the privileges of the older monks. I was also allowed to say prayers with them. All the while, I thought that Buddhism was the only religion in the world.

Escape From Cambodia

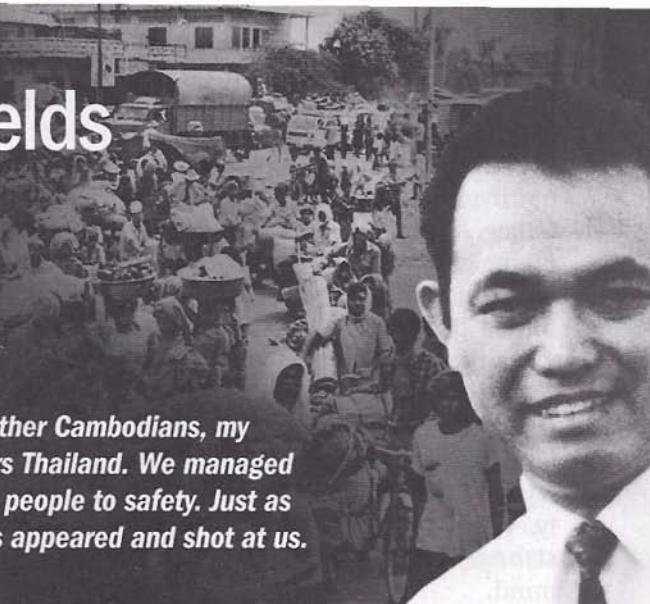
I was unsatisfied with temple life and returned home at the age of 14. Shortly thereafter, a political leader named Pol Pot came into power. His Khmer Rouge movement, which ruled from 1975 to 1979, forced everyone out of the cities and into the country as part of an effort to make Cambodia a Communist state. Our family too was relocated. Later, Pol Pot's men took my father and my uncle away. We never saw them again. In fact, under the Khmer Rouge, nearly 1.7 million Cambodians were executed on the so-called killing fields or died as a result of overwork, disease, or starvation.

These conditions prompted the 2,000 of us mentioned at the outset to embark on a dangerous three-day journey over mountainous terrain to the Thai border. We all arrived safely, including a baby boy born en route. Most of us carried money but ended up throwing it away because Cambodian currency was virtually worthless in Thailand at the time.

Life in Thailand

My family moved in with relatives in Thailand, and I found work as a commercial fisherman. Our boat often ventured into

Background: AFP/Getty Images



Cambodian waters, where there were more fish—as well as Khmer Rouge patrol boats. If caught, we would have lost our boat and our lives. In fact, we had two narrow escapes. Others, though, did not fare as well, including my neighbor, who was caught and decapitated. Although his death distressed me, I continued to fish off the coast of Cambodia—it was that or my family would have starved.

Out of concern for my family and myself, I decided to go into a refugee camp in Thailand, apply to immigrate to another country, and from there send money to my family. When I told my relatives about this, they strongly objected. But I had made up my mind.

English-speaking visitors I met in the refugee camp said they were Christians. That shattered my belief that Buddhism was the only religion. My newly adopted friend, Teng Hann, and I began to associate with the “Christians,” who showed us the Bible and gave us food. I lived in the camp for a year and applied to immigrate to New Zealand.

A New Life in New Zealand

My application was accepted in May 1979, and shortly thereafter I found myself in a refugee camp in Auckland. A kind sponsor arranged for me to go to the city of Wellington to work in a factory. Once there, I worked hard and sent money home as promised.

In my efforts to learn about Christianity, I began to attend two Protestant churches. Little, though, was said about the Bible. Because I wanted to pray properly, a friend taught me what is commonly called the Lord’s Prayer, or the Our Father. (Matthew 6:9-13) But nobody explained what the prayer actually meant. So just as I had done with Buddhist prayers, I uttered the words over and over without understanding what I was saying.

A Troubled Marriage

I married in 1981. About a year later, my wife and I were both baptized, the minister

sprinkling water on our heads. By then, I had two jobs, a fine home, and a comfortable lifestyle—things I never had in Cambodia. Yet, I was unhappy. Our marriage developed problems, and our attendance at church did not seem to help. Nor did my conduct, for I was gambling, smoking, drinking to excess, and seeing other women. My conscience bothered me, however, and I seriously doubted that I would qualify for heaven, where I was told all good people go when they die.

In 1987, I sponsored my mother and my sister so they could come to New Zealand, and they lived with us for a while. When they left, I did too, the three of us moving to Auckland.

At Last, I Learn the Bible

When leaving a friend’s place, I met two men who were going from house to house. One of them, Bill, asked me, “Where do you hope to go when you die?” “To heaven,” I replied. He then showed me from the Bible that only 144,000 go to heaven, where they will rule as kings over the earth. He also told me that the earth will be inhabited by millions of God-fearing humans and transformed into a paradise. (Revelation 5:9, 10; 14:1, 4; 21:3, 4) Initially, this teaching angered me, for it contradicted what I had been taught earlier. Deep down, though, I was impressed at seeing how well the men knew the Bible and how calm they remained. In fact, I regretted not having asked them for the name of their religion.

A few weeks later, I visited a friend whose children were having a Bible study with a couple named Dick and Stephanie. Their study aid was a brochure entitled *Enjoy Life on Earth Forever!* I began to read it and found that it made a lot of sense. I also learned that the couple were Jehovah’s Witnesses. Then it dawned on me that the two men I had recently met must have been Witnesses too, for what they said harmonized with the brochure.

Keen to learn more, I invited Dick and Stephanie to my home, where I inundated them with Bible questions. Later, Stephanie asked me if I knew God's name. She showed me Psalm 83:18, which reads: "That people may know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth." That scripture touched my heart, and I began to have a regular Bible study. La, the Laotian girl with whom I was then living, joined in the study.

In the meantime, I also sponsored my brother and his wife. After arriving in New Zealand, they too began to study the Bible with the Witnesses.

Not long thereafter, La and I had to stop our study because we moved to Australia for work. Although we were focused on making money, we began to miss our Bible studies. So one night we earnestly petitioned Jehovah to lead us to his people.

Our Prayer Is Answered

A few days later, I arrived home from shopping to find two Witnesses at my door. I silently thanked Jehovah, and La and I recommenced our study. We also began to attend Christian meetings at the local Kingdom Hall. However, I soon realized that to please God I had to make a number of changes in my life. As a result, I gave up my bad habits and cut my long hair. My old acquaintances teased me, but I managed to control my temper. I also had to address my marital situation, for La and I were not married, and my wife and I were not legally divorced. So in 1990, La and I returned to New Zealand.

Immediately, we telephoned Dick and Stephanie. "Sam, I thought we had lost you!" exclaimed Stephanie. We resumed our



Bible study with them, and as soon as my divorce came through, La and I were married with a clean conscience before God. We remained in New Zealand, where we were baptized in symbol of our dedication to God. Eager to share what I had learned, I had the privilege of studying the Bible with a number of Cambodian and Thai people living in Auckland and nearby.

Back to Australia

In May 1996, La and I returned to Australia and settled in Cairns, north Queensland. Here, I have the privilege of coordinating the preaching work among Cambodian, Laotian, and Thai people in the area.

I could never thank Jehovah enough for his blessings, which include my wonderful wife and our three boys—Daniel, Michael, and Benjamin. I am also deeply thankful that my mother, my sister, my brother, my mother-in-law, and Teng Hann, my friend in the Thai camp, also accepted Bible truth. My family and I still mourn the loss of my father and my uncle, but we are not overly sad. We know that in the resurrection God will so thoroughly undo past injustices that such things "will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart."—Isaiah 65:17; Acts 24:15.

A few years ago at an assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses, I saw a familiar face. It was Bill, who had called on me many years earlier. "Do you remember me?" I asked.

"Yes!" he replied. "I met you in New Zealand years ago and told you that only 144,000 go to heaven." After all those years, Bill remembered me. We hugged and reminisced, now as brothers.

WAS IT DESIGNED?

The Cyphochilus Beetle's Shell



■ The shell of the *Cyphochilus* beetle has overlapping scales that are ten times thinner than a human hair. "When I put them under the electron microscope, it was like another world had opened up," says Dr. Pete Vukusic of Exeter University in Britain. "It was totally remarkable."

Consider: What Vukusic found was the explanation for the beetle's bright-white color, which has nothing to do with pigment. The secret is in the size of the filaments of which the scales are made and the spacing between the filaments. This structure scatters light in an unusually efficient manner. "Industrial mineral coatings, such as those used on high quality paper, plastics and in some paints, would need to be twice as thick to be as white," reports *Science Daily*.

Scientists believe that the shell of the *Cyphochilus* helps it blend in with a white fungus where it is often found. But experts are more interested in how the secret of this tiny beetle's color can benefit humans—for example, in the development of ultrawhite synthetic materials. Vukusic says that such things as the paper we write on, the color of our teeth, and even the brightness of lights "will be significantly improved if technology can take and apply the design ideas we learn from this beetle."

What do you think? Did the white shell of the *Cyphochilus* beetle come about by chance? Or was it designed?

The "Cyphochilus" beetle is no bigger than your fingertip (photo enlarged)

Department of Entomology, Kasetsart University, Bangkok



THE harpy eagle

RAPTOR OF THE RAIN FOREST

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN ECUADOR

■ Early explorers in South America must have been stunned at the sight of this huge bird. They were so impressed that they named it after a frightful half-avian, half-woman monster of Greek mythology—the harpy.

Today the striking appearance of the harpy eagle still inspires wonder. Standing three feet tall and having a wingspan of up to seven feet, this bird of the Central and South American rain forests is one of the biggest and most powerful eagles in the world. Females are the larger sex and can weigh in at 20 pounds. Commensurate with their size, harpy eagles are armed with powerful talons that grow to about five inches in length, twice that of bald-eagle talons. Moreover, according to *National Geographic Today*, harpy-eagle talons are so strong that they can crush “the bones of the sloths, monkeys, and other prey the eagle snatches from the rain forest canopy, often killing its victims instantly.” Despite the harpy eagle’s great size and formidable weaponry, however, it flies so quietly that it may not even be noticed as it passes overhead.



Preparing to tag an eagle

Pete Oxford/Minden Pictures

A Bird in Trouble

Although humans have little to fear from the harpy eagle, the bird has cause to fear man. Poaching and the destruction of its forest habitat have put the bird on the endangered species list, and sightings in the wild are now rare. In an effort to save the harpy eagle, Panama declared it the national bird, and convicted poachers there face stiff sentences.

Harpy-eagle conservation is under way in Ecuador too. In an interview with *Awake!*, veterinarian Dr. Yara Pesantes of the Guayaquil Historic Park explained that harpy eagles do not become sexually mature until they reach four or five years of age. Even then, they breed in two-year cycles, females laying just one or two eggs at a time. Slow reproduction makes conservation a challenge. But the park’s captive-breeding program has already produced a healthy chick, said Dr. Pesantes.

Soon, however, conservation will no longer be an issue. How so? The Creator, Jehovah God, will take full control of earth’s affairs and prove beyond all doubt that he did not create our planet and its amazing creatures in vain.

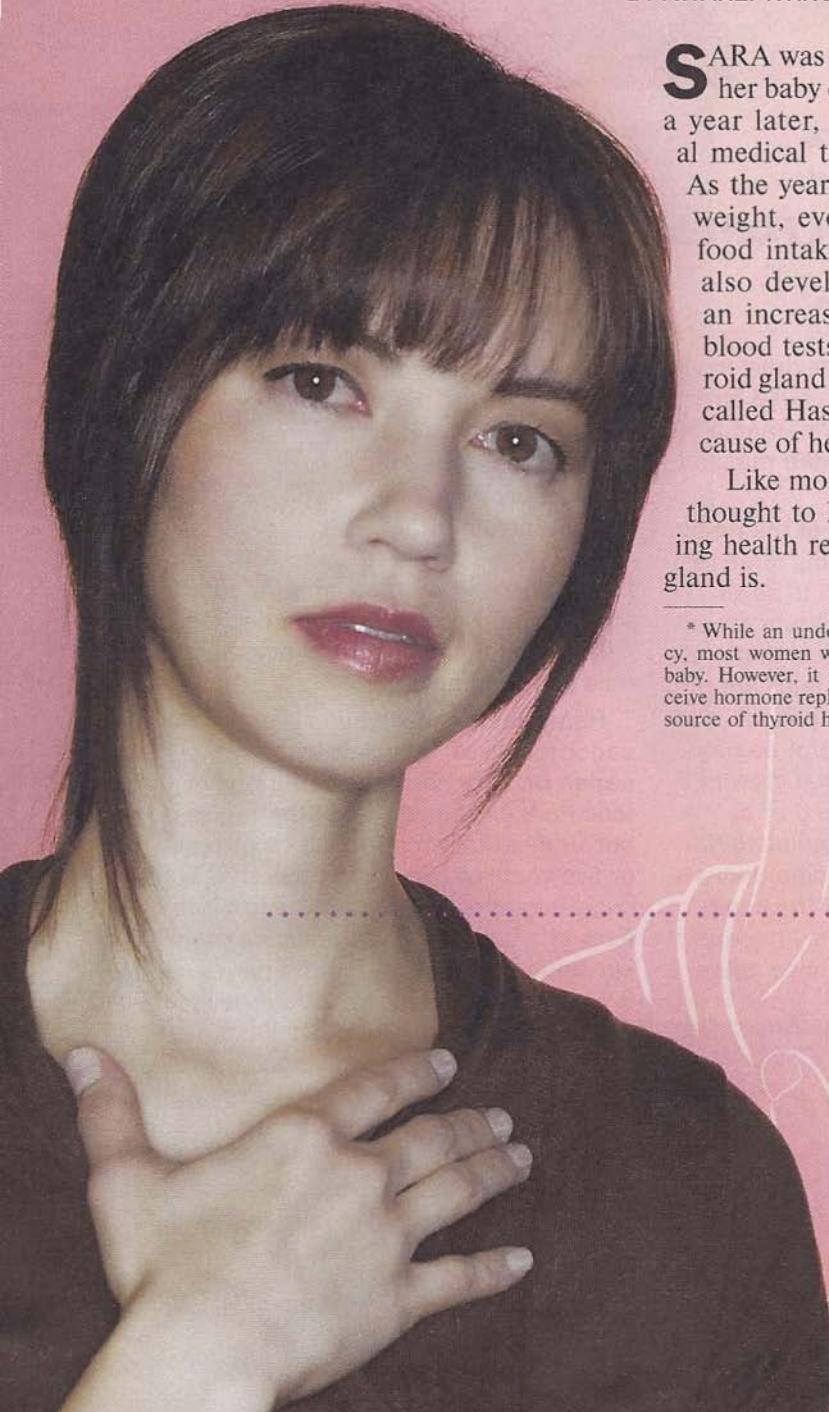
—Psalm 104:5; Isaiah 45:18.



▲ Tui De Roy/Roving Tortoise Photos

How Is Your *Thyroid?*

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BRAZIL



SARA was deeply grieved over the loss of her baby during her first trimester. About a year later, she lost another baby. Several medical tests failed to reveal the cause. As the years went by, Sara started to gain weight, even though she monitored her food intake and exercised regularly. She also developed cramps in her legs and an increased sensitivity to cold. Finally, blood tests and an ultrasound of her thyroid gland revealed that Sara had a disease called Hashimoto's thyroiditis, a possible cause of her miscarriages.*

Like most people, Sara had rarely given thought to her thyroid. But her deteriorating health revealed just how important that gland is.

* While an underactive thyroid may complicate a pregnancy, most women with thyroid disease give birth to a healthy baby. However, it is extremely important that the mother receive hormone replacement therapy, for initially she is the only source of thyroid hormone for her unborn child.

The Thyroid Gland

The thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland situated in the front of the neck just below the Adam's apple. The thyroid has two lobes that wrap around the trachea, or windpipe, and the whole gland weighs a little under an ounce. It is part of the body's endocrine system, a group of organs and tissues that produce, store, and secrete hormones—chemical messengers—directly into the bloodstream.

The thyroid consists of numerous tiny follicles, or sacs, filled with a viscous fluid that holds the thyroid hormones. These hormones contain a high concentration of iodine. In fact, nearly 80 percent of the iodine in the body is in the thyroid. A dietary deficiency of this element may lead to an enlarged thyroid, or goiter. In young children, a lack of iodine can inhibit hormone production and thereby retard physical, mental, and sexual development—a condition called cretinism.

Thyroid Hormones at Work

The thyroid hormones are designated T3, RT3 (Reverse T3), and T4.* Both T3 and RT3 are derived from T4, the conversion largely occurring outside the thyroid in body tissues. Hence, when the body requires more thyroid hormones, the gland secretes T4 into the bloodstream, and from there the T4 and its derivatives can affect all body cells.

Just as the accelerator controls the speed of a car's engine, thyroid hormones regulate the rate of the body's metabolism—chemical activity in cells that produces energy and new tissue. Thus, thyroid hormones promote normal tissue growth and repair, affect cardiac rate, and maintain the production of energy for muscles and body heat.

Thyroid hormones also have other important functions. For example, they help the liv-

* T3 is *triodothyronine* and T4, *thyroxine*. The digits 3 and 4 refer to the number of iodine atoms attached to the hormone. The thyroid also produces *calcitonin*, a hormone that helps to regulate calcium levels in the blood.

er remove excess triglycerides and low-density lipoproteins, called bad cholesterol, from the bloodstream. The cholesterol is transferred to the bile and from there to the feces. On the other hand, too little thyroid hormone can cause an increase in bad cholesterol and a decrease in high-density lipoproteins, or good cholesterol.

Just as the accelerator controls the speed of a car's engine, thyroid hormones regulate the rate of the body's metabolism

In the gastrointestinal tract, thyroid hormones speed up the secretion of digestive juices and also increase the rhythmic waves of muscular contractions (peristalsis). Thus, too much thyroid hormone can cause frequent bowel movements, and too little, constipation.

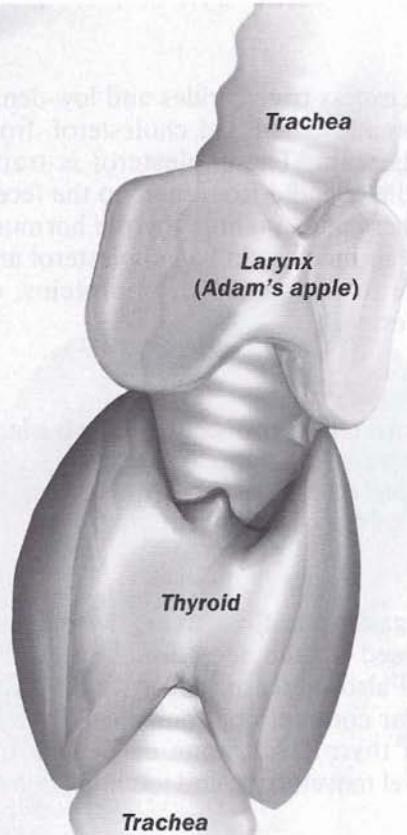
What Controls the Thyroid?

Thyroid regulation begins in the area of the brain called the hypothalamus. When the hypothalamus detects a need for thyroid hormones, it signals the nearby pituitary gland, situated at the base of the brain above the roof of the mouth. The pituitary, in turn, releases thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) into the bloodstream to signal the thyroid to get busy.

Hence, by measuring blood levels of both TSH and thyroid hormones, doctors can diagnose thyroid function and health. This is important, for things can go awry.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- Abortion—Why Is It Such an Issue?
- Should You Be Afraid of the Dead?
- Catholic Youth Urged to Bear Witness



When the Thyroid Is Not Well

Thyroid impairment may be the result of a diet poor in iodine, physical or mental stress, genetic defects, infections, disease (usually autoimmune disease), or side effects of medications prescribed for various illnesses.* An enlarged thyroid, or goiter, may be an indication of disease. The enlargement may be diffuse or in the form of nodules. Although generally benign, goiters should always receive medical attention, for they might indicate a more serious condition, such as cancer.[#]

Usually, ailing thyroids produce either too much or too little hormone. Overproduction is called *hyperthyroidism*; underproduction, *hypothyroidism*. Thyroid disease can develop gradually and imperceptibly, so one may have it for years and not know it. As with most illnesses, the outcome may be better if the diagnosis is made early.

The more common thyroid ailments are Hashimoto's thyroiditis and Graves' disease.

* *Awake!* does not endorse any particular therapy. If you suspect that you have thyroid problems, consult a physician who has experience in the prevention and management of thyroid disease.

[#] The risk of cancer is greater for those who have had head and neck radiotherapy or who have a personal history of cancer or relatives with thyroid cancer.

COMMON SYMPTOMS

Hyperthyroidism: Excessive agitation, unexplained weight loss, rapid heartbeat, increase in bowel movements, irregular menstrual periods, irritability, anxiety, mood swings, protruding eyeballs, muscular weakness, insomnia, and thin, brittle hair.*

Hypothyroidism: Physical and mental sluggishness, unexplained weight gain, hair loss, constipation, exaggerated sensitivity to cold, irregular menstrual periods, depression, voice change (hoarseness or low voice), memory loss, and tiredness.

* Some symptoms may be caused by other underlying conditions, so be sure to consult your doctor if you feel unwell.

AN IMPORTANT TEST FOR NEWBORNS

A few drops of blood taken from a newborn can show whether the baby has a thyroid abnormality. If blood tests reveal a problem, physicians can take corrective measures. Lacking sufficient thyroid hormones, a child may become physically and mentally retarded, a condition called *cretinism*. Hence, babies are usually tested just days after birth.

Both are autoimmune disorders—so named because the immune system attacks normal body cells, viewing them as foreign tissue. Hashimoto's thyroiditis is six times more

Thyroid disease can develop gradually and imperceptibly, so one may have it for years and not know it

common in women than in men, and it usually results in hypothyroidism. Graves' disease is eight times more common in women and generally causes hyperthyroidism.

Opinions vary as to how often people should be tested for thyroid disease, although screening for newborns is generally felt to be important. (See the box "An Important Test for Newborns.") If a medical examination suggests an underactive thyroid, tests for antibodies that attack the gland are usually ordered. On the other hand, if the test indicates an overactive thyroid, a thyroid scan is usually obtained, provided that the patient is not pregnant or breast-feeding. The presence of thyroid nodules may call for a biopsy to rule out malignancy.

When Treatment Is Necessary

Medication can ease the symptoms of hyperthyroidism, such as accelerated heartbeat, muscle tremors, and anxiety. Other treatment involves the destruction of thyroid cells so that the gland produces less hormones. And sometimes the thyroid may have to be surgically removed.

For patients with hypothyroidism or who have had their thyroid removed, doctors usually prescribe daily doses of the hormone T4. To get the dosage right, physicians monitor patients undergoing therapy. Thyroid cancer can be treated in a number of ways, including drugs, surgery, chemotherapy, and radioactive iodine.

Sara is successfully undergoing hormone replacement therapy with T4, and a nutritionist has helped her to plan a balanced diet. The results have been positive. As people like Sara have learned, the thyroid may be small in size, but it is big in importance. So take good care of yours—eat wholesome food that includes sufficient iodine, try to avoid chronic stress, and do your best to maintain overall good health.

ARE YOUR DIETARY NEEDS BEING MET?

Proper nutrition can help to prevent thyroid problems. For example, does your food include sufficient iodine, which is essential for the production of thyroid hormones? Saltwater fish and other seafood are excellent sources of this vital element. The amount of iodine in

vegetables and meats varies according to the chemical composition of the local soil. To compensate for a lack of the element in food, some governments require that iodine be added to table salt.

Also important to the thyroid is selenium. This trace element is part of the

enzyme that transforms the hormone T4 into T3. Again, the concentration of selenium in vegetables, meats, and milk depends on the soil. Seafood and Brazil nuts are rich sources of selenium. Of course, if you suspect that you have a thyroid problem, consult your doctor; do not try to treat it yourself.

Baggage That Goes Astray

Loss of baggage during air travel is anything but infrequent. The *International Herald Tribune* reports that in 2007, "42 million bags went missing, 25 percent more than in 2006." Most of those bags were delivered to their owners within 48 hours, but 3 percent of them, "one bag for every 2,000 travelers, were never found." Lost baggage cost airlines \$3.8 billion in 2007. Among the causes are "congestion due to growing passenger numbers, tight aircraft turnaround times," baggage mishandling, and tagging errors.

Cohabiting Catholics

A French study points to "the decline of religion" as a reason for the change in people's lives and values, whichever faith is considered, says the magazine *Population & Sociétés*. For example, some 88 percent of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 in France claim to be Catholic, but 80 percent of these never go to church other than for weddings, baptisms, or funerals. The weakening of traditional values is reflected in family life. Forty years ago, 1 couple in 10 lived together before marriage. Today, the figure is 9 out of 10. "Among the most regular Catholic churchgoers, 75 percent lived together before their marriage," the study revealed.

■ "Some 160,000 exhibits are missing from museums throughout Russia."
—RIA NOVOSTI, RUSSIA.

■ "NASA's Phoenix Mars Lander has detected snow falling from Martian clouds." —"NASA MISSION NEWS," U.S.A.

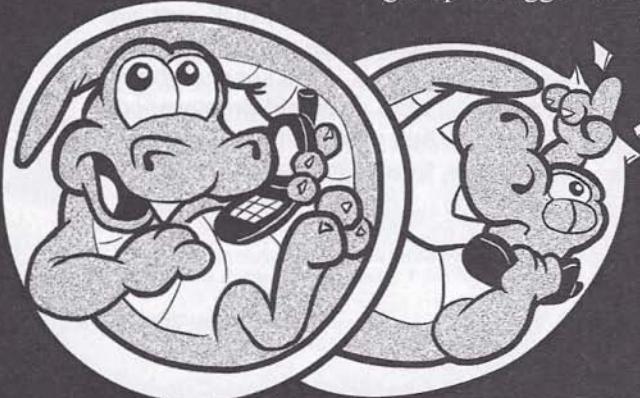
■ "65 percent of the drivers and passengers who lose their lives on Greek roads do not use their seat belts or crash helmets." —EIKONES, GREECE.

**Epidemic of Suicides
Among Indian Farmers**

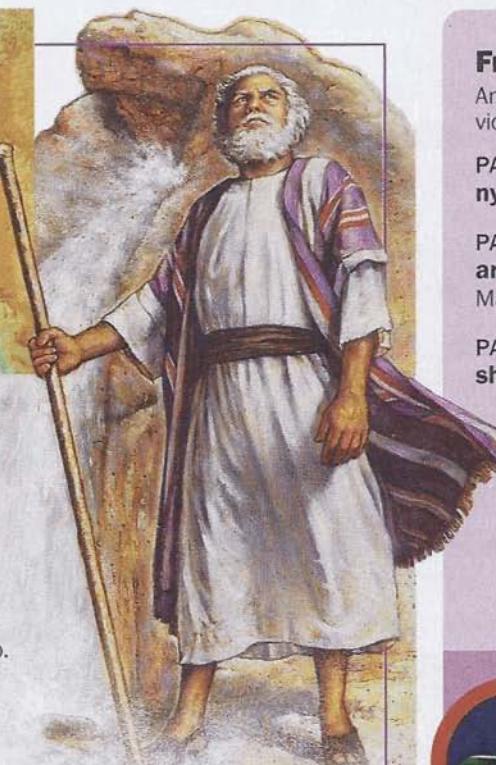
In India, since 2002, more than 17,000 farmers each year have taken their own life, often by ingesting pesticides, reports the newspaper *The Hindu*. Among the difficulties farmers face are drought, plummeting crop prices, rising costs of farm cultivation, and problems in obtaining bank credit. As a result, many turn to moneylenders, who charge exorbitant interest rates, leaving borrowers heavily in debt. To cover debts, some farmers even revert to selling their body organs. However, when that fails or nothing else seems to work, thousands turn to the only other escape they know—suicide.

Nile Crocodiles Communicate Before Hatching

"Baby crocodiles talk to each other while still in the egg," synchronizing hatching, reports *The Times* of London. Pre-hatch calls of Nile crocodiles in their eggs were recorded. The calls were then played to one group of eggs. The juveniles in those eggs answered the calls



and made their eggs move more frequently than those not exposed to the calls. "Those hearing the noises of other unborn crocodiles synchronised their hatching to within ten minutes of each other," says the report. Eggs that were either kept in silence or exposed to random noise failed to fine-tune their hatching.



A detailed illustration of Moses standing in a rocky, arid landscape. He is wearing a white tunic and a purple sash, and holds a long wooden staff. He is shown in the middle of striking a large rock with his staff, with water gushing out from the impact. In the background, a map of the Sinai Peninsula shows the locations of Kadesh, Rephidim, and Mt. Sinai (Horeb).

Where Did It Happen?

1. What was the location of the crag that Moses struck to make water flow for the Israelites?

CLUE: Read Numbers 20:1-8. Circle your answer on the map.

■ What did Moses and Aaron do wrong, and what punishment did they receive?

CLUE: Read Numbers 20:9-13; Psalm 106:32, 33.

FOR DISCUSSION: Why, do you think, did Moses become angry with the Israelites? Why is it important that you control your anger?

What Do You Know About the Prophets?

Read Amos 7:10-17, and then answer the following questions.

2.....
Of what crime does Amaziah the priest accuse Amos?

3.....
What are two qualities that Amos displays when answering the mockery of Amaziah?

FOR DISCUSSION: Should you stop speaking about Jehovah because some people make fun of you? Why, or why not?

■ Answers on page 11

Map: Based on maps copyrighted by Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est. and Survey of Israel

From This Issue

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

PAGE 7 What will bad company do? 1 Corinthians 15:_____

PAGE 8 Happy are those who are conscious of what? Matthew 5:_____

PAGE 13 Our manner of life should be free of what? Hebrews 13:_____

PAGE 18 What is love not? 1 Corinthians 13:_____



Children's Picture Search

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



■ What does the Bible mean when it speaks about the end of the world, or the present system of things? A global nuclear exchange that could wipe out all human life? Or is it referring to some natural phenomenon, such as an asteroid impact? Interestingly, the Bible says that “a great crowd” of humans will survive the world’s end. (Revelation 7:9, 10, 14) Who will they be? Can you be among them?

Those important questions will be answered in the public talk “How Can You Survive the End of the World?” It will be delivered at the “KEEP ON THE WATCH!” conventions of Jehovah’s Witnesses, beginning in May in the United States and continuing around the world. You are cordially invited to attend the convention nearest you. Contact Jehovah’s Witnesses in your area, or write to the publishers of this magazine. The March 1, 2009, issue of our companion magazine, *The Watchtower*, lists convention locations in the United States.

“HOW CAN YOU SURVIVE THE END OF THE WORLD?”

