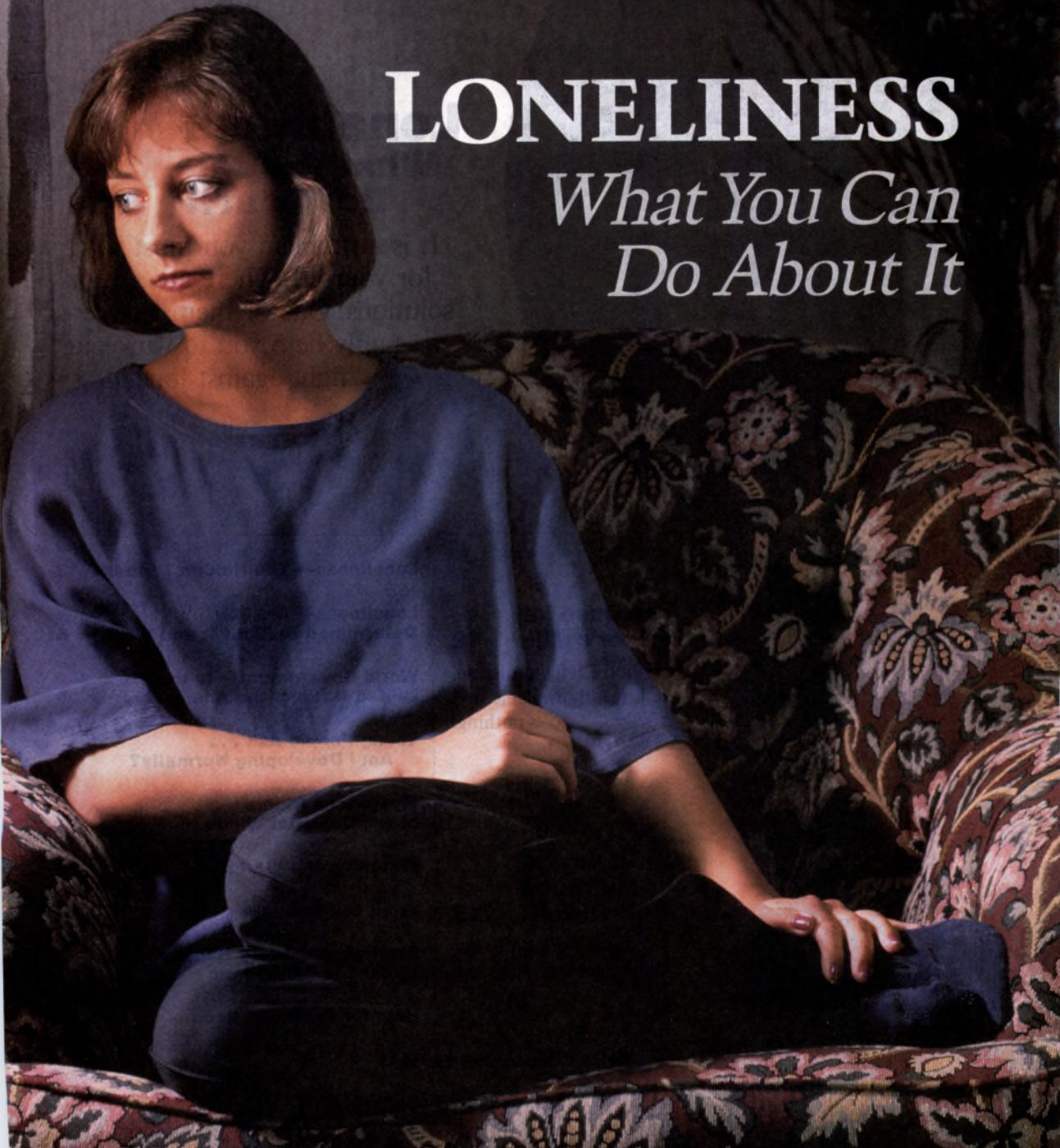


Awake!

September 22, 1993

LONELINESS

*What You Can
Do About It*





Loneliness What You Can Do About It 3-11

It is a problem you must solve for yourself. There are several solutions. One of them will certainly help you to win your fight against loneliness.



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The best food—it fights disease, is readily available, and costs nothing.



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LONELINESS

The Hidden Torment

CAN you pick them out in a crowd? Does it show on their faces? When they greet you, will their smiles cover it? Can you tell by their walk, their posture? Notice the elderly man sitting alone on the park bench or the young woman by herself in the art museum—are they tormented by loneliness? Study the three generations represented by mother, daughter, and grandchild strolling in the mall. They seem happy enough, but can you be sure? Consider your workmates. You may know them as happy people with caring families and with income adequate to support them comfortably. Yet, can it be that one of them could truly say, "I am lonely"? And what are the chances of that happy, vibrant teenager being lonely? The answers to these questions may surprise you.

"Lonely" is defined by *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* as "producing a feeling of bleakness or desolation." It is a feeling of lacking something, of an emptiness inside, and it is not always discernible in someone's outward appearance. One researcher says: "In our society, loneliness is a secret we keep—sometimes from ourselves. Loneliness has a stigma attached to it. There's an assumption out there that if you're lonely, it must be your own fault. Otherwise, you'd certainly have

lots of friends, right?" Sometimes this can be true, especially if we expect or demand more of others than is reasonable.

Lonely Women

Experts seem to agree that women—especially married women—of all ages expect more from life than men. Understandably, widows, divorced women, and older single women are sometimes lonely. But what about seemingly happily married women with families? Consider, for example, this lament from a 40-year-old schoolteacher: "I have no time for friends; I miss that desperately. But I feel funny even saying that. How can I complain about being lonely . . . ? After all, I have a wonderful marriage, terrific kids, a beautiful home, a job I love. I'm proud of what I've accomplished. But something's missing."

Although women may truly love their husbands and be devoted to them and have a like response from their mates, such love does not necessarily fulfill all their needs for companionship. The schoolteacher quoted above explains: "Even though my husband is my best friend, it doesn't make up for not having good women friends. Men may hear, but women listen. My husband doesn't want to know how overwhelmed I am. He wants to jump right in

and solve the problem. But my women friends will let me talk about it. And sometimes I just need to talk."

When a woman loses a loved one through death or divorce, her emotional upset may be profound. Loneliness sets in. Not only must the grieving widow or divorcée turn to her family and friends for support but she must also turn inward to her own strength to adjust to the new reality. Although her loss will always be a part of her life, she must realize that it cannot be allowed to become an obstacle to her getting on with her life. Experts have found that those with stronger personalities may often overcome their loneliness faster than others.

There is a difference of opinion over which one has the greater pain—the widowed or the divorced. The magazine *50 Plus* reported: "Whenever we invite divorced people into our widowed support groups, the two sides wind up arguing about whose pain is greater. The widowed person says, 'Hey, at least your spouse is alive,' while the divorced person will say, 'Hey, you haven't been personally rejected the way I was. You don't have the sense of failure.'"

Lonely Men

When it comes to loneliness, men cannot boast of being the stronger of the two sexes. "Men handle things more physically than emotionally," said Anne Studner, program specialist for the Widowed Persons Service of

AARP (American Association of Retired Persons). "Women will tell the story 10 trillion times, but men will attempt to replace their wives rather than work through grief." Male counselors may spend considerable time with bereaved men before they slowly begin to discuss their emotional feelings.

Experts have found that, unlike women, men seek the companionship of a woman to confide in rather than a man. Dr. Ladd Wheeler, an expert on loneliness at the University of Rochester, reveals that males do not confide in each other deeply enough to feel emotionally connected. "The need to escape an overwhelming emotional isolation after the loss of a wife, and the subsequent reaching out to a female friend, may also help to explain why men typically remarry much more quickly after widowhood or divorce than women."—*50 Plus* magazine.

The Lonely Young

There are many reasons why children and young adults become lonely—often similar to those affecting older people. Moving to a new location and leaving friends behind; not being liked by classmates in a new school; religious and ethnic backgrounds; divorce in the home; the feeling of not being loved by parents; being rejected by members of the opposite sex—such things loom large as contributing factors in loneliness.

The very young need someone to share their play activities with. They need emotion-

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al support and understanding. They need affection and confirmation of their own worth. They must know that others will be loyal and trustworthy. When loved, they feel secure and also learn to show love to others. These social supports may come from different sources—family, peers, and even pets.

Both male and female students, from the lowest grade to college, often suffer the same degree of loneliness, many times brought on by nonacceptance by their peers. "I feel bad because I am alone and I don't talk," lamented one female high school student. "I just listen to the teacher, do my work and that's it. When there is free time, I just sit there and draw or something. Everybody is talking to each other, but nobody talks to me. . . . I know I can't hide forever. For now, that's all I have."

The blame, however, cannot always be rightly attributed to other people's aloofness or snobbery. A person may have behavioral or social difficulties, such as being extremely shy, temperamental, and overly impulsive and having difficulty getting along with his or her peers. A disability can also play a devastating role in causing youths of all ages to suffer loneliness unless such ones are strong and outgoing.

The Need to Help Yourself

Health educator Dolores Delcoma of Cal State Fullerton put her finger on a key truth when she commented on a person's attempt

to fight loneliness: "The effort needs to come from inside him. He eventually has to realize his problem because no matter how much people try to help, the only person who can help him break out of his shell is himself."

Those who make adjustment difficult for themselves are identified by Dr. Warren Jones as loneliness-prone personalities: "These people unwittingly do things that prevent them from feeling close to others. Some don't know

"Lonely people don't feel very good about themselves"

how to listen, and they monopolize the conversation. They tend to be more critical of others and themselves; they ask fewer questions, and often wreck a friendship by saying mean or obnoxious things."

In addition to such ones, who basically lack self-esteem, there are others who lack the social skills needed to relate to others. Concerning them, therapist Evelyn Moschetta says: "Lonely people don't feel very good about themselves. Anticipating rejection, they don't bother to reach out."

Contrary to conventional wisdom, however, researchers have found that elderly women and men suffer from loneliness less than younger people do. They are not sure why. They have also found that when loneliness is

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suffered by the elderly, it is due more to a lack of friends than to a lack of kin. "It's not that family relations are unimportant to older people. They turn to family for assistance. But they can have *lots* of family to assist them, and still feel terribly lonely if they don't have friends."

The Need for Close Friends

For people of all ages, close friends sometimes fill a need beyond that which family and relatives can supply. People need a friend, a close friend, one they may confide in or reveal themselves to without fear of being hurt. Without such a friend, loneliness may increase. It is of such a friend that the American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: 'A friend is one before whom I can think aloud.' Such a person is a confidant to whom you can reveal yourself completely without fear of betrayal or anxiety that your confidences will be used to disparage you or cause others to

laugh at you. Some whom you may have considered loyal companions may not have always lived up to your trust, but there is "a friend" who does "not reveal the confidential talk of another," who is "sticking closer than a brother."—Proverbs 18:24; 25:9.

There are those who like to pose as being tough and needing no one. They claim to be independent and self-sufficient. Nevertheless, they often collect in groups of so-called toughies. Children have clubs, build clubhouses, form gangs; older youths have motorcycle gangs; criminals have cronies who will not squeal on them; those with drinking problems join Alcoholics Anonymous; those struggling with obesity join Weight Watchers. People are gregarious; they group together for support. Even in their misery, they love company. And unanimously they hate loneliness. What can be done about loneliness?

LONELINESS

Are You Determined to Fight It and Win?

ARE you lonely? There are occasions in life when it is natural to feel lonely, whether you are married or single, whether you are a man or a woman, whether you are old or young. Realize also that being alone does not necessarily cause

loneliness. A lone scholar absorbed in his research does not feel lonely. A lone artist creating a painting has no room to feel lonely. They welcome a solitary moment, and solitude is then their best friend.

The feeling of true loneliness builds up

from the very inside of us rather than from the outside. Loneliness may be triggered by some saddening event—a death, a divorce, a lost job, some tragedy. When we light our inner world brightly, that loneliness can be made to diminish, perhaps even disappear in time, and the loss that afflicted us can be accommodated, absorbed.

Feelings arise from your thoughts. After a loss has been absorbed and the feelings it produced have been allowed to recede into the background, it is time to give prominence to upbuilding thoughts that allow you to get on with your life.

Bestir yourself. Take yourself in hand. There are positive things to be done. So be outgoing. Phone someone. Write a letter. Read a book. Invite people over. Have an interchange of ideas. To have friends, you must show yourself friendly. Reach into yourself to reach out to others. Show little kindnesses. Share some comforting spiritual tidbit with them. You will find Jesus' words to be true: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." You will realize another proverbial truth: "The one freely watering others will himself also be freely watered."—Acts 20:35; Proverbs 11:25.

It Is Up To You

Difficult to do? Easier said than done? Everything worthwhile is easier said than done. That's what makes the doing of it satisfying to you. You have to put forth special effort. A part of you goes into the giving, and the bright light inside of you grows brighter. It is up to you to put forth the effort to rout the loneliness that seeks to dominate you. A writer in *Modern Maturity* magazine said: "No one else is responsible for your loneliness, but *you* can do something about it. You can open up your life with a single friendship. You can forgive someone whom you feel has

hurt you. You can write a letter. You can make a phone call. Only you can turn your life around. There is no other human being who can do it for you." He quoted a letter that he had received that "hits the nail squarely on the head: 'I tell people it's up to themselves to keep their lives from being lonely or unfulfilled. Get with it!'"

Your helpful friends need not be limited to those who are human beings. A doctor of veterinary medicine said: "The greatest problems confronting the elderly aren't physical ailments, but the loneliness and rejection they experience. By providing . . . companionship, animal pets (including dogs) give purpose and meaning at a time when the elderly often are alienated from society." *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine said: "Pets help treat the emotionally disturbed; motivate the physically ill, the handicapped, and the disabled; and revitalize the lonely and elderly." Another magazine article said of people newly cultivating an interest in pets: "Patients' anxieties lessened and they could express love to their pets without fear of rejection. Later they opened up with people, first talking about the care of their pets. They began to feel a responsibility. They felt needed, something depended on them."

Too often the one suffering from loneliness will not rally himself sufficiently to help himself, to lift himself out of the depths of his despair. There is an inertia, an unwillingness, to exert himself to that extent, but if he is to get to the bottom of his loneliness, it must be done. Dr. James Lynch wrote of people's resistance to advice they find hard to take: "The human condition is such that we generally resist hearing, or at least resist incorporating into our behavior, information we do not like." A person may want to escape his loneliness, but he may not be willing to muster up the willpower needed to effect the release.

Act as You Want to Feel

To overcome a deep depression, one needs to persist in pursuing real cheerfulness and kindness. (Compare Acts 20:35.) This calls for breaking through the entrenched mood of loneliness by acting just the opposite of its deadening lethargy. Act happy, dance around, sing a jolly song. Do anything reflecting happiness. Exaggerate it, overdo it, crowd out the morose mood with happy thoughts. Such as?

Such as those at Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things."

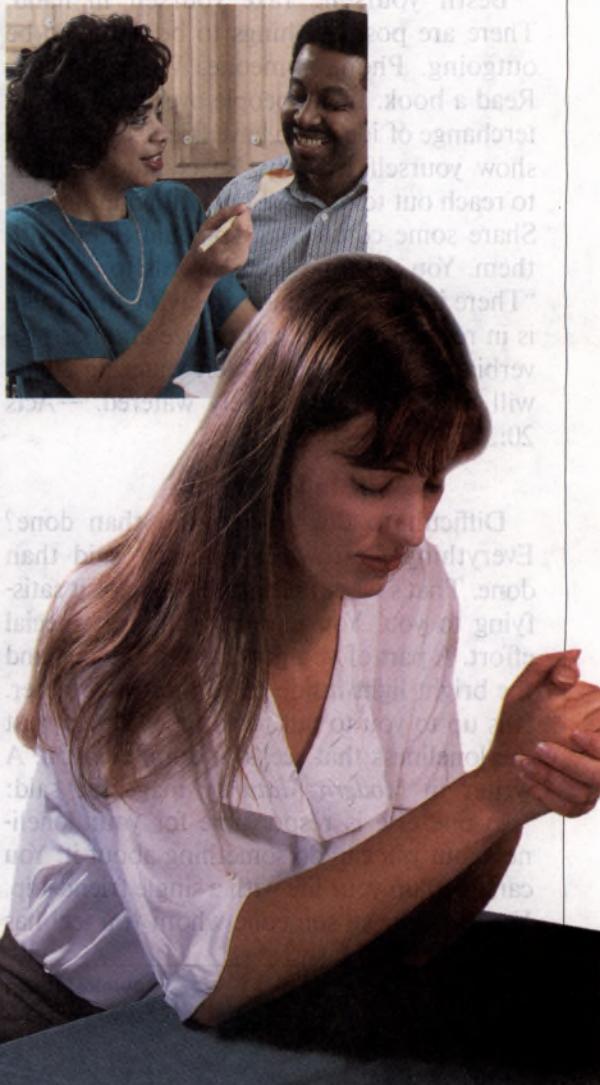
The need is to put some meaning into your life. If you feel that your life has some meaning, you will be energized to respond to that and seek to fulfill it. You will not likely fall into a feeling of despondent loneliness. This is interestingly shown in Viktor Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*. He discusses it relative to prisoners in Hitler's concentration camps. Those who had no sense of meaning in their lives succumbed to loneliness and lacked the will to live. But "the consciousness of one's inner value is anchored in higher, more spiritual things, and cannot be shaken by camp life." He continued: "Suffering ceases to be suffering in some way at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of sacrifice. . . . Man's main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain, but rather to see a meaning in his life. That is why man is even ready to suffer, on the condition, to be sure, that his suffering has a meaning."

The Ultimate Relationship You Need

The way to achieve a truly spiritual outlook is to come all the way to God and his

Word, the Bible. Faith in God and earnest prayer to him can give our lives meaning. Then, even if human relationships crumble, we are not alone, not condemned to loneliness. As Frankl said, suffering with meaning is bearable, even a source of joy. One observer of human nature said: "A martyr at the stake may have happiness that a king on his throne might envy."

The apostles of Christ felt joy from Jehovah when persecuted by men; such suffering held great meaning for them. "Happy are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, since the kingdom of the



heavens belongs to them. Happy are you when people reproach you and persecute you and lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against you for my sake. Rejoice and leap for joy, since your reward is great in the heavens; for in that way they persecuted the prophets prior to you." (Matthew 5:10-12) A similar response is recorded at Acts 5:40, 41: "They summoned the apostles, flogged them, and ordered them to stop speaking upon the basis of Jesus' name, and let them go. These, therefore, went their way from before the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted

worthy to be dishonored in behalf of his name."

Where You Tend a Rose, a Thistle Cannot Grow

Fill the soil of your mind with seeds of beauty and positive purpose; leave no room for the seeds of negative despair and bleak loneliness. (Compare Colossians 3:2; 4:2.) Difficult to do? Under certain circumstances, seemingly impossible. A poet noted: "Where you tend a rose, . . . a thistle cannot grow," which again requires positive effort and determined exercise of willpower. But it can be done, is being done.

Take the case of Laurel Nisbet. She contracted polio and at 36 years of age was placed in an iron lung, where she lay flat on her back for 37 years. Totally paralyzed from the neck down, she could move her head, but that was all. At first she was sad beyond despair. Then, after about a day of self-pity, she decided, 'Enough of that!' She had two children to raise and a husband to care for. She began to rebuild her life; she learned to manage her home from an iron lung.

Laurel slept very little. How did she pass the long nighttime hours? Giving in to loneliness? No. She prayed to her heavenly Father, Jehovah. Prayed for strength for herself, prayed for her Christian brothers and sisters, and prayed for opportunities to witness to others about God's Kingdom. She devised ways to preach and impressed many by her witnessing for Jehovah's name. She allowed no thistles of loneliness to grow; she was too busy tending the roses.

That also was the case with a Watch Tower missionary, Harold King. Sentenced to five years in solitary confinement in a Chinese prison, he was a perfect candidate for a long siege of loneliness. He rejected that negative outlook, however, and by a deliberate act of

**Prayer and
other activities can
help you to avoid loneliness**





U.S. National Archives photo



The experiences of Harold King and thousands of other Jehovah's Witnesses in concentration camps demonstrate that faith in God can overcome loneliness under the worst of circumstances

willpower launched his mind on a different course. He later described it as follows:

"I arranged for a program of 'preaching' activity. But to whom does one preach when in solitary confinement? I decided that I would build up some appropriate Bible sermons from the things I could remember and then preach to imaginary characters. Then I started out on the work, as it were, knocking on an imaginary door and witnessing to an imaginary householder, visiting several doors during the morning. In time I met an imaginary Mrs. Carter, who showed some interest, and after a number of return visits we arranged to have a regular Bible study. In the course of this study we covered the principal themes from the book '*Let God Be True*,' as I remembered them. All this I did aloud, so that the sound of these things would further impress them on my mind."

The thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses imprisoned in Hitler's concentration camps

could have gained their freedom if they had just renounced their faith. Very few did. Thousands died faithful—some by execution, some by sickness and malnutrition. One imprisoned Witness—Josef by name—had two brothers in other camps. One was forced to lie down with his face upward to watch the blade descend that took off his head. Josef explained: "When others in the camp heard about this they congratulated me. Their positive attitude touched me deeply. Remaining loyal meant more to us than survival."

His other brother, facing a firing squad, was asked if he wished to say anything. He asked permission to say a prayer, and permission was granted. It was filled with such touching pathos and heartfelt joy that when the order to fire was given, not one of the squad obeyed. The order was repeated, whereupon one shot was fired, hitting him in the body. Furious at this, the commanding

officer then drew his own pistol and finished the execution.

What Can Make Lives Truly Meaningful

All these cases involved strong faith in God. When all else has been tried and fails, it is always there to bring victory over loneliness and make lives once empty filled with meaning. Many lives considered meaningful in a worldly way are actually meaningless. Why is this so? Because these end up dead, returned to dust, sunk into oblivion, having left no ripple on the seas of humanity, no footprint on the sands of time. It is as Ecclesiastes 9:5 says: "For the living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all, neither do they anymore have wages, because the remembrance of them has been forgotten." Any sense of meaning attributed to lives lived apart from Jehovah's purposes is empty vanity.

Look at the starry heavens, feel the vastness of this dark vault overhead, and your sense of meaningfulness shrivels into nothing. You understand the psalmist David's feelings when he wrote: "When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have prepared, what is mortal man that you keep him in mind, and the son of earthling man that you take care of him?" David's son Solomon dismissed man's works, saying, "Everything is vanity," and concluded: "The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man."—Psalm 8:3, 4; Ecclesiastes 12:8, 13.

In the final analysis, then, how does a lonely person, or anyone else for that matter, infuse meaning into his life? By living his life in the fear of God, obeying God's commandments. Only then can he fit into the purposes

of God, the Creator of this vast universe, and be a part of that eternal divine arrangement.

If God Is With You, You Are Never Alone

One faithful African Witness of Jehovah, after enduring terrible persecution and feeling abandoned, said that even if her human relationships failed, she was still not alone. She quoted Psalm 27:10: "In case my own father and my own mother did leave me, even Jehovah himself would take me up." Jesus felt the same way. "Look! The hour is coming, indeed, it has come, when you will be scattered each one to his own house and you will leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."—John 16:32.

Jesus was not afraid to be alone. He often sought solitude deliberately. When he was alone, he was not lonely. He opened himself to an inflowing of the spirit of God and felt close to Him when surrounded with His creations. At times he avoided the company of people so that he could be solely in the company of God. He 'drew close to God; God drew close to him.' (James 4:8) He was undoubtedly God's closest friend.

A friend such as the Scriptures describe is a precious thing. (Proverbs 17:17; 18:24) Because of his absolute faith in Jehovah God and his unquestioning obedience to him, Abraham "came to be called 'Jehovah's friend.'" (James 2:23) Jesus said to his followers: "You are my friends if you do what I am commanding you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, because all the things I have heard from my Father I have made known to you."—John 15:14, 15.

With friends like Jehovah God and Christ Jesus, how can those having faith fail to win their fight against loneliness?

The Case for Mother's Milk

By Awake!
correspondent
in Nigeria



MAGINE a baby food that is delicious, easy to digest, and meets all the nutritional needs of developing infants. A food that is a "wonder drug" that both guards against and treats disease. A food that costs nothing and is readily available to families everywhere on earth.

Impossible, you say? Well, such a product does exist, though it has not been developed by industrial scientists. It is mother's milk.

Throughout mankind's history this marvelous food has been considered crucial to child care. For example, the Bible tells us that when the daughter of Pharaoh found the infant Moses, she directed his sister to call for "a nursing woman" to care for him. (Exodus 2:5-9) Later, in Greek and Roman societies, robust wet nurses were commonly employed to provide milk for the infants of wealthy parents. In recent decades, however, the practice of breast-feeding has sharply declined, partly because of advertising that made many people think that breast milk was inferior to the infant formulas of modern technology. Today, that trend is being reversed as more and more mothers come to realize that "breast is best."

The Best Nutrition

Have scientists improved on the Creator's built-in method of feeding infants? Hardly. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) states: "Breast-milk alone is the best possible food and drink for babies in the first four to six months of life." Breast milk contains all the proteins, growth stimulants, fats, carbohydrates, enzymes, vitamins, and trace elements that are vital to an infant's healthy growth during the first few months of life.

Not only is breast milk the best food for newborn babies but it is also the only food they need. The World Health Assembly reaffirmed in May 1992 that "during the first four to six months of life no food or liquid

other than breast milk, not even water, is required to meet the normal infant's nutritional requirements." Breast milk contains enough water to quench a baby's thirst even in hot, dry climates. Bottle-feeding extra water or sugary drinks is not only unnecessary but can cause the baby to stop breast-feeding entirely, since babies usually prefer the relative ease of bottle-feeding. Of course, after the first few months of life, other food and drink need to be gradually added to the baby's diet.

No substitute provides such an ideal balance of ingredients to promote the healthy growth and development of infants. The book *Reproductive Health—Global Issues* states: "Attempts to substitute for breast milk have not been successful. The historical literature on the subject of infant feeding is replete with evidence that non-breastfed infants are at a much higher risk of infection and malnutrition than breastfed infants."

Breast-Feeding Saves Lives

According to WHO (World Health Organization), a million infant deaths worldwide would be prevented each year if all mothers fed their babies nothing but breast milk during the first four to six months of life. UNICEF's report *State of the World's Children 1992* states: "A bottle-fed baby in a poor community is approximately 15 times more likely to die from diarrhoeal disease and 4 times more likely to die from pneumonia than a baby who is exclusively breastfed."

Why is this? One reason is that powdered milk, apart from being nutritionally inferior to mother's milk, is often overdiluted using unclean water and then served in unsterilized feeding bottles. So bottle milk can easily be contaminated with the bacteria and viruses that cause diarrheic disease and respiratory infections, the major killers of children in developing countries. In contrast, milk straight from the breast is not easily contaminated, requires no mixing, does not spoil, and cannot become overdiluted.

A second reason why breast-feeding saves lives is that mother's milk contains antibodies that protect the infant against disease. Even when diarrheic disease or other infections do occur, they are usually less severe and easier to treat among breast-fed infants. Researchers also suggest that babies fed on breast milk seem less prone to dental disease, cancer, diabetes, and allergies. And because it requires vigorous sucking action, breast-feeding may promote in infants the proper development of facial bones and muscles.

Benefits to Mothers

Breast-feeding doesn't benefit just baby; it benefits mother as well. For one thing, a baby's suckling the breast stimulates the release of the hormone oxytocin, which not only helps milk release and flow but also causes contraction of the uterus. When the uterus contracts promptly after delivery, prolonged

Breast-Feeding in the Developing World

1. Breast milk alone is the best possible food and drink for a baby in the first four to six months of life.
2. Babies should start to breast-feed as soon as possible after birth. Virtually every mother can breast-feed her baby.
3. Frequent sucking is needed to produce enough breast milk for the baby's needs.

4. Bottle-feeding can lead to serious illness and death.

5. Breast-feeding should continue well into the second year of a child's life and for longer if possible.

Source: *Facts for Life*, jointly published by UNICEF, WHO, and UNESCO.

bleeding is less likely. Breast-feeding also delays the return of ovulation and menstruation. This tends to delay the next pregnancy. Longer intervals between pregnancies mean healthier mothers and babies.

Another big plus for women is that breast-feeding lowers the risk of ovarian and breast cancer. Some experts say that the risk of breast cancer for a woman who breast-feeds her infant is half what it would be if she did not.

Not to be overlooked in listing the benefits of breast-feeding is mother-child bonding. Since it involves not only the giving of food but also oral contact, skin-to-skin contact, and physical warmth, breast-feeding can help forge an important bond between mother and child and may contribute to the child's emotional and social development.

Deciding to Breast-Feed

Almost all mothers are physically able to provide enough milk for their infants if cer-

tain requirements are met. Breast-feeding should begin as soon as possible after birth, within the first hour after the delivery of the baby. (The first breast milk, a thick yellowish substance called colostrum, is good for babies and helps protect them from infections.) Thereafter, babies should be fed on demand, including during the night, and not according to a fixed schedule. The correct positioning of the baby at the breast is also important. An experienced and sympathetic adviser can provide help in these matters.

Of course, whether a mother decides to breast-feed her infant or not depends on more than simply her physical ability to do so. *The State of the World's Children 1992* reports: "Mothers need the support of hospitals if they are to give their babies the best possible start; but if they are to continue breastfeeding, they will also need the support of employers, trade unions, communities—and of men."

Breast-Feeding and AIDS

In late April 1992, WHO and UNICEF brought together an international group of experts to consider the relationship of AIDS and breast-feeding. The need for the meeting was explained by Dr. Michael Merson, director of the WHO Global Program on AIDS. He said: "Breast-feeding is a crucial element of child survival. A baby's risk of dying of AIDS through breast-feeding must be balanced against its risk of dying of other causes if not breast-fed."

According to WHO, about one third of all babies born to HIV-infected mothers become infected also. While much of the mother-to-infant transmission of the disease occurs during pregnancy and delivery, there is evidence that it can also occur through breast-feeding. However, states WHO, "the vast majority of babies breast-fed by HIV-infected

mothers do not become infected through breast-feeding."

The panel of experts concluded: "Where infectious diseases and malnutrition are the main cause of infant deaths and the infant mortality rate is high, breast-feeding should be the usual advice to pregnant women, including those who are HIV-infected. This is because their baby's risk of HIV infection through breast milk is likely to be lower than its risk of death from other causes if it is not breast-fed."

"On the other hand, in settings where the main cause of death during infancy is not infectious diseases and the infant mortality rate is low, the... usual advice to pregnant women known to be infected with HIV should be to use a safe feeding alternative for their baby rather than breast-feed."



“Oh, Jehovah, Keep My Young Girl Faithful!”

I WAS born in 1930 in Alsace, France, into an artistic family. During the evenings, Father, sitting in his lounge chair, would be reading some books about geography or astronomy. My doggy would be sleeping by his feet, and Daddy would be sharing with Mum some highlights from his reading while she was knitting for her family. How much I enjoyed those evenings!

Religion played a big part in our lives. We were staunch Catholics, and people who saw us going to church on Sunday morning would say: “It’s nine o’clock. The Arnolds are going to church.” Every day before going to school, I went to church. But because of the priest’s misbehavior, Mum forbade me to go to church alone. I was six years old at the time.

After having read only three booklets of the *Bibelforscher* (Bible Students, now known

as Jehovah’s Witnesses), my mother started preaching from house to house. Dad was upset about that. He made it a rule that no religious discussion was to be held in front of me. ‘No reading of that stuff!’ But Mother was so enthusiastic about the truth that she decided to do some Bible reading with me. She got a Catholic version of the Bible and read it every morning without commenting on it, to obey Dad.

One day she read Psalm 115:4-8: “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of the hands of earthling man. . . . Those making them will become just like them, all those who are trusting in them.” She linked it with the second commandment, which states: “You must not make for yourself a carved image.” (Exodus 20:4-6) I immediately got up and destroyed my personal altar I had in my room.

I would go to school and share with my Catholic classmates my daily Bible reading. It caused quite a disturbance at school. Very often children would follow me in the street calling me a “stinky Jew!” That was in 1937. This situation caused my father to check on what I was learning. He got himself the book *Creation*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. He read it and became a Witness himself!

As soon as the German army entered France over the Belgium border, we began to see swastikas on flags on top of churches, even though the French flag still flew over city hall. The French had closed our Kingdom Hall and banned the work of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and we were already working underground when the Germans came. But the effort to crush the Witnesses intensified. Two years later, at age 11, I was baptized.

One month later, September 4, 1941, at two o’clock in the afternoon, the doorbell rang. Dad was due home from work. I jumped up, opened the door, and ran into his arms. A man behind him shouted, “Heil Hitler!”

Down on my feet again, I then realized that the man I had embraced was an SS soldier! They sent me off to my room and gave my mother a four-hour cross-examination. As they left, one of them shouted: "You won't see your husband anymore! You and your child will go the same way!"

Dad had been arrested that morning. He had had his monthly salary in his pocket. The SS closed down the bank account and refused my mother a working card—a necessary document to get a job. Their policy now was: "No means of living for those vermin!"

Persecution at School

During this time the pressures at the college preparatory school I was attending continued to increase. Whenever the teacher came to class, all 58 students had to stand with outstretched arms and say, "Heil Hitler." When the priest came for religious education, he would come in and say, "Heil Hitler—blessed is the one that cometh in the name of the Lord." The class would answer, "Heil Hitler—Amen!"

I refused to say, "Heil Hitler," and word of this came before the school director. A warning letter was written stating: "A student is not submitting to school rules, and if no change occurs in a week's time, this student will have to leave school." It mentioned at the bottom that this letter had to be read to the more than 20 classes.

The day arrived when I was called in front of my class to make my decision known. The director gave me five more minutes either to salute or to take my school papers and leave. Those five minutes on the clock seemed an eternity. My legs got weak, my head felt a fullness, my heart was pounding. The heavy silence of the whole class was interrupted by a strident "Heil Hitler," with the whole class then repeating it three times. I ran to the desk, got my papers, and ran out.

The following Monday, I was allowed to go to another school. The director said I could attend on the condition that I wouldn't tell anyone why I had been expelled from the other school. My classmates turned on me, calling me a thief, a delinquent child, saying that was why I was sent away. I could not explain the real reason.

I was seated at the back of the class. The girl next to me realized I wasn't saluting. She thought I was a French resister. I just had to explain to her why I refused to heil Hitler: "According to Acts 4:12, 'There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved.' Only Christ is our Savior. Since 'heil' stands for having salvation by someone, I cannot attribute this salvation to any man, including Hitler." This girl and her mother started studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and became Witnesses themselves!

Underground Activity

During all this time, we continued preaching underground. We went out the first Sunday of every month to a place in the mountains where we got the French edition of *The Watchtower* to translate it into German. Mum had made a special garter belt with a hidden pocket for me to carry *The Watchtower*. One day we were stopped by two soldiers and taken to a mountain farm, where we were searched. I got so sick that they had me go lie in the hay, and because of this, they never found *The Watchtower*. One way or another, Jehovah always seemed to rescue me.

One day I got the call to go to a "psychiatrist." It proved to be two of the SS. Other Witness children were there too. I was the last one to get called in. The two "doctors" sat behind a table, I sat with a bright light shining in my face, and the cross-examination began. One "doctor" would ask me some geo-

graphic or historical questions, but before I could answer, the other came in with questions about the underground work. He would also ask for the names of the other Witnesses. I was on the verge of a breakdown when suddenly a phone call interrupted their interrogation. How wonderfully Jehovah's help always came!

When my school director learned that I had been explaining our beliefs to one of my classmates, I was arrested, tried in court, and sentenced by the judge to a "penitentiary school." The judgment noted that 'she was raised in the teachings of the International Bible Students Association, whose teachings are forbidden by law, and she will become a corrupt character and a danger to others.' It was a dreadful ordeal for me, now a 12-year-old, in that awe-inspiring courtroom! However, because of the help of a sympathetic friend working in the administration, my sentence was not carried out immediately.

About a month later, our school class was chosen to go to a Hitler Youth training camp for two weeks. I never talked to my mother about that. I did not want her to have to bear any responsibility about my decision not to go there. Before the day of departure came, the school director warned me: "If on Monday you are not at the railroad station or in my office, I will get the police after you!"

So Monday morning I passed the railroad station on my way to school. All my classmates were calling me to go with them, but I was determined to go to the director's office. I was late getting there, so he assumed I had gone with the others on the train. He was furious when he saw me. He took me into his classroom and made the whole class there suffer for four hours. For example, he would call each child to the front of the class, and rather than handing them their notebook, he would slap them in the face with it. He would

point at me and say: "She is responsible!" He tried to get the 45 children, only ten years of age, to turn on me. But at the end of class, they came congratulating me because I had kept refusing to sing military songs.

Later I was appointed to sort paper, cans, and bones. I refused to do that, since the cans were used for military purposes. I was beaten and left unconscious. Later my classmates helped me back on my feet.

When I returned to school, I was surprised to see all the classes standing in the yard around a flagpole, about 800 children. I was put in the middle. A long description of freedom and the outcome for traitors was given, followed by three cries of *Sieg heil!* (victory and salvation). The national song was sung with me standing stiff and shivering. Jehovah supported me; I kept integrity. Later, upon entering our apartment, I found my clothes lying on the bed and a letter saying: "Simone Arnold is to present herself at the railroad station tomorrow morning."

On to the Penitentiary School

The following morning Mother and I were at the railroad station. Two ladies took me into custody. On the train Mother repeated her counsel as to my behavior. "Always be polite, kind, and gentle, even when suffering injustice. Never be obstinate. Never talk back or answer insolently. Remember, being steadfast has nothing to do with being stubborn. It is going to be your schooling for future life. It is Jehovah's will that we undergo trials for our future benefit. You are well prepared for that. You know how to sew, to cook, to wash, and to do gardening. You are a young lady now."

That evening, in a vineyard outside our hotel, Mother and I knelt on our knees, sang a Kingdom song about the resurrection hope, and had a prayer. In a firm voice, Mum made supplication in my behalf: "Oh, Jehovah, keep my



**Simone Arnold
Liebster and her
husband, Max
Liebster**

young girl faithful!" For the last time, Mum tucked me into bed and kissed me.

Things went fast the following day when we arrived at the penitentiary house, without giving me a chance to say good-bye to Mum. A girl showed me a bed with a wheat-bran mattress. My shoes were taken away, and we had to walk barefoot until the first of November. The first noon meal was hard to swallow. I was given six pairs of socks to mend; otherwise I couldn't get any food. For the first time, I started crying. Tears made those socks wet. I cried almost the whole night.

The next morning I got up at 5:30. My bed was bloodstained—my periods had started shortly before this. Trembling, I went to the first teacher I came across, Miss Messinger. She called a girl who showed me how to wash my sheet in cold water. The stone floor was cold, and the pains got stronger. I began to cry again. Then Miss Messinger said with a caustic smirk: "Tell your Jehovah he should wash your sheet!" That was just what I needed to hear. I dried my eyes, and never were they able to get me to shed tears again.

1944/45, with another girl, I had to saw trees up to two feet in diameter using a lumberjack's saw. The children were forbidden to talk to one another and were not allowed to be alone, not even to go to the toilet. We had a bath twice a year, and we washed our hair once a year. Punishment was food privation or a beating.

I got to clean Miss Messinger's room. She demanded that I go under the bed every day to clean the springs. I had a little Bible that I had smuggled into the house, and I was able to wedge this into the springs. Thereafter, I was able to read parts of the Bible every day. No wonder I was called the slowest child they ever had!

The Protestant girls went to their church on Sunday, and the three Catholic girls to theirs, but I had to do the cooking for all 37 children. I was so small that I had to stand on a bench and hold the spoon with two hands to stir the soup. For our four teachers, I had to cook meat, bake cakes, and prepare vegetables. On Sunday afternoon, we had to embroider napkins. There was no playtime.

Several months later, with obvious pleasure, Miss Messinger gave me the news that dear Mum had been arrested and was in a concentration camp.

In 1945 the war ground to a halt. The concentration camps collapsed and spilled their tortured contents out over the land, setting thousands wandering about looking for any remnants of family that might still exist.

Poignant Reunions

At least my mother knew where I was, but when she came to get me, I did not recognize her. Little wonder, from what she had been through! When Mum was arrested, she was sent to the same camp where Daddy had been sent, Schirmeck, except she was put in the women's camp. She refused to mend soldiers' uniforms and was put in solitary for months in an underground bunker. Next, to contaminate her, she was moved in with women who had syphilis. While being moved to Ravensbrück, she became very weak with a cough. At that time the Germans fled, and the prisoners en route to Ravensbrück were suddenly free, my mother among them. She headed for Constance, where I was, but an air raid blast had left her face cut and bleeding.

When I was ushered into her presence, she was so changed—emaciated from hunger, obviously sick, her face bruised and bloody, her voice scarcely audible. I had been trained to bow down in front of visitors and show them all my work—the embroideries, the sewing—because some ladies came to the home to get a maid. And that is the way I treated poor Mum! Only when she took me to a judge to get the legal right to take me home did the realization dawn on me that this was my mother! All at once the tears I had kept inside of me for the past 22 months burst out.

As we left, the statement of the director, Miss Lederle, was like soothing oil to Mum. She said: "I give your girl back to you in the same mental attitude she came." My integrity

was still intact. We found our apartment and started to settle in. The only thing that still saddened us was that Dad was missing. He was listed as dead by the Red Cross.

In the middle of May 1945, there was a knock at the door. Again I ran to open it. A friend, Maria Koehl, was at the door, and she said: "Simone, I'm not alone. Your father is downstairs." Dad could hardly make it up the steps, and he had lost his hearing. He passed right by me and went straight to Mum! The spontaneous little 11-year-old girl he had once known had grown to be a shy young teenager during those long months. This new girl he did not even recognize.

What he had been through had taken its toll. First to Schirmeck, a special camp, then to Dachau, where he contracted typhus and for 14 days thereafter was unconscious from it. He was later used in medical experiments. From Dachau he was sent to Mauthausen, an extermination camp worse than Dachau, where he suffered hard labor and beatings and was set upon by police dogs. But he had survived and was finally here at home once more.

When I became 17, I went into the full-time service as a minister of Jehovah's Witnesses and then to Gilead in the United States, the Watch Tower Society's school for missionaries. At the Society's world headquarters, I met Max Liebster, a German Jew who had become a Witness in one of Hitler's concentration camps. We married in 1956, and with the help of our God, Jehovah, we have kept on until now in full-time service as special pioneer ministers here in France.

How true were the words Mum had spoken in her prayer for me those many years ago, the evening before she left me at the penitentiary house: "I make supplication to you, oh, Jehovah, keep my young girl faithful!"

And down to this day, Jehovah has done just that!—*As told by Simone Arnold Liebster.*

World Government Is the United Nations the Answer?

IN RECENT years the United Nations has won renewed confidence and admiration in the world. To millions the abbreviation "UN" evokes heroic images: troops in blue berets bravely rushing to the world's trouble spots to establish peace, relief workers bringing food to the starving refugees of Africa, and dedicated men and women working unselfishly to establish a new world order.

According to a nine-month investigation undertaken by *The Washington Post*, as reported in the *International Herald Tribune*, the reality behind the image is "an enormous, largely uncontrolled bureaucracy, subject to abuses and deficiencies that impair its effectiveness." The study, based on thousands of pages of documents and interviews with current and former UN officials, revealed the following picture.

Aid to Africa: The UN has poured billions of dollars of badly needed aid into Africa, a continent wracked by war, famine, poverty, and disease. Countless lives have been saved.

Yet, thousands of lives and millions of dollars have also been lost because of mismanagement, negligence, and, at times, corruption. The UN has pumped relief aid into famine-stricken Somalia, where many people have been dying each day. But Aryeh Neier, executive director of the Human Rights Watch, is quoted in the *Tribune* as saying: "The United Nations and its various organizations have been so monstrously negligent and incompetent that they have played almost no role at all in alleviating Somalia's misery."

The report also charged that some UN officials have been implicated in diversions of food aid, embezzlement of humanitarian assistance, fraudulent procurement, black-marketing, and currency-exchange manipulation. UN investigators found evidence of such fraud in no fewer than seven African countries.

Peacekeeping: Keeping the peace is a primary goal of the UN, though in the years since its founding in 1945, there have been over a hundred major conflicts, and 20 million people have been killed in war. Since 1987, however, the UN has embarked upon 13 peacekeeping operations, as many as in its entire history before then.

While some might argue that the cost of these operations is preferable to the terrible price of war, many complain that things have gone too far. For example, peacekeeping operations drag on for decades, eating up hundreds of millions of dollars while negotiations remain deadlocked. The UN peacekeeping mission in Cambodia allocates more than \$1 million for TV sets and VCRs for the troops and another \$600,000 for magazine and newspaper subscriptions.

Reform: There are widespread cries for reform within the UN, but opinions vary as to what needs to be reformed. Developing countries are calling for a greater voice in the decision-making process and would like to expand economic and social programs. Industrialized nations want to cut back on these programs and end corruption, mismanagement, and waste.

Said a senior UN official: "To really reform, you have to do something that is absolutely undoable in a bureaucracy: You have to clean the place out. To do something meaningful, you have to scrape away 45 years of barnacles, and that's a lot of barnacles."

While Christians see the need for a single body to administer mankind's affairs, they do not believe that the United Nations is the answer. Instead, they look to God's Kingdom, the government that Jesus told his followers to pray for.—Matthew 6:10.

**Young
People
Ask...**



Am I Developing Normally?

"I was one of the smallest kids in my class—and I weighed the least. I didn't like my arms. I thought they were too skinny. I even mailed off for an exercise kit advertised in the back of a comic book. It didn't work though."—Eric.

"I'm just not tall enough. I'm 13 years old, and I'm just five feet tall. Everybody in my class is taller! Well, there are some boys who are shorter, but they're probably going to grow during the summer. I just don't like being short! I can't see anything! I wish I could be taller right now."—Kerri.

TOO tall! Too short! Too fat! Too skinny! These are not simply the taunts of cruel peers. Many youths judge themselves this way every time they look in a mirror. "When I was 13," recalls a petite Hispanic woman named Mari, "I just hated my nose; it was so wide I thought I needed surgery! And I had such a blocky build! My older sister had a dress that looked good on her shapely figure. When I tried to wear it, everybody laughed."

When you are in "the bloom of youth," especially that tumultuous period of rapid physical and emotional change known as puberty, it is easy to feel bad about yourself. (1 Corinthians 7:36) From what you can see, your peers are blooming into tall, attractive adults. But it might look as if you are hardly blooming at all—or blooming too much. One survey revealed that an astronomical 56 percent of teenagers are not satisfied with their bodies. Researchers Jane Norman and Myron W. Harris say that many of those dissatisfied youths felt that they were "too short" or that they were "underdeveloped."

Many youths are also concerned about the development of their intimate body parts; they wonder if they are normal. Explains the book *Growing Into Love*, by Kathryn Watterston Burkhart, youths' "feelings of self-esteem, competence and personal dignity are rooted in their bodies, so it becomes extremely important that their physical selves are properly put together." Not surprisingly, then, youths are often quite anxious in situations (such as gym class) where their bodies are exposed to scrutiny—or comparison. "I feel very uncomfortable about taking showers with the boys at school," confessed one young boy.

Are you displeased with the way your body is developing? Well, relax! More than likely you are perfectly normal.

Growing Pains

Puberty is a natural and healthy process. Even Jesus Christ went through it,

"progressing in wisdom and in physical growth." (Luke 2:52) Puberty involves the maturing of your reproductive organs.* However, it also involves a sudden spurt of rapid growth, often double one's average yearly growth rate. "I started growing four inches a year," recalls a young man named Danny. "By age 13 I was six feet tall."

Usually, though, girls begin their growth spurt about two years ahead of boys. So at age 12, a girl may tower over her male classmates. Likely she will enjoy this height for only a short time. Within a couple of years, most of the boys will catch up in height and go on to surpass her.

Even so, rapid growth is not without its problems. Usually, the first parts that get large are your feet. For a while, then, your feet may be all out of proportion to your body size. Writer Lynda Madaras quotes one young girl as saying: "I was just a little over five feet tall when I was eleven, but I wore a size eight shoe. I thought, Oh, no, if my feet keep on growing, they're gonna be gigantic! But I'm sixteen now, and I'm five feet eight inches tall, but my feet are still size eight." Rapid growth of your lower legs, thighs, and trunk soon follows.

Even more distressing may be the changing image you see in the mirror. Explains writer Lynda Madaras in *The What's Happening to My Body? Book for Girls*: "As you go through puberty, your face changes. The lower part of your face lengthens and your face gets fuller." This is true of both girls and boys. It may take a while before your face seems properly proportioned.

Because different parts of your body grow at different rates, your arms and legs may also seem embarrassingly long. "My arms seemed to go down to the floor," recalls Christine, who later grew into an attractive adult. An of-

ten humiliating period of awkwardness may also set in before your body finally seems 'harmoniously joined together and made to cooperate through every joint.'—Ephesians 4:16.

Late Developers

Puberty can be a strange thing, however. Sometimes a 12-year-old can be mistaken for a 20-year-old. But for other youths, the hormones just don't seem to kick in on time. Laments one youngster, named Willie: "I'm one of the shortest kids in my class, and I know how it feels to be picked on." If you find yourself having to stand on your tiptoes to look your peers in the eye, don't panic. Usually, it simply means that your body is developing at a slower rate than those of your classmates.*

Granted, being shorter or looking younger than your peers may be hard to take. "I know I look like a little kid, and I hate it!" complains 16-year-old Allison. Can you speed up the growing process? No, but you can facilitate it. At Job 8:11, the Bible says: "Will a papyrus plant grow tall without a swampy place? Will a reed grow big without water?" Just as a plant thrives with the right environment and nourishment, so you need sufficient rest and a healthy diet. A steady diet of junk food will deprive your body of the nutrition it needs for proper growth.

Aside from commonsense health care, there is little you can do about your physical development. But in time your growth spurt will begin. In fact, you may even keep growing after your peers have reached their full height. "In eighth grade," recalls a young man named John, "I was the second-to-the-shortest kid in the class, but over the summer, I shot up. By the time I started ninth grade, I was just about the tallest boy in the class." We are reminded

* See the "Young People Ask . . ." articles appearing in the January 22 and February 8, 1990, issues of *Awake!*

* Some experts recommend that if an adolescent has not experienced any of the changes of puberty by age 15, he or she should be examined by a physician so as to rule out any serious health disorders.

of the ancient proverb: "Expectation postponed is making the heart sick, but the thing desired is a tree of life when it does come." —Proverbs 13:12.

Of course, there is no guarantee that you will ever be as tall as a basketball player. If you have short parents, more than likely you will be of short stature yourself. However, being shorter than your friends may create problems for you.

How to Cope

While God does not judge a person by his stature, small-minded humans often do. Studies show that youths tend to view those who develop more slowly as less attractive and less competent than more mature-looking youths. They may even ostracize former friends who no longer seem to fit in because they look so young. This may strike at the heart of your self-esteem. One study showed that long after late-blooming youths physically catch up with their schoolmates, feelings of inadequacy can linger.

How can you cope? Some youths who bloom late become quiet and withdrawn. Yet others—particularly boys—become obnoxious show-offs or daredevils in a misguided attempt to call attention to themselves. But neither course of action will win you true friends. In the long run, people are going to like you for who you are, not for how you look. If you show a genuine interest in others and cultivate kindness and generosity, most people will like you. (Proverbs 11:25; Philippians 2:4) If some continue to tease or ignore you, try talking matters out with your parents. They may have some practical suggestions to offer.

Remember too that God "sees what the heart is." (1 Samuel 16:7) The Bible says that King Saul was one of the tallest and most handsome men in Israel. But he was a failure both as a king and as a man. (1 Samuel 9:2) On the other hand, the man named Zacchaeus

Girls usually begin their growth spurt about two years ahead of boys. However, most boys quickly catch up and eventually surpass girls in height



was "small in size." Yet he was blessed with the privilege of entertaining the Son of God. (Luke 19:2-5) Therefore it is what is inside a person that really counts. And if your body is not growing as quickly as you might like, you can take comfort in knowing that this may be perfectly normal. "For everything there is an appointed time," and eventually your body will respond to the call of puberty. (Ecclesiastes 3:1) Oddly enough, many youths complain that their bodies are developing too quickly. Their plight will be the subject of the next article in this series.

MYSTERIOUS RIDERS

"Who but God can conceive such infinite scenes of glory? Who but God could execute them, painting the heavens in such gorgeous display?"

WHAT aroused the sense of piety in Charles F. Hall, 19th-century Arctic explorer? One of the most awesome natural phenomena visible to the human eye, the aurora borealis—commonly known as the northern lights.

Fascination with these celestial lights dates back to the fourth century B.C.E., when Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote his theory on this phenomenon. It was not until 1621, however, that French scientist and mathematician Pierre Gassendi introduced the term “aurora borealis” (or, northern dawn) as we presently use it. Aurora was the name of the rosy-fingered Roman goddess of dawn in classical mythology.



She was also the mother of the winds, the north wind being called Boreas.

What causes the aurora? Could it be caused by the sun's rays reflecting from tiny ice crystals in the air? Or sunlight reflecting from icebergs? Or explosions created by

OF THE CELESTIAL WINDS

Astro-weather forecast

Has anyone ever seen a solar storm? It's not something we see, but it should become more popular since it's considered a major weather phenomenon. Such storms are caused by intense solar flares that erupt from sunspot groups. These flares can last for days and even weeks.

What's the difference between a solar flare and a regular flare? A solar flare is a sudden release of energy from the sun's magnetic field. A regular flare is a similar release of energy from Earth's magnetic field.

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the meeting of warm air and cold air? None of these. Advanced scientific study traces this phenomenon to a direct association between activity on the sun and the earth's magnetic field.

Ninety-three million miles away, at the heart of our solar

system, the marvelous auroral spectacle begins. Nuclear explosions occurring on and in the sun hurl large amounts of gas into space at speeds

of up to 1,000 miles per second. This plasma, or ionized gas, is carried by the sun's magnetic field lines to Earth. As the plasma approaches the earth, it is deflected by Earth's own magnetic field. This interaction creates the aurora.

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NASA photo

estimated by some to reach 2,500,000 miles per hour. These gusty solar winds, containing streams of high-energy particles, can reach earth's outer atmosphere within 24 to 48 hours. As they enter the outer fringes of the earth's magnetic field, many charged particles are trapped and drawn toward the poles. They subsequently collide with nitrogen molecules and oxygen atoms, exciting them and activating a display of lights. A similar reaction occurs when turning on a switch for a neon light.

At times it seems as if the auroral curtains almost touch the ground. However, this phenomenon occurs only between 60 and 600 miles above earth's surface. Lower altitude collisions create shades of yellow and green, while at the higher altitudes, red and blue emissions result. Some displays are enormous—measuring from 2 to 3 miles thick and over 100 miles high—extending literally thousands of miles.

Where Can We See Them, and What Do They Look Like?

Unfortunately, only a very small percentage of earth's population will ever see the aurora. It is virtually unknown to people living in the tropics. However, if you live in southern Greenland, Iceland, northern Norway, or northern Alaska, the aurora dances as often as 240 nights a year. Northern Siberia and central Canada will see them about 100 nights a year, while residents of southern Alaska view them only about 5 nights a year. Central Mexico may witness an occurrence once a decade. In the Southern Hemisphere, these dancing lights, called aurora australis, perform mainly for seals, whales, and penguins. However, New Zealand, parts of Australia, and Argentina fall within the sparsely populated auroral region and thus experience the celestial display.

A clear night sky provides a perfect backdrop for the ever-changing panorama of cur-

tains, arcs, and waterfall shapes that billow and sway across the heavens. An invisible belt, ringing the north and south geomagnetic poles, somewhere between 55 and 75 degrees latitude, appears to be where the lights are brightest. Polar explorer William H. Hooper admits: "Language is vain in the attempt to describe its ever varying and gorgeous phases; no pen nor pencil can portray its fickle hues, its radiance, and its grandeur."

Can You Really Hear Them?

While scientists have not discounted the possibility that sounds occur as a result of an aurora, it is unclear how any discernible disturbance could come from within the display itself. The phenomenon occurs a considerable distance above the earth. Sound takes about five seconds to travel a mile, so the noise would noticeably lag after the visible flash.

Interestingly, during one bright aurora, a man was blindfolded, and "at almost every

Aurora Borealis Legends and Superstitions

For generations northern cultures believed the auroras to be:

"Torches held in the hands of spirits to guide the souls of those who have just died to a land of happiness and plenty"

"Spirits of the dead playing ball with a walrus head"

"An ill omen of war and pestilence"

"The ghosts of their slain enemies"

An indication that "the weather would change for the worse"

"Fires over which the great medicine men and warriors . . . simmered their dead enemies in enormous pots"

"A radiating snake dancing in the sky"

"The spirits of children who died at birth"

"Helpful in curing heart ailments"

brilliant rush of auroral light, he exclaimed, "Don't you hear it?" An amateur astronomer said: "It sounded like cellophane and steam. It was one of the eeriest moments of my life." A native Inuit from Fort Chimo, Ungava, Canada, was asked to relate what he heard one clear night as he was heading home with his dog team. "They went whoo-o-o-sh, whish- whoo-o-o-sh, like that. It was not wind. The night was very calm. . . . And the dogs were scared. They scattered in all directions they were so scared."

Are such sounds hallucinations—noises in the head? Some think so. However, scientist William Petrie in his book *Keoeit—The Story of the Aurora Borealis* offers a possible explanation. He reasons: "A faulty light switch can make a faint hissing or crackling sound as electrical charges escape instead of following the normal route through the switch. Now since an aurora is the result of the entry into the atmosphere of electrically charged particles, one might expect electrical conditions near the earth's surface to be altered. Recently, it has in fact been determined that the conditions are changed substantially, with the result that charges of electricity 'leak' away from the surface, and in so doing, possibly generate a faint sound."

How powerful is it? The *Alaska Geographic* quarterly *Aurora Borealis—The Amazing Northern Lights*, published in 1979, reports that "the electrical power associated with the auroral discharge is enormous, about 1,000 billion watts, or annual 9,000 billion kilowatt hours—more than the present annual U.S. electric power consumption, which is a little less than 1,000 billion kilowatt hours!" The aurora emits waves called radio noise that can be picked up by a radio receiver but not heard by humans. Fortunately, the ionosphere shields us from this noise, so we are able to use a radio.

Violent auroral storms have disrupted

commercial communications media. On one occasion crude telephone calls interfered with easy-listening music broadcast by a radio station. The Trans-Alaska Pipeline was once charged with 100 amperes of electricity because of the aurora. Even radar systems have been fooled into reporting nuclear-missile attacks. One giant display over North America in 1941 reportedly woke up sea gulls on the waterfront of Toronto, Canada.

Lasting Impressions

Edward Ellis, 19th-century adventurer and author, upon observing the aurora borealis, was impelled to say: "I pity the man who says, 'There is no God' or who can look unmoved to the very depths of his soul by such displays of infinite power." Witnessing these mysterious riders of the celestial winds for the first time evokes superlatives, such as awesome! spectacular! majestic! This phenomenon is such an attraction that people from as far away as Japan charter flights to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada, just to see the northern lights. A local resident said of one such group: "Some of them cried afterward, they thought it was so beautiful."

Indeed, only the work of our Master Designer can touch our emotions in such a beautiful way. It is just as the psalmist was moved to write: "The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling."—Psalm 19:1.

In Our Next Issue

Protect Your Children!

Do We Really Need Priests?

Jehovah's Witnesses Vindicated in Child-Custody Battle

Watching the World

Whence Comes Complexity?

Many evolutionists assume that ancient living things were simple but then were supposedly driven by natural selection to become more and more complex through the ages. Recent studies have failed to find such a drive toward greater complexity. Dr. Dan McShea, a paleobiologist, examined the fossilized backbones of various mammals; another study focused on mollusk fossils. Neither study found any evidence of an evolutionary drive toward greater complexity. Nor did they find that greater complexity brought any survival advantage. According to *The New York Times*, experts say that these findings "will come as a surprise to many biologists used to thinking in terms of such trends." Notes the *Times*: "According to Dr. McShea, the perception of drives toward complexity may be more a reflection of scientists' desires to see some sort of progress in evolution rather than a reflection of any biological reality."

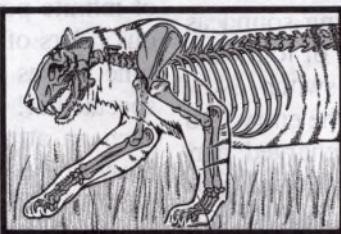
Exercise and Age

Is it ever too late to start exercising? Not according to a study carried out recently in the eastern United States. A survey of over 10,000 men found that they increased their average life span regardless of their age when they took up "moderately vigorous" exercise. Those who were between 45 and 54 when they started benefited most, extending their life span by some ten months. The 65 to 74 group added six months, and those 75 to 84 improved by two months. Dr. Ralph S. Paffenbarger, who directed the study, emphasized that these were averages; thus, some subjects benefit-

ed much more from exercise than others. The main benefit seemed to lie in preventing heart attacks. However, those who exercised were less likely to die of other causes as well.

Tiger Bones

The demand for tiger bones for use in traditional Oriental medicine poses a threat to the world's dwindling tiger population, states the British medical magazine *The Lancet*. Despite international efforts to curb trading in tiger products, tiger bone is widely marketed



in wines, medicines, and confections (medicinal powder mixed with honey or syrup). In 1991 alone, one Asian country allegedly exported 15,079 cartons of tablets, 11,570 pounds of confections, and 31,500 bottles of wine containing tiger bone. The remaining number of tigers worldwide is estimated to be only about 6,000.

The Gender Handicap

"Too often in the Third World, a female's life is hardly worth living," began a recent series of reports in *The Washington Post*. The *Post* reporters, after interviewing scores of women in poor parts of Africa, Asia, and South America, found that "culture, religion and the law often deprive women of basic human rights and sometimes

relegate them to almost subhuman status." For instance, in one Himalayan village, the women did 59 percent of the work, laboring up to 14 hours a day and often carrying loads 1.5 times their own weight. A study found that "after two or three . . . pregnancies, their stamina gives up, they get weaker, and by the late thirties are spent out, old and tired, and soon die." Female children are commonly fed less, pulled out of school and put to work earlier, and given less medical attention than boys. Many women kill female infants, viewing them as an expensive liability. The reporters noted that in rural southern India, a common method of infanticide is to pour scalding chicken soup down the child's throat. A police official, when asked if such crimes are punished, responded: "There are more pressing issues. Very few cases come to our attention. Very few people care."

The Essential Moon

To the already striking list of factors that make planet Earth uniquely suitable for life, astronomers may have to add another item: the Moon. Our satellite does far more than provide an ornamental night light for the skies and create tides. According to computer studies by French astronomers, it also helps to regulate earth's obliquity, that is, the degree of tilt of its spin axis. Mars, which does not have such a large satellite, has apparently shifted in its degree of tilt between 10 and 50 degrees over the ages. This instability has probably caused catastrophic climate changes, with the polar caps melting and then refreezing. The computer studies revealed that with-

out the moon, which exerts a restraining influence, the earth's obliquity may well have shifted by some 85 degrees. Thus, the French astronomers conclude: "One might consider the Moon to act as a potential climate regulator for the Earth."

South Africa Addresses Abuse Crisis

In just five years, the number of children raped in South Africa more than doubled, according to *The Star*, a Johannesburg newspaper. The paper reports that there were 1,707 rapes of children reported in 1988; by 1992 that figure had soared to 3,639. Minister of Justice Kobie Coetsee cited these figures when opening the country's first court designed to specialize in rape cases, located at Wynberg, Cape Town. He expressed hope that the court would handle such cases speedily and more sympathetically. Deputy Attorney General Natalie Fleischack said that the new initiative would eliminate some of the humiliation and embarrassment that rape victims commonly experience during prosecution and would expedite their "psychological rehabilitation" as well.

Suspicious Birth Defects in Hungary

In a small town in southwestern Hungary, a high percentage of babies were born with severe birth defects in 1989 and 1990. In fact, 11 of the 15 babies born in that period were afflicted with such disorders as Down's syndrome and abnormalities of the lungs, heart, and digestive tract. This rate was 223 times that of the rest of the country. Andrew Czeizel, with a team of Hungarian and German scientists, zeroed in on a possible culprit: trichlorfon, a

pesticide. It seems that in 1988 the village fish farm adopted a new technique of administering trichlorfon: the fish were soaked in the *undiluted* chemical and returned to the water with levels of the stuff that were a thousand times the recommended maximum. "It is a poison," says Czeizel about trichlorfon. According to *New Scientist* magazine, it changes slowly into another chemical that is a hundred times deadlier and is able to pass through the mother's placenta into the fetus.

Translated by Computer

In what is being described as a first, a computer recently provided a translation of telephone conversations between researchers in Japan, Germany, and the United States. When speaking, scientists at Kyoto, Munich, and Pittsburgh restricted their vocabulary to 550 everyday words and an additional 150 specialized terms from the



field of convention and hotel bookings. These are the only words that the computer program can understand and translate. The newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of Munich reports that scientists "are working together on a translation computer that will handle convention bookings from participants from various countries and answer simple questions."

Buddhist Bar

In an effort to bring Buddhism back to their wandering flock,

Buddhist priests have opened a bar in Osaka, Japan. "In ancient times," *Asahi Evening News* quoted one of the priests as saying, "all kinds of people gathered at temples and talked while eating and drinking. As hundreds of years passed, Buddhism became separated from the people." Fifteen priests, many of them young, take turns acting as host at the bar and drinking with the customers. "Our bar is a temple in the real sense of the word where you can talk frankly with a priest," says the manager. Incense burns and religious symbols hang on the wall. The background music is rock.

A Little Wine for Your Heart

Moderate consumption of red wine may reduce the risk of heart attack. For some time scientists have puzzled over what has come to be termed the "French Paradox." Although the average Frenchman's diet is not low in the saturated fats that contribute to cardiovascular problems, the French have one of the lowest mortality rates for coronary heart disease in the industrialized West. According to the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro*, which was referring to reports published in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, scientists believe this may have something to do with the red wine that the French generally drink with their meals. Acidic compounds present in red wine, called phenols, have been shown to inhibit the so-called bad cholesterol (LDL) from clogging arteries with the fatty deposits that cause heart attacks. *Le Figaro* adds that these phenols are nonalcoholic components of wine and that beyond a half pint a day, the alcohol does more harm than good.

From Our Readers

Home Schooling I appreciated your article "Home Schooling—Is It for You?" (April 8, 1993) I am being taught at home myself, and I was falling behind in my schoolwork. But when I read your article, it lifted up my spirits. Now I'm getting back on track.

N. S., United States

Family Planning I was greatly offended by your February 22, 1993, feature articles "Family Planning—A Global Issue." It is absurd to suggest that responsible Christians need to limit their family sizes. On what basis do you suggest that God's command in Genesis [to "fill the earth"] does not apply to Christians?

A. D., United States

God's command to Adam and Eve to "fill the earth" was repeated to Noah and his family. However, nowhere does the Bible impose the procreation mandate upon Christians.

(Genesis 1:28; 9:1-5; Acts 15:29) In fact, the Bible commands Christians who remain unmarried "on account of the kingdom." (Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:38) Individual couples must therefore make their own decisions when it comes to childbearing and birth control. Since Christians are commanded to care for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of their children, responsible parents may feel it prudent to limit the size of their family so that such care can be rendered.

(1 Timothy 5:8) This in no way undermines the fact that children "are an inheritance from Jehovah." (Psalm 127:3)—ED.

Alcoholism Thank you for the excellent "Young People Ask . . ." articles in the January 8 and 22, 1993, issues, namely, "Can Drinking Really Get Me Hooked?" and "How Can I Stop Drinking?" I am 48 years old and a [recovering] alcoholic. The devastating ef-

fects of this "disease" of the body, mind, and spirit are heartbreaking. When I began to realize that I was hooked on alcohol, I felt as if Jehovah would never be able to forgive me. But I went to the elders, and they gave me loving help. After a relapse, I entered an alcohol treatment program. Now if the urge to drink comes, I pray and meditate on God's new world. I also read the many *Watchtower* and *Awake!* articles that deal with alcoholism or that tell encouraging life experiences. Thank you for your understanding of the problems Jehovah's people undergo and for giving us fine articles.

C. D., United States

Young People Ask . . . My sincere gratitude for the article "Should I Go to the Prom?" (March 8, 1993) I have had much pressure to attend "my" senior prom. But after reading this precious article, all my doubts were settled. I am not going to go, and I don't think that I will be missing much.

J. L., United States

Thank you for the article "What Can I Do About So Much Homework?" (April 8, 1993) I put the suggestions it contained into practice immediately, and I have really benefited from them. Now I can save more time for spiritual things. Many thanks!

M. M., Italy

Thank you very much for publishing the article "How Can I Cope With a Failed Romance?" (May 8, 1993) I am going through a very difficult period. Often it seems that I have no chance of getting married. So while I was reading the magazine, I did not have the strength to hold back my tears. However, reading it made me feel understood and appreciated. It made me realize more fully that Jehovah loves us and understands what we are going through.

R. Z., Italy



Strange and Scary Happenings Under the Ozone Hole

THE 125,000 residents of Punta Arenas, Chile's southernmost city, have long made jokes about living at "the end of the world." But a spate of strange and scary phenomena last year makes the joke a bit too literal. Some scientists are beginning to think that there may be "something new under the sun here." A dispatch in *The Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 1993, gives some details.

Felix Zamorano, a member of the Atmospheric Studies Group at the local University of Magallanes, reports: "In October, we registered the lowest levels of ozone yet measured. The ozone layer thinned to about half of what is normal for three days and fell below what's considered dangerous levels." The effects of increased ultraviolet radiation from a hole in the ozone layer "include skin cancer and cataracts, plus trouble for phytoplankton, the base of the marine food chain," said the *Journal*.

Last year "half of Radovan Vilicic's herd of 1,200 cattle were so blinded by conjunctivitis that they crashed into each other like bumper cars, and five starved because they couldn't find their feed."

The *Journal's* dispatch continues: "Jose Bahamonde tells a similar tale. His ranch, 125 kilometers [80 miles] from here, offers a magnificent view of the Strait of Magellan, but many of his 4,300 sheep can't see it, or much else. About 10% of them are being treated for eye infections, and 200 of his flock went blind last year."

Dermatologist Jaime Abarca contends that "what's happening here is something totally new in the world. It's as unusual as Martians landing." He sees more and more patients with skin problems, sunburn cases have flared up, and the proportion of new skin-cancer cases that are the more dangerous melanoma cancers is five times the norm. He is personally convinced there's a relationship with the increased ultraviolet radiation.

The Punta Arenas populace is taking it seriously. One pharmacy sold 40 percent more sun block than last year. A sunburn hotline gives the ultraviolet readings. Three local radio stations broadcast them too. Schools tell students to wear a hat, sun block, and sunglasses. At one store, sales of sunglasses rose 30 percent. And "a local farmer is trying to design sunglasses for sheep."

Governor Scarpa says: "I don't deny the facts. . . . What do you want to do? We can't put the whole region under a roof."

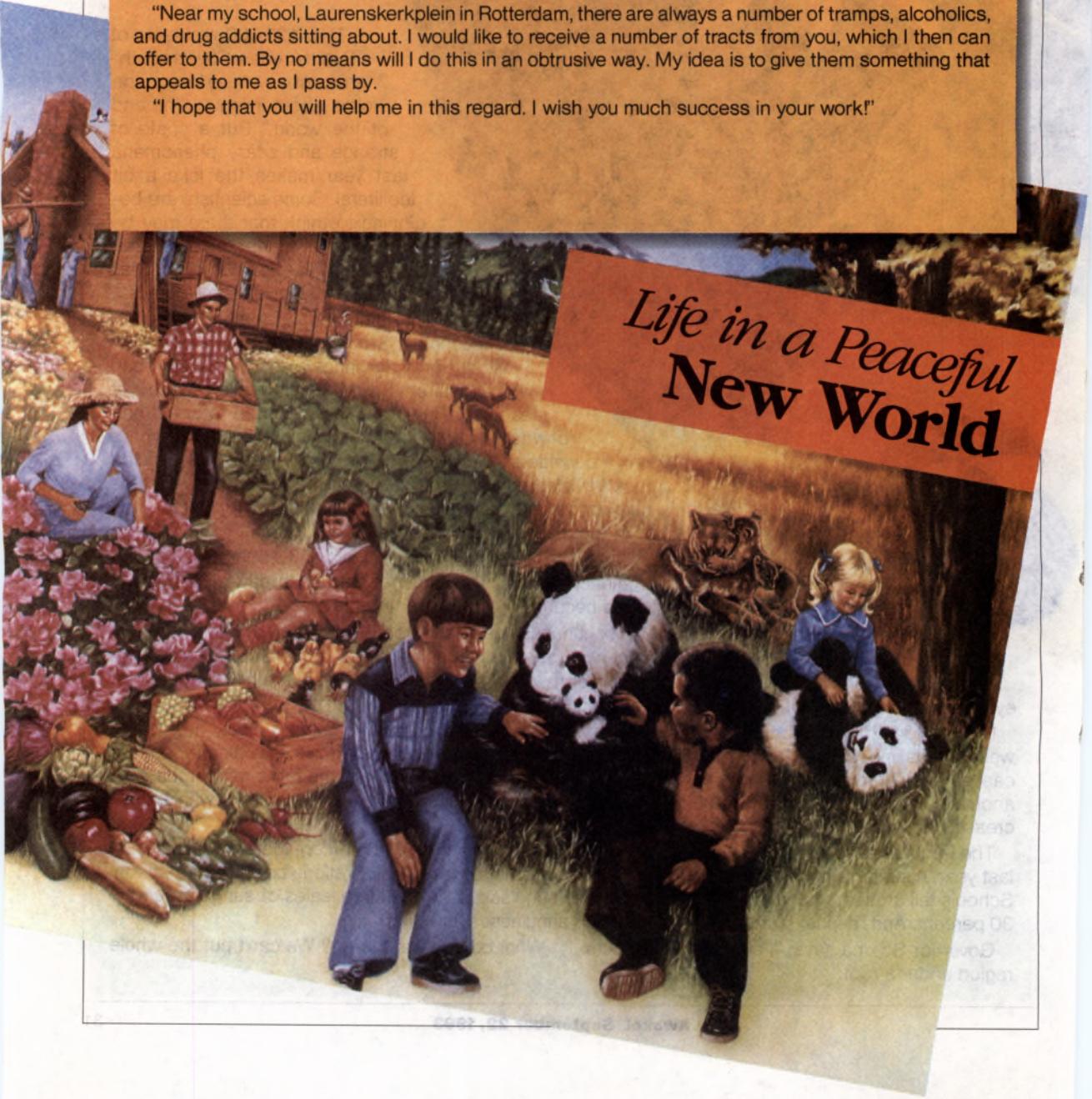
Help for People in Need

Help is just what many well-meaning people want to provide. But what kind of help? And how can it be given? A kindly person wrote the Netherlands branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses last October and explained how he would like to provide help.

"Last Saturday," he explained, "I was offered a small tract entitled *Life in a Peaceful New World*. I think this is a good and clear tract with a fine message. It seems to me suitable for people with big problems, people who really want help, people who would be glad to read such a tract."

"Near my school, Laurenskerkplein in Rotterdam, there are always a number of tramps, alcoholics, and drug addicts sitting about. I would like to receive a number of tracts from you, which I then can offer to them. By no means will I do this in an obtrusive way. My idea is to give them something that appeals to me as I pass by."

"I hope that you will help me in this regard. I wish you much success in your work!"



*Life in a Peaceful
New World*