

Awake!

JUNE 8, 2004

Alone
but
Not Lonely



Awake!

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- 3 Why So Many Lonely People?
- 5 Coping With Loneliness
- 9 When No One Will Ever Feel Lonely Again
- 12 The Tower of London —Historic Monument to a Turbulent Past
- 22 Crossword Puzzle
- 23 Marco Polo Travels the Silk Road to China
- 28 Watching the World
- 30 From Our Readers
- 31 The Value of Our Natural Environment
- 32 Welcome to the "Walk With God" District Convention

Does Anxiety Indicate a Lack of Faith? 16

What does the Bible say about this?

Tires—Your Life Could Depend on Them! 18

Good tires are vital for vehicle safety. How can they be kept in proper condition?



Alone but Not Lonely 3-11

Why are so many people lonely?

What can be done about it?

Will there ever be a time when no one will feel lonely?



Why So Many Lonely People?

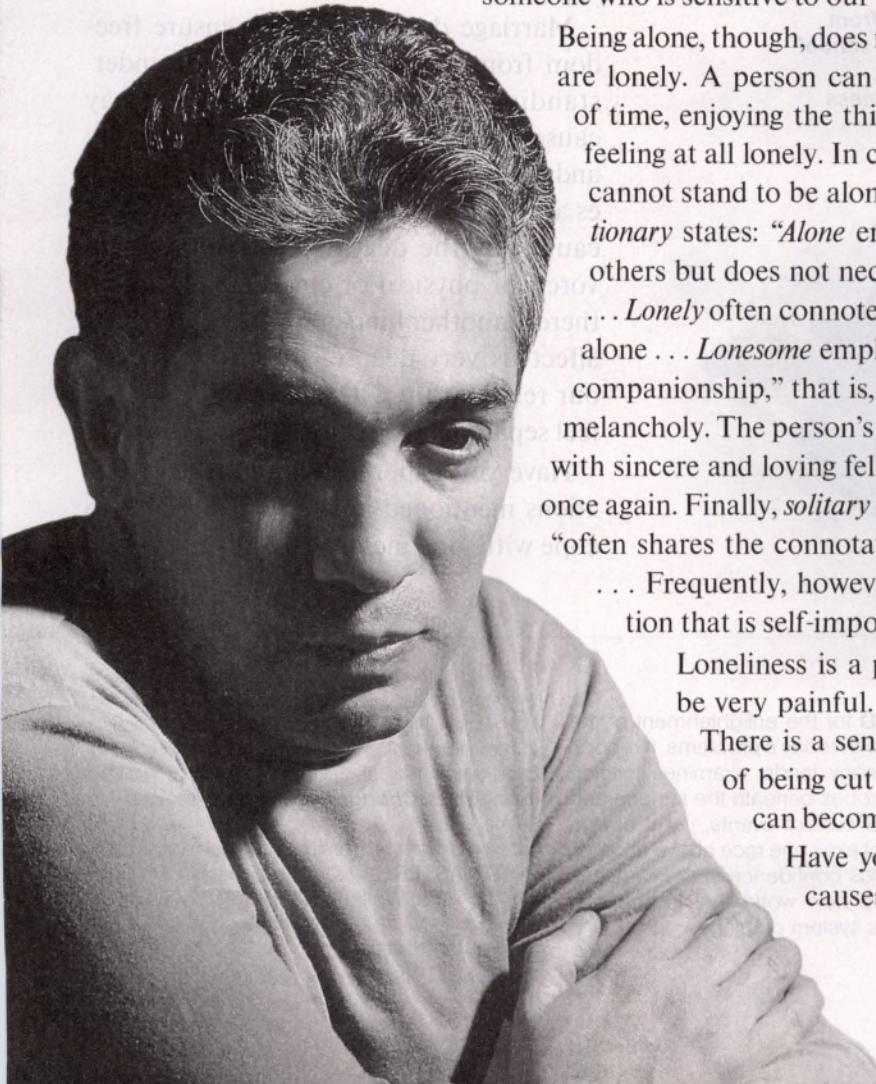
IN TODAY'S society, many experience loneliness. It affects people of all ages and of all races, social strata, and creeds. Have you ever been lonely? Are you lonely now? Actually, all of us at one time or another have felt the need for companionship—for someone to lend us an ear, to offer us reassurance or possibly to echo our deep feelings or inner thoughts, and to understand us as a person. We have a need for someone who is sensitive to our emotions.

Being alone, though, does not necessarily mean that we are lonely. A person can be alone for a long period of time, enjoying the things he or she does, without feeling at all lonely. In contrast, there are those who cannot stand to be alone. *The American Heritage Dictionary* states: “*Alone* emphasizes being apart from others but does not necessarily imply unhappiness. . . . *Lonely* often connotes painful awareness of being alone . . . *Lonesome* emphasizes a plaintive desire for companionship,” that is, a condition of grief, woe, or melancholy. The person’s heart needs to be comforted with sincere and loving fellowship for it to be cheerful once again. Finally, *solitary* is defined as a condition that “often shares the connotations of *lonely* and *lonesome* . . . Frequently, however, it stresses physical isolation that is self-imposed.”

Loneliness is a powerful feeling, and it can be very painful. It is a feeling of emptiness.

There is a sensation of isolation, a feeling of being cut off from other humans. We can become vulnerable and frightened.

Have you ever felt this way? What causes loneliness?





Changes in life, from attending a new school to losing a mate, can cause loneliness



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.

Problems, situations, and conditions have diverse effects on people. Perhaps you feel rejected by your peers because of your physical appearance, race, or religion. Changes of environment—such as attending a new school, initiating a new job, or moving to a new neighborhood, city, or country—can bring a sense of loneliness because you have to leave old friends behind. Experiencing the loss of a parent or a marriage partner can result in loneliness, possibly for many years. Also, as we get older, our circle of friends and acquaintances changes, decreases, or disappears.

Marriage does not always ensure freedom from loneliness. Mutual misunderstanding or lack of compatibility may cause stress that can produce uncertainty and may even result in isolation for spouses and children. But apart from loneliness caused by the death of a loved one, divorce, or physical or emotional isolation, there is another kind of loneliness that can affect us very deeply. This occurs when our relationship with God suffers and we feel separated from him.

Have you experienced any of the situations mentioned above? Is it possible to cope with loneliness?

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know your own worth. I found myself in the middle of a lifeless, soulless world. I was lost. I was alone. I was afraid. I was afraid to face the truth. I was afraid to face myself. I was afraid to face the world. I was afraid to face my own self.

Coping With Loneliness

COPING with loneliness is not easy. Powerful emotions are involved. How can a person deal with loneliness? What have some done to overcome this powerful feeling?

Facing Loneliness

Helen* likes to be alone when making some decisions, but she feels that loneliness can be dangerous. When she was a child, communication with her parents was lacking. Not knowing how to get their attention, she shut herself up in her room. She relates: "I began to have eating disorders. I was trapped in depression. I would say to myself, 'Why should I worry about my parents' problems when they don't worry about mine?' Then I thought that marriage could fill the vacuum of my loneliness. I sought marriage as an escape. But I soon reasoned: 'Why should I ruin the life of another person? First, I need to put my own thinking in order!' I sought Jehovah's help in prayer, pouring out my anguish."

* Some of the names have been changed.

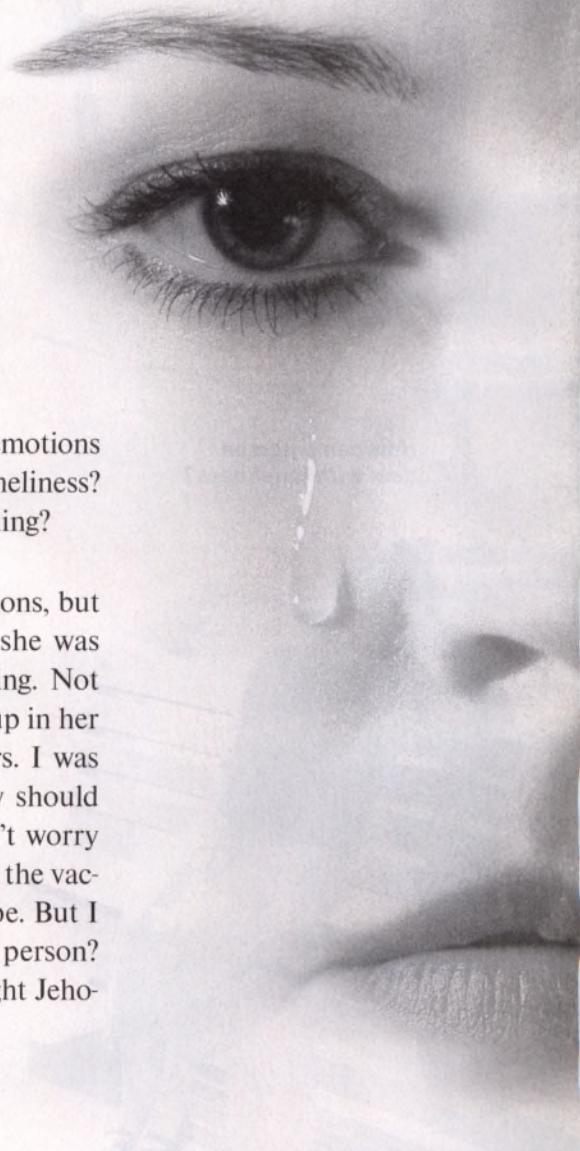
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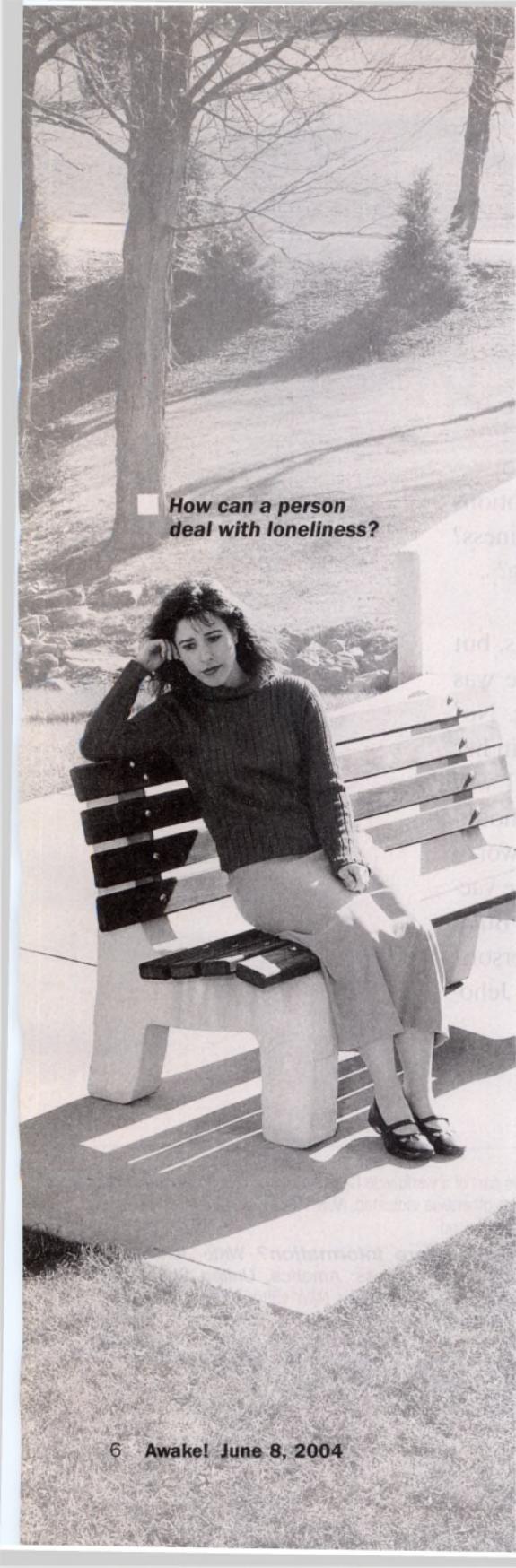
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How can a person deal with loneliness?

"In the Bible, I found very comforting words, such as those of Isaiah 41:10: 'Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not gaze about, for I am your God. I will fortify you. I will really help you. I will really keep fast hold of you with my right hand of righteousness.' These words helped me a lot because I felt as if I had no father. Today I read the Bible regularly and pray to my heavenly Father. I have learned to overcome my loneliness."

Losing a loved one in death causes sadness, which can lead to loneliness. Luisa, who is 16 years old, expresses her anguish: "My father was killed when I was five years old. I turned to my grandmother for comfort, but I never felt that she loved me. I did not receive much affection during my childhood, when I needed it most. Between the ages of eight and nine, I tried to commit suicide three times. I thought that it would be the best thing for my family because my mother was struggling to bring home food for my three sisters and me. Then we began to associate with Jehovah's Witnesses. A young married couple took a genuine interest in me. They would tell me, 'We appreciate you and need you.' The words 'We need you' gave me a lot of strength. Sometimes I cannot express my feelings to someone else, but when I read articles published in *The Watchtower* or *Awake!* I give thanks to Jehovah, for through these publications I have felt his love. I have made many changes. Today I can smile, and I am able to express feelings of sadness and joy to my mother. Sometimes memories of the past come back to me but not like before when I tried to commit suicide or when I stopped talking to my loved ones. I always remember what the psalmist David said: 'For the sake of my brothers and my companions I will now speak: "May there be peace within you.'"—Psalm 122:8.

Martha has been divorced for 22 years, during which time she raised a child. "Feelings of worthlessness and loneliness tend to surface when I think that I have failed at something," she says. How does she cope with these feelings? She explains: "I have found that the best way to deal with

What You Can Do About Loneliness

- Keep in mind that your situation can be changed, that it is not a permanent situation but a common experience shared by others.
- Do not be unreasonably demanding of yourself.
- Feel content about yourself in general.
- Develop good habits in eating and exercise, and get adequate sleep.
- Use the time you spend alone doing creative things and learning new skills.
- Be careful not to judge people you meet on the basis of your past experiences.
- Value your friends and their unique qualities. Work toward developing a good circle of friends. Ask for ideas from older, experienced ones.
- Do something for others—give them a smile, express a kind word, share a thought from the Bible with them. Feeling needed by others is an antidote to loneliness.
- Avoid fantasizing about movie or TV stars or Internet or literature characters, imagining a relationship with them.
- If you are married, do not expect your mate to meet all your emotional needs. Learn to give and take, to help and support each other.
- Learn to talk to others and to be a good listener. Focus on other people and their interests. Show empathy.
- Acknowledge that you feel lonely, and talk to a mature friend, someone you trust. Don't suffer in silence.
- Avoid drinking too much, or do not drink at all. Alcohol does not drown your problems—with time they float to the surface again.
- Avoid pride. Forgive those who hurt you, and make amends. Be willing to let down your defenses.



them is immediately to talk to Jehovah God about them. When I pray, I know I am not alone. Jehovah understands me better than I understand myself. I also try to find ways of taking personal interest in others. My full-time ministry is an especially powerful weapon against negative feelings. When you talk to others about the blessings of God's Kingdom and realize that your listeners have absolutely no hope and that they see their problems as permanent, you find that you have strong reasons to want to live and keep fighting."

"Heartfelt prayer to Jehovah gives us the help we need to get out of a dead-end street." —Luisa

Elba, who is 93 years old and whose only child serves as a missionary in another country, tells us about how she copes with loneliness: "When my daughter and her husband received the invitation to attend the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, I saw their faces radiant with joy, and I rejoiced with them. Later on, when they received an assignment to serve in a foreign country, I began to feel a little selfish. I knew I wasn't going to have them close anymore, and I felt a certain sadness. The situation seemed to me like that of Jephthah and his only daughter, described in Judges chapter 11. I had to pray to Jehovah with tears, asking for his forgiveness. My children stay in touch with me. I know they are very busy, but wherever they serve, they make time to keep me posted, sharing the experiences they have had in the field ministry. I read their letters over and over. It

is as if they have talked with me every week, and I am so thankful for that. Also the Christian elders in my congregation give appropriate attention to us elderly and infirm ones, following up to make sure we have transportation to the congregation meetings and providing other needs. I consider my spiritual brothers and sisters a blessing from Jehovah."

You Too Can Cope With Loneliness

Whether you are young or older, single or married, a child with parents or an orphan and whether you have lost loved ones or are experiencing some other type of loneliness, there are ways to cope with your feelings. Jocabed, an 18-year-old girl whose father abandoned his family of six to go to another country, says: "Speak up! It is important that we express ourselves. If we do not, no one is going to understand us." She recommends: "Stop thinking so much about yourself. Seek help from mature ones, not from youths who may be worse off than you are." Luisa, previously mentioned, says, "Heartfelt prayer to Jehovah gives us the help we need to get out of what you might call a dead-end street." Jorge, who lost his wife in death, comments on how he copes with loneliness: "Persistence is needed. Showing interest in others helps me a lot. 'Showing fellow feeling' when conversing with others can make our conversations meaningful and can help us to discover the beauty in other people." —1 Peter 3:8.

Many things can be done to combat loneliness. But will the day ever come when loneliness is a thing of the past? If so, how will this come about? The following article will answer these questions.



When No One Will Ever Feel Lonely Again

THE record at Genesis 2:18 states that when the first human was created, "Jehovah God went on to say: 'It is not good for the man to continue by himself. I am going to make a helper for him, as a complement of him.'" Humans were created to be with others and to depend on them.

The best Friend we can have is Jehovah God. The apostle Paul acknowledges Jehovah as "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation." (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) Jehovah himself expresses sorrow at the suffering of any of his servants. He is a God of empathy. "He himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust." (Psalm 103:14)

Do you not feel attracted to Jehovah God and grateful for his loving, kind, and understanding attention?

Jehovah Supports the Lonely Ones

In the past many of God's servants experienced circumstances in which they felt lonely. To them, Jehovah was a source of support and comfort. Take, for example, Jeremiah, who was called to be a prophet when a young man. Among the 40 writers of the Scriptures, Jeremiah was perhaps the one who expressed the most about his personal feelings. He felt timid and inadequate when he received his first assignment from God. (Jeremiah 1:6) To carry it out, he had to rely fully on Jehovah. Truly, Jehovah was with him "like a terrible mighty one."—Jeremiah 1:18, 19; 20:11.

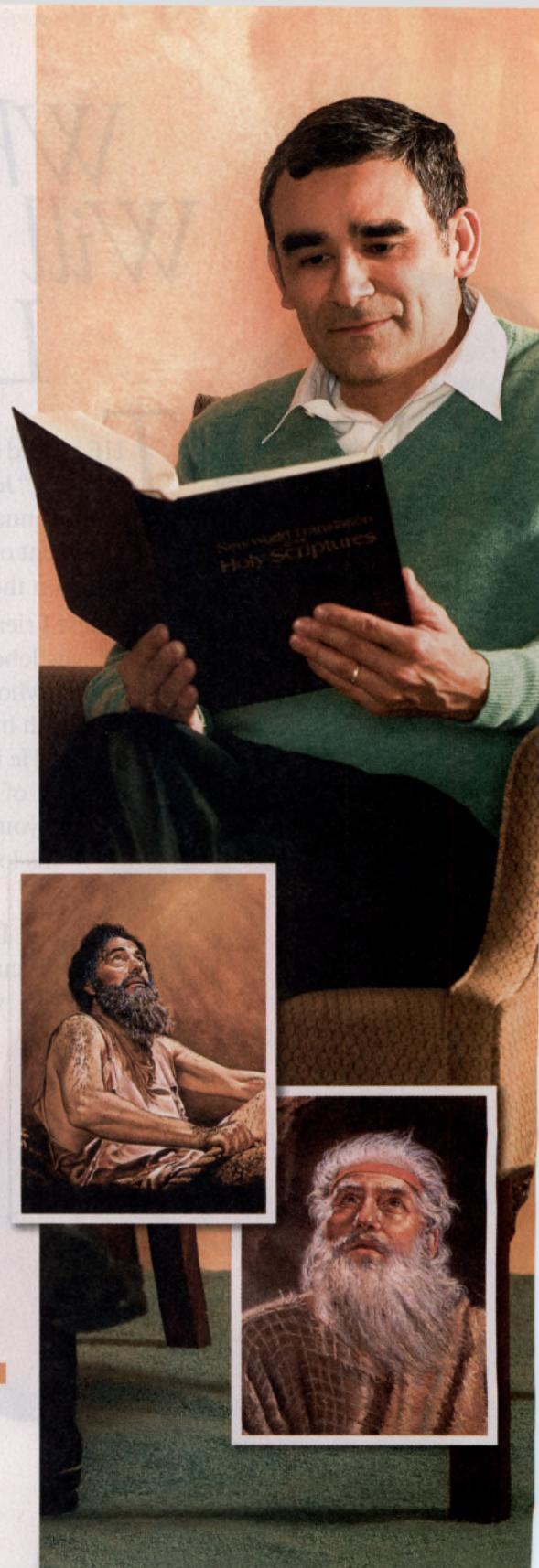
■ **With Jehovah's support we will not feel lonely, even when alone**

Some 300 years before Jeremiah, when Queen Jezebel heard of the death of her Baal prophets, she vowed to have Elijah put to death. Elijah fled some 285 miles to Horeb in the Sinai Peninsula. There he entered a cave to spend the night, and Jehovah God put this question to him: "What is your business here, Elijah?" Elijah explained that he felt he was the sole worshiper of Jehovah in all Israel, the only prophet left who was zealous for God's service. Jehovah assured him that he was not alone. Jehovah was with him, and 7,000 of Elijah's fellow Israelites were also with him, although unknown to him. Jehovah comforted and soothed Elijah and built up his faith. He touched Elijah's heart, encouraging the prophet not to give up in his assignment. (1 Kings 19:4, 9-12, 15-18) If, like Elijah, we ever feel lonely or worthless, we too can pray to Jehovah for strength. Also, by using discernment, Christian elders can speak consolingly to faithful ones, helping them to see their role in the outworking of God's purpose.—1 Thessalonians 5:14.

From these and other examples, we can appreciate Jehovah's willingness to give support and loving comfort to those who feel lonely. Yes, "Jehovah will become a secure height for anyone crushed, a secure height in times of distress." —Psalm 9:9; 46:1; Nahum 1:7.

A Man With Deep Feelings and Sympathy

Jesus Christ is an example of someone to be admired for his perfectly balanced emotions in imitation of Jehovah. Luke describes Jesus' reaction when encountering a funeral procession in the city of Nain: "There was a dead man being carried out, the only-begotten son of his mother.... When the Lord caught sight of her, he was moved with pity for her, and he said to her: 'Stop weeping.' With that he approached and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still, and he said: 'Young



**What do the Bible accounts of
Jeremiah and Elijah teach us?**

man, I say to you, Get up!" And the dead man sat up and started to speak, and he gave him to his mother." (Luke 7:12-15) Jesus' emotions were stirred. He was a compassionate man. Imagine the happiness Jesus brought to the lonely widow when he restored her son to her! No longer was she lonely.

We can experience the reassurance of having in Jesus one who can "sympathize with our weaknesses." He certainly sympathizes with upright ones who are lonely. Indeed, through him "we may obtain mercy and find undeserved kindness for help at the right time." (Hebrews 4:15, 16) By imitating Jesus, we can develop sympathy for those who experience grief, affliction, and loneliness. By helping others, we are less likely to be lonely. But there is yet another way in which we can gain help in overcoming the negative feelings of loneliness.

Jehovah's Word Can Help Us Overcome Loneliness

Many have found that "through the comfort from the Scriptures we . . . have hope." God's Word is full of practical counsel that can help us to overcome loneliness. (Romans 15:4; Psalm 32:8) For example, God's Word exhorts us 'not to think more of ourselves than it is necessary to think.' (Romans 12:3) To apply this advice, we may need to make an adjustment in our thinking. Humility and modesty—having a realistic view of our limitations—will certainly help us develop balanced and reasonable expectations. God's Word also counsels us to develop genuine personal interest in others. (Philippians 2:4) This is a two-way street. As you give of yourself, you will receive from others. This good fellowship helps to relieve feelings of emptiness and gives meaning to our lives.

The Bible encourages us as Christians 'not to forsake the gathering of ourselves

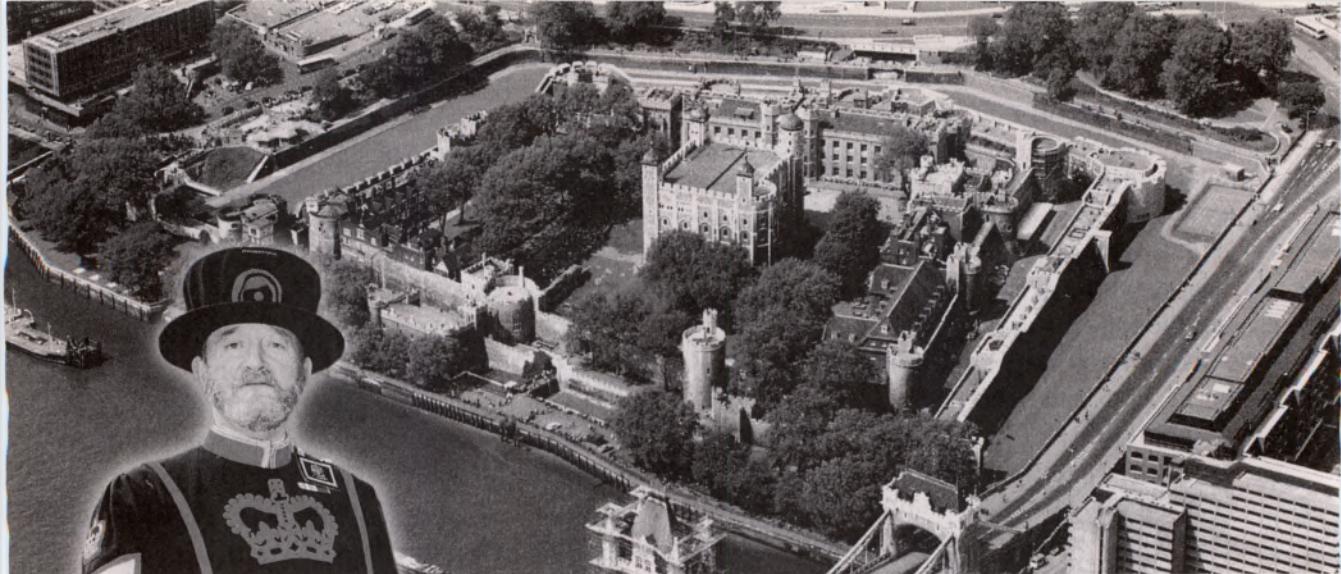
together.' (Hebrews 10:24, 25) So engage in positive activities, such as attending meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses regularly. Undoubtedly, Christian meetings can contribute to our spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. Speaking to others about the good news of God's Kingdom is an enjoyable way to fill our lives with wholesome activity. It keeps our mind focused in the right direction, fortifies our faith, and protects our hope.—Ephesians 6:14-17.

Draw close to Jehovah in prayer. David exhorted: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you." (Psalm 55:22) By studying God's Word, you will feel happy. (Psalm 1:1-3) If feelings of loneliness seize you, meditate on Jehovah's loving care as revealed through his Word. The psalmist wrote: "My soul has been cleaving to the very dust. Preserve me alive according to your word."—Psalm 119:25.

When No One Will Say, "I Am Lonely"

Jehovah God has promised us a new world free from anxieties, frustrations, and negative feelings. The Bible states: "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 have passed away." (Revelation 21:4) Yes, among those former things that will pass away are the physical, mental, and emotional pains that we experience today.

The earth will be full of friendly people, who will enrich our lives. Jehovah through his heavenly Kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ will cure us forever of our loneliness. He will give us new and wonderful things to do in an earthly paradise. The day will soon come when we will never again say, "I feel lonely."



THE TOWER OF LONDON

Historic Monument to a Turbulent Past

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BRITAIN

DOMINATING the Thames River in East London stands one of the most famous monuments in the world—the Tower of London. For nearly a thousand years, this great fortress, palace, and prison played a central role in England's turbulent history. Through its gates passed kings, queens, courtiers, churchmen, politicians, and judges—some to emerge in triumph, others never to be seen alive again. Why was the Tower built, and what human dramas inside its walls shaped the course of English history?

Royal Fortress

After Duke William of Normandy invaded England in 1066, he constructed a series

of castles to intimidate the hostile Anglo-Saxons. The most formidable building came to be in the city of London. The wooden fort initially erected inside the southeast corner of the old Roman walls was soon replaced by a huge stone structure, the Great Tower. Roughly square, measuring 106 by 118 feet, it loomed 90 feet into the sky, instilling fear in the local inhabitants. When a later king had it whitewashed, it became known as the White Tower.

Subsequent kings added towers of varying sizes, two massive encircling walls, and a deep moat, making the complex one of the most impregnable fortresses in Europe. Indeed, sometimes monarchs had to seek refuge behind its walls to escape their rebellious



**Anne
Boleyn**



**Catherine
Howard**



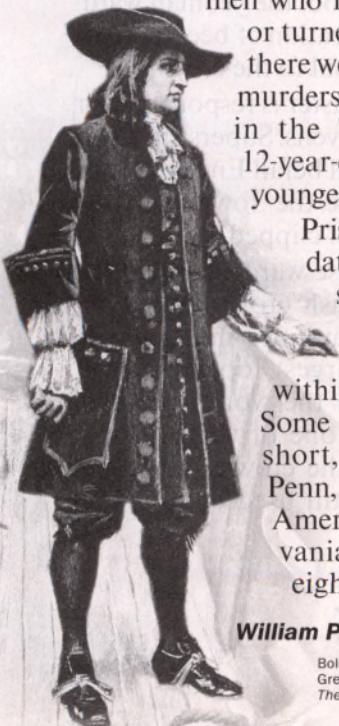
**Jane
Grey**

subjects. In times of civil war, the victorious side was the one that gained control of the Tower, seen as a symbol of power and authority. In more peaceful times, it was the starting point for impressive coronation-day processions. When in residence, the king and his entourage lived in richly ornamented palace apartments, where they entertained their friends with lavish banquets. However, the king's enemies got a different reception.

State Prison

Known to house its first prisoner in 1100, the Tower was a prison with a difference. It was reserved for people of rank and importance. Among its high-profile detainees were defeated kings of Scotland and France as well as members of the aristocracy and churchmen who had fallen out of favor or turned traitor. On occasion, there were executions and even murders. Henry VI was killed in the Tower, and so were 12-year-old Edward V and his younger brother.

Prisoners were accommodated wherever there was space and were either closely confined or allowed to wander within the castle precincts. Some prison sentences were short, others long. William Penn, later the founder of the American colony of Pennsylvania, was imprisoned for eight months for his reli-



William Penn

Boleyn and Howard: From the book *Heroes of the Reformation*, 1904; Grey: From the book *The World's Famous Events*; Penn: From the book *The Library of Historic Characters and Famous Events*, Vol. V, 1895



A tower apartment later used for prisoners

Copyright Historic Royal Palaces

gious beliefs. After a defeat in battle, the French king's nephew, Charles, Duke of Orléans, was held intermittently for 25 years until an enormous ransom was paid. The courtier, explorer, and writer Sir Walter Raleigh whiled away 13 dreary years writing his *History of the World* before his temporary release and eventual execution.

Executions Increase

The Tower's reputation for harsh treatment of prisoners really dates from the time of the Reformation. Henry VIII, desperate for a male heir, broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and began executing people who refused to acknowledge him as head of the Church of England. Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn, failed to produce a son and was beheaded in the Tower for alleged treason and adultery, along with her brother and four others. Catherine Howard, the fifth of Henry's wives, suffered the same fate. In addition, many nobles with royal blood, who were thus threats to the throne, were put into the Tower and died on the scaffold.

When Henry's young son the Protestant Edward VI became king, he continued the brutal executions. He died within six years and was succeeded by Henry's daughter

Mary, a zealous Roman Catholic. She lost no time in beheading 16-year-old Lady Jane Grey and her young husband, pawns in the struggle for power. Now it was time for Protestant enemies to die. Mary's half sister Elizabeth spent many anxious weeks in the Tower before she was released, but on becoming queen herself, she imprisoned and executed those who refused to give up their Catholic faith or who opposed her rule.

Although thousands were imprisoned in the Tower, only five women and two men were beheaded within its precincts, being spared the embarrassment of a public execution. Three of the women were queens —Anne Boleyn, Catherine Howard and, after reigning just nine days, Jane Grey. Most of the other executions, usually beheadings, took place on nearby Tower Hill and were watched by huge, unruly crowds. The severed head was displayed on a spike on London Bridge as a warning to others, and the headless body was taken back to the Tower for burial under a chapel floor. Eventually, over 1,500 corpses were interred there.

Sometimes, usually only with official sanction, prisoners were tortured to extract confessions. In 1605, Guy Fawkes, who had attempted to blow up the king and the Parliament in the Gunpowder Plot, was stretched on the Tower's rack to make him reveal the names of his accomplices before he was executed.

For a short time in the 1600's, England and the Tower came under the control of Oliver Cromwell and the Parliamentarians, but after Charles II was restored to the throne, fewer prisoners were sent to the Tower. In 1747 the last beheading took place on Tower Hill, but the Tower's role as state penitentiary was not quite finished. During the first world war, 11 German spies were confined there and executed by firing squad.

In the second world war, the Tower briefly held prisoners of war, including Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy reichsführer. The final victim to die within its walls was the spy Joseph Jacobs, shot in August 1941.

Yeoman Warders and the Crown Jewels

Since the Tower's beginning, warders have guarded both prisoners and buildings. But the specially chosen yeoman warders date their origin from 1485. In those days prisoners often arrived by river and entered the Tower through Traitor's Gate. If the accused was returning from his trial, spectators watched to see which way the accompanying yeoman gaoler (jailer) held his ax. A blade facing the prisoner signaled another execution.

Today yeoman warders still guard the Tower but act as knowledgeable guides for the many visitors. On ceremonial occasions they wear their resplendent Tudor livery of a scarlet-and-gold tunic topped with a high white ruff, but for normal duties they dress in their navy-and-red Victorian uniforms. Warders are popularly known as beefeaters, a nickname that probably started as a term of derision during times of famine. While Londoners went short of food, the yeoman warders were always given a ration of beef to make sure that they stayed loyal to the crown.

The yeoman raven master is responsible for the Tower's large ravens. Superstition has it that disaster will befall England if the birds ever leave the Tower, so their wings are kept clipped.

Jewel House wardens guard the famous British crown jewels, on public display since the 17th century. The largest top-quality cut diamond in the world, the Cullinan I, is one of the priceless stones in the crowns, orbs, and scepters still used by the royal family.



The yeoman gaoler

Copyright Historic Royal Palaces



Some of the crown jewels

Zoo, Mint, and Armory

Early in the 13th century, King John kept lions in the Tower, but the royal menagerie really began when his successor, Henry III, received three leopards, a polar bear, and an elephant from European sovereigns. Although the animals were intended for the amusement of the king and his court, when the bear went swimming in the Thames on the end of a lead to catch fish, all London could enjoy the spectacle. More exotic animals arrived over the years, and the menagerie was open to the public from Elizabethan times. It was closed in the 1830's when the animals were moved to the newly opened zoo in Regent's Park in London.

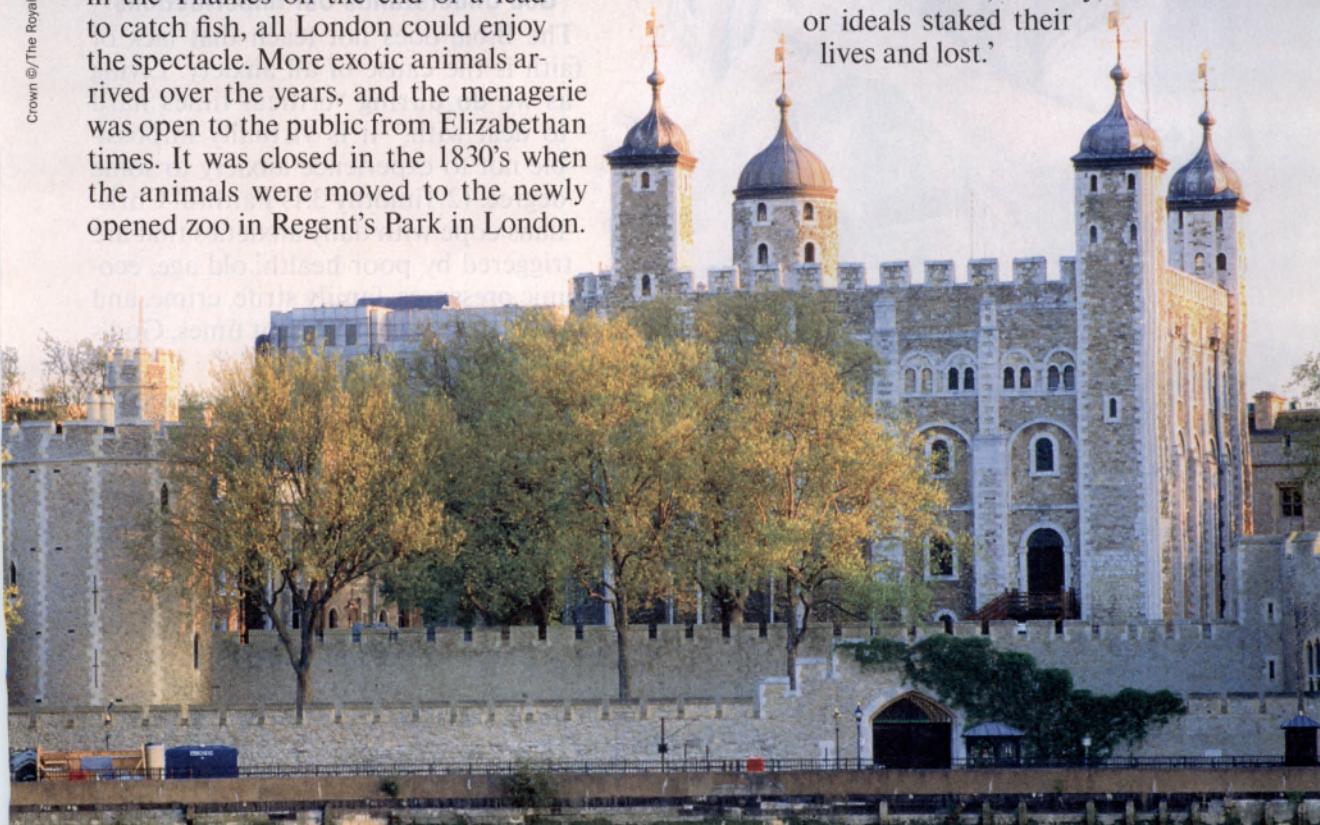


A 16th-century coin depicting Henry VIII

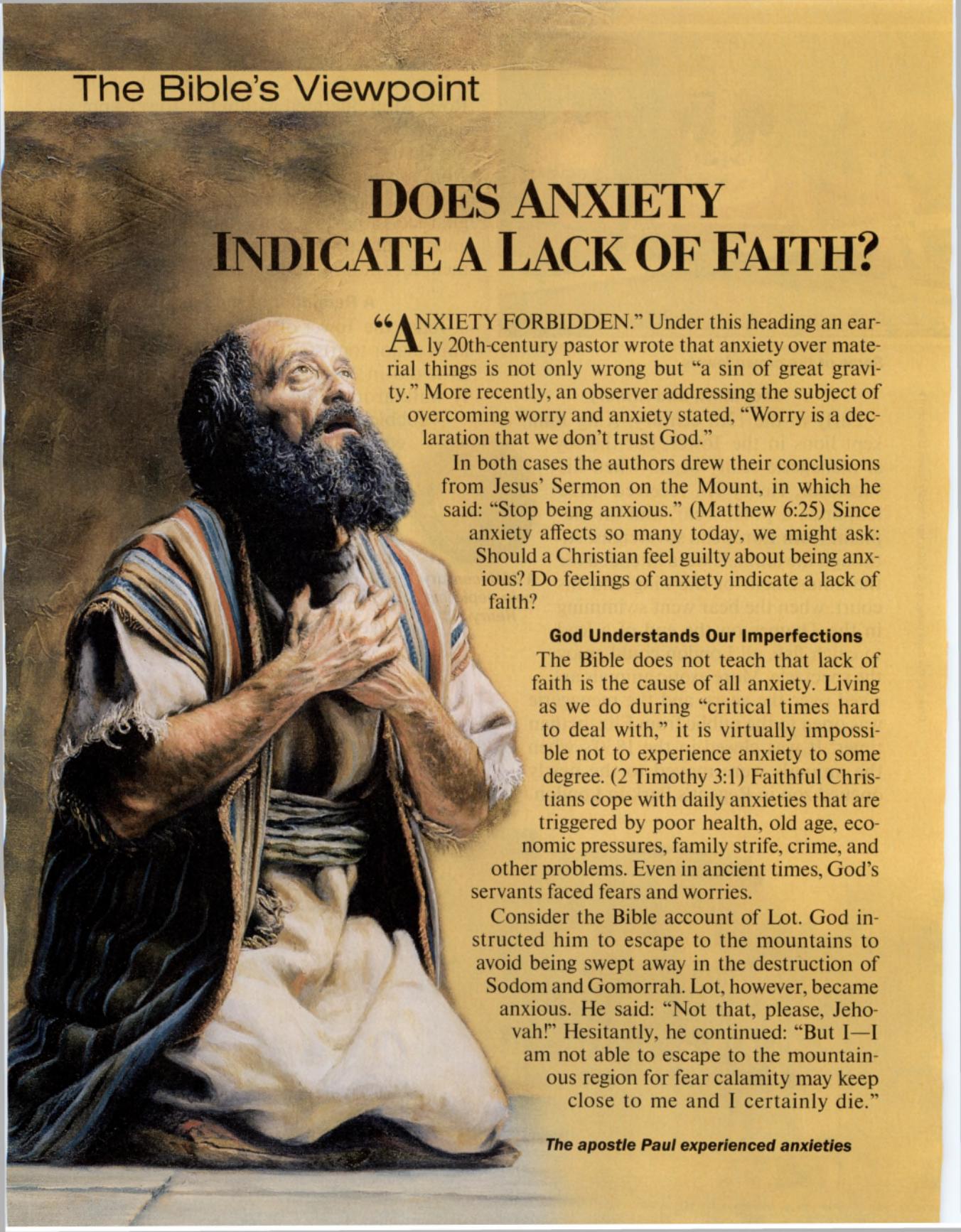
For over 500 years, a major branch of the Royal Mint operated within the Tower's precincts. One of its busiest times occurred during Henry VIII's reign, when it made coins from silver confiscated from the recently dissolved monasteries. The Tower also safeguarded important State and legal records and manufactured and stored military equipment for the king and his army.

A Reminder of the Past

Today the Tower of London is one of Britain's major tourist attractions. It looks much as it did in earlier times, so one can hardly walk around the grim, gray towers and cobbled streets without being reminded of the violence, suffering, and human tragedy experienced within the Tower's walls over the centuries. Its turbulent past is well summed up at the site of the scaffold on Tower Hill. There a small plaque commemorates 'the tragic history, and in many cases the martyrdom, of those who for the sake of their faith, country, or ideals staked their lives and lost.'



DOES ANXIETY INDICATE A LACK OF FAITH?



“ANXIETY FORBIDDEN.” Under this heading an early 20th-century pastor wrote that anxiety over material things is not only wrong but “a sin of great gravity.” More recently, an observer addressing the subject of overcoming worry and anxiety stated, “Worry is a declaration that we don’t trust God.”

In both cases the authors drew their conclusions from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, in which he said: “Stop being anxious.” (Matthew 6:25) Since anxiety affects so many today, we might ask: Should a Christian feel guilty about being anxious? Do feelings of anxiety indicate a lack of faith?

God Understands Our Imperfections

The Bible does not teach that lack of faith is the cause of all anxiety. Living as we do during “critical times hard to deal with,” it is virtually impossible not to experience anxiety to some degree. (2 Timothy 3:1) Faithful Christians cope with daily anxieties that are triggered by poor health, old age, economic pressures, family strife, crime, and other problems. Even in ancient times, God’s servants faced fears and worries.

Consider the Bible account of Lot. God instructed him to escape to the mountains to avoid being swept away in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot, however, became anxious. He said: “Not that, please, Jehovah!” Hesitantly, he continued: “But I—I am not able to escape to the mountainous region for fear calamity may keep close to me and I certainly die.”

The apostle Paul experienced anxieties

Why did Lot fear the mountains? The Bible does not say. Whatever the reason, Lot felt quite intimidated. How did God react? Was Lot disciplined for lack of faith or trust in God? No. On the contrary, Jehovah showed consideration, allowing Lot to escape to a nearby city.—Genesis 19:18-22.

There are other Bible examples of faithful worshipers who became very anxious at times. The prophet Elijah became afraid and ran away after receiving a death threat. (1 Kings 19:1-4) Moses, Hannah, David, Habakkuk, Paul, and other men and women of strong faith also expressed anxieties. (Exodus 4:10; 1 Samuel 1:6; Psalm 55:5; Habakkuk 1:2, 3; 2 Corinthians 11:28) Yet, God showed compassion and continued to use them in his service, thereby manifesting a real understanding of imperfect humans.

"The Sin That Easily Entangles Us"

Persistent anxiety, however, can wear us down and lead to loss of trust in God. The apostle Paul referred to lack of faith as "the sin that easily entangles us." (Hebrews 12:1) By including himself, Paul was likely admitting his own propensity to get 'easily entangled' in episodes of momentary weakness of faith.

Perhaps this was the case with Zechariah when he did not believe the angel who informed him that his wife would become pregnant. On one occasion Jesus' apostles were unable to perform a cure because of their "little faith." However, these individuals continued to enjoy God's approval.—Matthew 17:18-20; Luke 1:18, 20, 67; John 17:26.

On the other hand, the Bible also includes examples of people who lost their trust in God and suffered serious consequences. For instance, many Israelites who left Egypt were barred from entering the Promised Land because of their lack of faith. In one incident they even spoke directly against God, saying: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread

and no water." Indicative of God's displeasure, poisonous snakes were sent to punish them.—Numbers 21:5, 6.

The inhabitants of Jesus' hometown, Nazareth, missed the privilege of seeing more miracles performed in their territory because they lacked faith. Further, the wicked generation of that day received a scathing denunciation from Jesus because of lack of faith. (Matthew 13:58; 17:17; Hebrews 3:19) Appropriately, the apostle Paul warned: "Beware, brothers, for fear there should ever develop in any one of you a wicked heart lacking faith by drawing away from the living God."—Hebrews 3:12.

Yes, in extreme cases lack of faith could result from a wicked heart. But this was not the case with Zechariah and Jesus' apostles in the examples previously mentioned. Their lack of faith was due to momentary weakness. Their general pattern of life showed that they were "pure in heart."—Matthew 5:8.

God Knows Our Needs

The Scriptures help us to make a distinction between general anxiety and the sin of lack of faith. Daily feelings of anxiety or even a momentary lapse of faith because of human weakness should not be confused with the complete lack of trust in God that springs from a wicked, unresponsive heart. Christians, therefore, need not be plagued by guilt just because they periodically experience anxiety.

Nevertheless, caution is necessary so that anxiety does not grow out of proportion and dominate our lives. Hence, the wisdom of Jesus' words when he said: "Never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?'" This he followed with the comforting words: "For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you."—Matthew 6:25-33.



Tires

Your Life Could Depend on Them!

IMAGINE being strapped inside a welded steel-and-glass cage with acid and flammable liquids in containers near you. Now suspend this potentially deadly construction just inches off the ground and accelerate it to about 100 feet per second. As a final touch, put your machine among similar ones and have them dart around one another while other machines race past you from the opposite direction!

That is essentially what you do every time you get into a vehicle and drive down the highway. What helps you to maintain control and feel secure while driving? To a large degree, it is your tires.

What Tires Do

Tires serve a variety of important purposes. They not only bear the weight of your vehicle but also cushion it from bumps, potholes, and other irregularities in the road. More important, your tires supply vitally needed traction in order for you to accelerate, steer, brake, and provide directional stability under varying road conditions. Yet, only a small portion of the tire—about the size of a postcard—is in contact with the ground at any one time.

In view of their importance, what can you do to keep your tires functioning safely and efficiently? And when the time comes, how do you select the correct tires for your vehicle? Before answering these questions, let us take a brief look at the history of the tire.

Early Pioneers of Rubber

Although wheels have been in use for thousands of years, the idea of attaching rubber to the outer rim of vehicle wheels is a relatively recent development. Natural rubber was first attached to wooden or steel wheels in the early 1800's. But it wore out quickly, so the future of rubber-coated wheels seemed bleak—that is, until Charles Goodyear, a determined inventor from Connecticut, U.S.A., came along. In 1839, Goodyear discovered a process known as vulcanization, whereby rubber is infused with sulfur, under heat and pressure. This process made the rubber much easier to mold and

vastly improved its resistance to wear. Solid rubber tires became more popular, but they gave a rough ride.

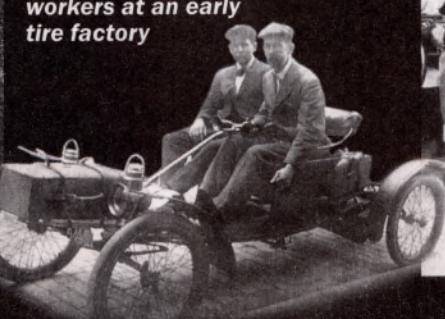
In 1845, Scottish engineer Robert W. Thomson received a patent for the first pneumatic, or air-filled, tire. However, it wasn't until another Scotsman, John Boyd Dunlop, set out to improve the ride of his son's bicycle that the pneumatic tire became a commercial success. Dunlop patented his new tire in 1888 and started his own company. Nevertheless, the pneumatic tire still had to overcome significant obstacles.

One day in 1891, a French cyclist got a flat tire. He attempted to repair it but failed because the tire was permanently bonded to the bicycle wheel. He sought the help of a fellow Frenchman, Édouard Michelin, who was known for his work with vulcanized rubber. Michelin spent nine hours repairing the tire. That experience motivated him to develop a pneumatic tire that could be removed from its wheel for easy repair.

Michelin's tires were so successful that the following year 10,000 happy cyclists were using them. In short order, pneumatic tires were installed on horse-drawn carriages in Paris, much to the delight of their French passengers. In 1895, to demonstrate that pneumatic tires could be used on motorized vehicles, Édouard and his brother, André, put them on a race car, but it finished last. Still, people were so amazed by these unusual tires that they tried to cut the tires open to see just what the Michelin brothers had hidden inside them!



An early bicycle and car, both with inflatable tires; workers at an early tire factory



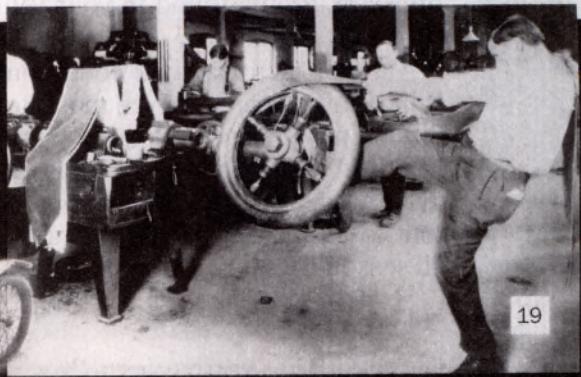
In the 1930's and '40's, durable new materials, such as rayon, nylon, and polyester, replaced the more fragile materials of cotton and natural rubber. Following World War II, groundwork was laid for a tire that maintained an airtight seal directly against the wheel, therefore no longer requiring an inner tube to contain the air. Later, further improvements were made.

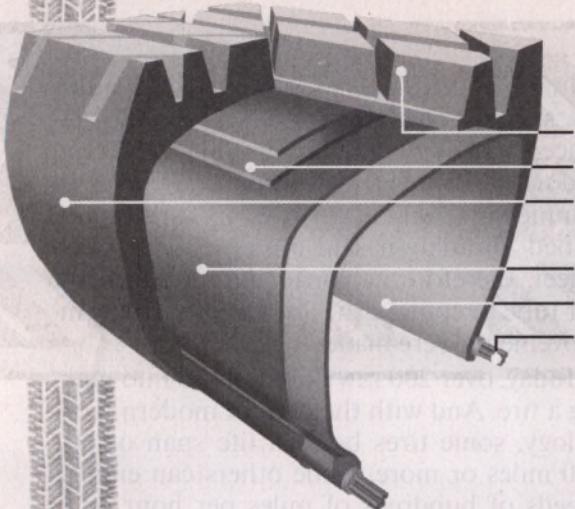
Today, over 200 raw materials go into making a tire. And with the help of modern technology, some tires boast a life span of 80,000 miles or more, while others can endure speeds of hundreds of miles per hour on a race car. All the while, tires have become more affordable for the everyday consumer.

Selecting Tires

If you own a motor vehicle, you may be faced with the daunting task of selecting new tires. How do you determine when it is time to replace your tires? By inspecting your tires regularly for obvious signs of wear or damage.* Tire manufacturers provide built-in wear indicators, frequently called wear bars, to indicate when your tires have reached the end of their useful life. Wear bars appear as solid bands of rubber across the tread surface. It is also good to check for tread separation, protruding wires, bulges in the sidewall, and other irregularities. If you find any of these things, you should not drive the vehicle until the tire is repaired or replaced. If you purchased the tires new, the tire retailer may replace the damaged tire at a reduced cost if it is covered by a warranty.

* See the chart on page 21 for help in inspecting your tires.





Parts of a Tire

- Tread** provides traction and cornering grip
- Belts** stabilize and strengthen the tread
- Sidewall** protects the side of the tire from road and curb damage
- Body ply** gives the tire strength and flexibility
- Inner liner** keeps the air inside the tire
- Bead** assures an airtight fit with the wheel

Tires are best replaced in matched pairs, mounted on the same axle. If you are installing only one new tire, mate it with the tire having the most tread in order to balance traction when braking.

Sorting through all the different types, sizes, and models of tires can be confusing. However, by answering a few key questions, you will find the job to be much easier. First, review the vehicle manufacturer's recommendations. Your vehicle has specific requirements that need to be considered, such as tire and wheel size, ground clearance, and load capacity. Important, too, is your vehicle's design. Modern vehicles with anti-lock brakes, traction control, and all-wheel-drive systems are designed to be used with tires having specific operating characteristics. Tire specifications are usually found in your vehicle owner's manual.

Another factor is road conditions. Will your vehicle be driven mostly on dirt or paved roads, in rainy or dry weather? It could well be that you drive under varying conditions. In that case, you may need all-terrain or all-season tires.

You should also consider the life expectancy and traction rating of the tire. Generally, the softer the tread compound, the more traction the tire will have, but it will wear out sooner. Conversely, if the tread compound is relatively hard, the tire will have less traction but will likely last longer. Ratings are usually found in sales literature where tires are sold. Be aware that tire ratings vary from manufacturer to manufacturer.

Once you have narrowed down your search, price may determine your final selection. Well-known manufacturers usually offer better quality assurance and warranty coverage.

Maintaining Your Tires

Proper tire maintenance involves three things: maintaining the correct air pressure, rotating the tires regularly, and keeping them properly balanced and aligned. Maintaining the correct tire pressure is very important. If a tire has too much air, the tread will wear prematurely in the center. On the other hand, if tire pressure is too low, a tire will wear excessively on the edges and fuel efficiency will be reduced.

In Our Next Issue

- **Can Science Help You to Find God?**
- **Wartime Hardships Prepared Me for Life**
- **How Can I Stop My Boyfriend From Mistrating Me?**

Tires may lose a pound or more of pressure every month because of air bleeding through the rubber. So don't assume that you can tell whether your tires are properly inflated by looking at their shape. According to the Rubber Manufacturers Association, "a tire can lose up to half of its air pressure and not appear to be flat!" Therefore, use a pressure gauge to monitor tire pressure, and do so at least once a month. Many vehicle owners keep a gauge in the glove compartment for convenient use. Always check your tires when you change the engine oil and only when the tires are cold—in other words, after they have been sitting for at least three hours or when they have been driven on for less than a mile. Tire pressure specifications are usually noted in the owner's manual, on a label near the driver's doorpost, or in the glove compartment. If you want to avoid a rough ride, do not inflate tires to the maximum pressure, which is molded on the sidewall.

Tires will last longer and wear more evenly if you rotate them on a regular basis. Unless your vehicle manufacturer recommends otherwise, it is good to rotate tires every 6,000 to

8,000 miles. Once again, check your owner's manual for the suggested rotation pattern.

Finally, get your tire alignment checked annually or whenever you notice any unusual vibration or irregularity in your car's steering. While the suspension system on your vehicle is designed to align the tires under varying loads, normal wear and tear makes it necessary to check and realign the tires periodically. An automotive service technician who is certified in suspension and wheel alignment should be able to keep your vehicle in accurate alignment, maximizing tire life and ride quality.

"Intelligent" Tires

With the aid of computers, some cars warn the driver when tire pressure is below safe limits. Some tires can operate safely for short periods without air pressure, and others seal themselves after a puncture. Indeed, engineers are designing tires for an ever-widening range of operating conditions.

As advances in materials, tread design, suspension, steering, and braking systems are applied to modern vehicles, tires make driving not only easier but safer.

Tire Maintenance Checklist

Visual checks:

- Are there bulges in the sidewall?
- Are wires showing in the tread surface?
- Is the tread depth within safe limits, or are the tires' wear bars showing?



Also consider:

- Is the tire pressure set at the vehicle manufacturer's recommended pressure?
- Is it time to rotate the tires? (Use the vehicle manufacturer's suggested mileage interval and rotation pattern.)
- Should different tires be installed because of a change in seasons?

Crossword Puzzle

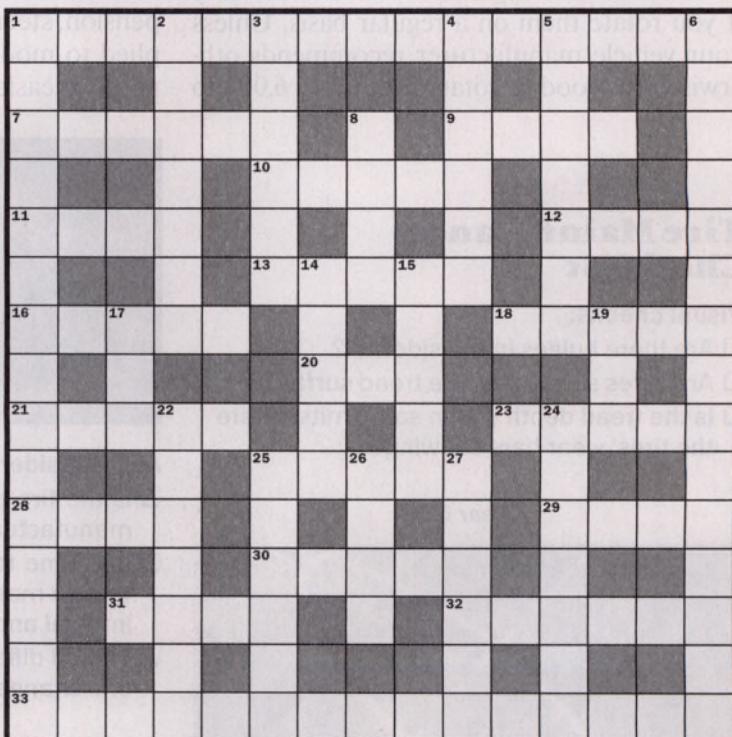
Clues Across

- The foundation of the tabernacle consisted of these [2 words] (Exodus 26:19-32)
- What the deliverance of the nation of Israel from bondage to Egypt is called (Hebrews 11:22)
- In forewarning a man desirous of following Him, Jesus said that foxes have these, whereas He had "nowhere to lay down his head" (Luke 9:58)
- Jesus foretold that Peter would disown him this number of times (Matthew 26:75)
- One of the three qualities that characterized the Christian congregation after the disappearance of the miraculous gifts of the spirit (1 Corinthians 13:13)
- Idols have them, but they cannot process information (Psalm 115:6)
- Paul counseled that for Christian women this should be well arranged and modest (1 Timothy 2:9)
- Because he was a former persecutor of Christians, Paul considered himself to be this in regard to the other apostles (1 Corinthians 15:9)
- Where Jesus lay sleeping when a storm almost swamped the boat (Mark 4:37, 38)
- One made of goats' hair was used by David's wife Michal in her scheme to help David escape Saul's wrath (1 Samuel 19:12, 13)
- The jawbone of an ass used by Samson to kill 1,000 Philistine men was described as this (Judges 15:15)
- Item (Hebrews 8:1)
- Person (Acts 17:29)
- Formerly (Colossians 1:21)
- Steadfast (Ephesians 6:14)
- To make glad or happy (2 Corinthians 2:2)
- The father of Saul's concubine Rizpah (2 Samuel 3:7)
- For centuries this insect has been a food item in the Middle East (Leviticus 11:22)

- A blessing the Israelites would enjoy if they obeyed Jehovah [3 words] (Leviticus 26:5)

Clues Down

- For two days in a row, John the Baptizer made this proclamation about Jesus [5 words] (John 1:29, 35, 36)
 - Because of their position deep in the body, these organs are used in the Bible to represent one's deepest thoughts and emotions (Revelation 2:23)
 - To have become acquainted with by experience (1 Peter 2:3)
 - In the revelation to John, 24 of them are seen seated around Jehovah's throne (Revelation 4:4)
 - Jesus described the mustard grain as this in relation to all other seeds (Mark 4:31)
 - When Paul reached Athens on his second missionary tour, he requested that these two men
- "come to him as quickly as possible" [3 words] (Acts 17:15)
- To impel to action (Genesis 33:11)
 - Proximity (1 Samuel 31:2)
 - God's chief Adversary (Job 1:6)
 - The family head of certain returned exiles included among "the sons of the servants of Solomon" (Ezra 2:55, 57)
 - He mistakenly rebuked righteous Hannah for being drunk (1 Samuel 1:12-16)
 - Designed for a particular purpose (1 Peter 2:9)
 - Cornelius was one in the army's Italian band (Acts 10:1)
 - The father of "good-for-nothing" Sheba, who rebelled against David (2 Samuel 20:1)
 - Opinion (Romans 2:3)
 - In the wilderness the Israelites longed for this item they used to eat in Egypt (Numbers 11:5)



MARCO POLO

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN ITALY

Three men step off a galley at a quay in Venice. No one rushes to greet them. Their homecoming after 24 years abroad would have passed unnoticed had their bizarre appearance not made them stand out. Dressed in ragged robes of once fine silk, in the Mongol style, they had, says one source, "a certain indescribable smack of the Tartar both in air and accent, having indeed all but forgotten their Venetian tongue." The travelers are Marco Polo, his father, and his uncle. The year is 1295.

TRAVELS THE SILK ROAD TO CHINA

THE Polos' stories of a journey to distant Cathay, now China, seemed incredible to their contemporaries. Marco's memoirs—originally entitled *Description of the World* and later, *Travels of Marco Polo*—told of unknown civilizations of huge wealth, abounding in goods avidly sought by Western merchants. His book exerted an enormous influence on popular imagination. Within 25 years of Marco's return, manuscript versions were current in Franco-Italian, French, Latin, Tuscan, Venetian, and likely German—an unparalleled success for the Middle Ages. His book was copied by hand for two centuries and since 1477, it has continually been in print in many languages. Marco Polo is probably the most famous Westerner ever to have traveled on the Silk Road to China. Why did he make the journey? And can all that he claimed to have seen and done be believed?

Merchants of Venice

In the 13th century, many Venetian merchants settled in Constantinople, now Istanbul, and made fortunes there. Among them were Niccolò and Maffeo Polo, Marco's father and uncle. In about 1260 they liquidated their property in the area, invested in jewels, and made for the capital of the western khanate of the Mongol Empire, Sarai, on the Volga River. Business went well, and they doubled their assets. Prevented by war from returning home, they headed east, likely on horseback, to the great commer-



© Michael Yamashita/CORBIS

cial city of Bukhara, now in Uzbekistan.

Unrest detained them there for three years, until envoys bound for Kublai—Great Khan of all the Mongols, whose domains stretched from Korea to Poland—passed through Bukhara. The envoys invited Niccolò and Maffeo to accompany them,

since, recounted Marco, the Great Khan had never met any “Latins”—likely meaning southern Europeans—and would be pleased to speak with them. A year’s trek took the Polos to the court of Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, founder of the Mongol Empire.

The Great Khan welcomed the two Polo brothers and asked them much about the West. He gave them a gold tablet as a safe-conduct for their return and entrusted them with a letter asking the pope to send “some hundred wise men, learned in the law of Christ and conversant with the seven arts to preach to [Kublai’s] people.”

Meanwhile, Marco was born. He was 15 when he first met his father, in 1269. On reentering “Christian” dominions, Niccolò and Maffeo learned that Pope Clement IV had died. They awaited a successor, but this three-year interregnum was the longest in history. After two years, in 1271 they left to return to the Great Khan, taking 17-year-old Marco with them.

Marco’s Journey

In Acre, Palestine, a prominent church politician, Teobaldo Visconti, gave the Polos letters for the Great Khan explaining why the Polos had been unable to carry out his request for a hundred wise men. On reaching Asia Minor, they heard that Visconti himself had been elected pope, so they returned to him in Acre. Instead of a hundred sages, the new pope, Gregory X, sent just two friars with powers to ordain priests and bishops and furnished them with proper credentials and gifts for the Khan. The party set off again, but fear of the wars ravaging those regions soon caused the friars to turn back. The Polos continued on.

The three traveled through the lands now known as Turkey and Iran and descended to the Persian Gulf with the idea of proceeding by sea. However, judging the ships unseaworthy, “wretched affairs . . . only stitched together with twine,” they settled on the overland route. Turning north and east, they traversed the immense wastes, imposing mountain ranges, green plateaus, and rich pastures of Afghanistan and the Pamirs before reaching Kashgar, in what is now the Chinese autonomous region of Xinjiang Uygur. Then, following ancient caravan routes south



Venice

Mt. Ararat

Robert Azzi/Saudi Aramco
World/PADIA



Mongolian woman

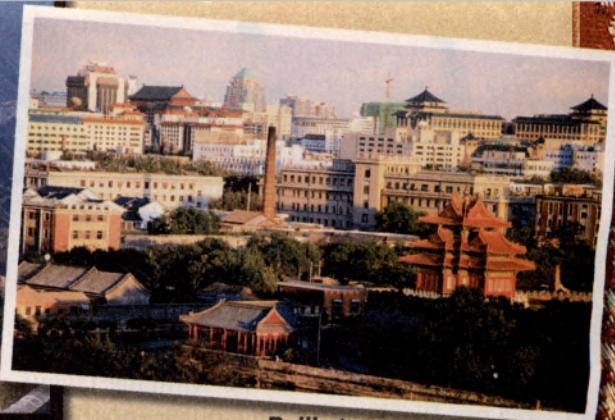
C. Ursillo/Robertstock.com

Boatman, Myanmar

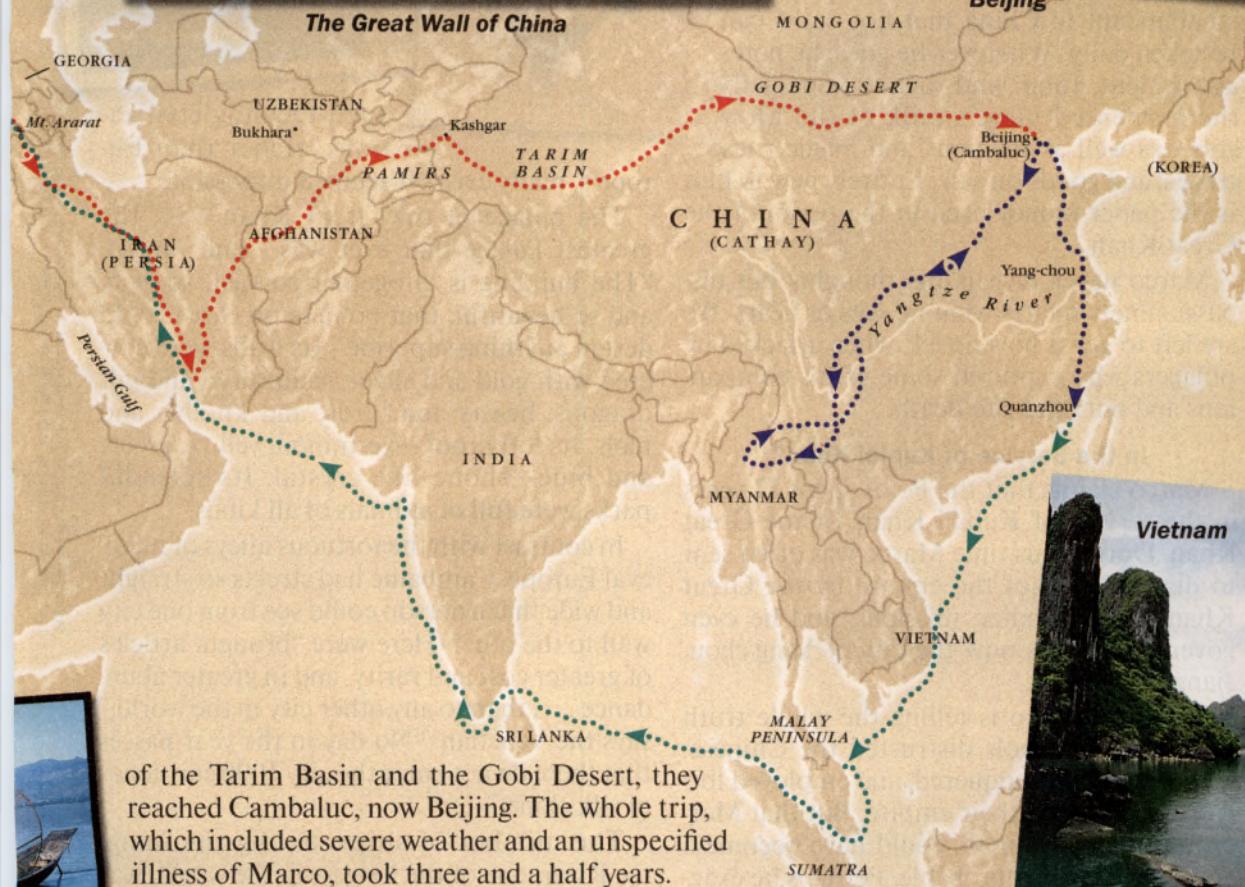




(Sarai)



Beijing



of the Tarim Basin and the Gobi Desert, they reached Cambaluc, now Beijing. The whole trip, which included severe weather and an unspecified illness of Marco, took three and a half years.

Marco notes curiosities along the way—the mountain on which Noah's ark was said to have come to rest in Armenia, the Magi's supposed burial site in Persia, lands of intense cold and perpetual darkness in the far north. Marco's is the first mention in Western literature of petroleum. He reveals that "salamander," far from being the wool of an animal able to resist fire, as was reputed, is a mineral

Indian
spices



Vietnam



Chinese horsemen, Kublai Khan, the Yangtze River

—asbestos—found in the Xinjiang Uygur region. Black rocks that burn—coal—are so abundant in China that hot baths can be taken daily. Wherever he goes, he notes adornment, food, and drink—especially the fermented mare's milk of the Mongols—as well as religious and magic rites, trades, and goods on sale. Entirely new to him is the paper money used in the realm of the Great Khan.

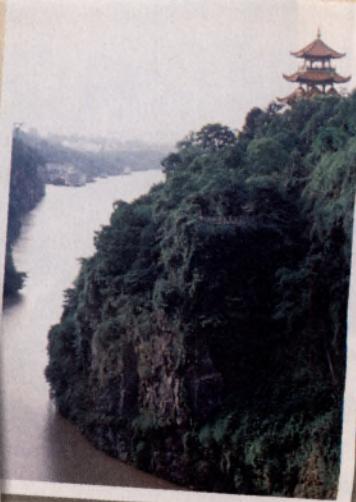
Marco never reveals his thoughts but dispassionately relates what he sees or hears. We are left to guess how he felt when attacked by pillagers who captured some of his companions and put others to death.

In the Service of Kublai Khan?

Marco claims that the Polos spent 17 years in the service of Kublai Khan, or the Great Khan. During this time Marco was often sent to distant parts of the empire by the Great Khan on fact-finding missions, and he even governed what is now the city of Yang-chou, Jiangsu Province.

Whether Marco is telling the whole truth is debated. Mongols distrusted the Chinese, whom they had conquered, and employed foreigners to govern their empire. But that Marco, an unlettered man, could have become a governor seems improbable. Perhaps he exaggerated his rank. Yet, scholars are willing to accept that he may have been "a useful emissary at some level."

Nonetheless, Marco was able to paint a dazzling picture of metropolises of untold wealth and of pagan and outlandish customs belonging to a world wholly ignored by the West or known only through fable and hearsay. Could



such teeming civilizations, richer than Europe's, really exist? It seemed impossible.

The palace of the Great Khan was "the greatest Palace that ever was," said Marco. "The building is altogether so vast, so rich, and so beautiful, that no man on earth could design anything superior." Its walls were covered with gold and silver, sculptured and gilt dragons, beasts and birds, and knights and idols. Its lofty roof—vermilion, yellow, green, and blue—shone like crystal. Its splendid parks were full of animals of all kinds.

In contrast with the tortuous alleys of medieval Europe, Cambaluc had streets so straight and wide that a person could see from one city wall to the other. Here were "brought articles of greater cost and rarity, and in greater abundance . . . , than to any other city in the world," says the Venetian. "No day in the year passes that there do not enter the city 1000 cart-loads of silk alone."

The number of ships sailing the Yangtze River, one of the longest in the world, was amazing. The port of Sinju, Marco reckons, must have accommodated as many as 15,000 ships.

Among the Mongol customs Marco mentions is that of the marrying of dead children. If one family lost a son aged four or more and another lost a daughter of the same age, the fathers might decide that the dead children

Horsemen: Tor Eigeland/Saudi Aramco World/PADA; Kublai Khan: Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan; Yangtze River: © Chris Stowers/Panos Pictures

should be married, thereafter making a marriage contract and holding a great feast. Food would be offered, and paper effigies of slaves, money, and household goods would be burned, in the conviction that the "spouses" would possess these in the so-called other world.

Marco is struck by Mongol military skill, methods of governing, and religious tolerance. Socioeconomic achievements included relief for the poor and ill, patrols against fire and disorder, reserve granaries to alleviate distress caused by floods, and a post system for rapid communication.

While he knew of Mongol attempts to invade Japan, Marco did not claim that he had been there. However, he states that gold was so abundant in Japan that the emperor's palace was entirely roofed and paved with it. Marco's was the only reference to Japan in Western writings before the 16th century.

Marco's book was both marveled at and scoffed at for centuries. Scholars today, after weighing all its inaccuracies, define it as "an unsurpassed description" of Kublai's reign at its height.

Crossword Solutions

S	O	C	K	E	T	P	E	D	E	S	T	A	L	S
E	X	O	D	U	S	U	D	E	N	S	L			
T	N	T	H	R	E	E	I	I	A					
H	O	P	E	E	G	R	E	A	R	S				
E	Y	D	R	E	S	S	S	A						
L	E	A	S	T	A	A	S	T	E	R	N			
A	M		N	E	T		L	D						
M	O	O	I	S	T	G	A	P	O	I	N	T		
O	N	C	E	I	I	D	A	E	F	I	R	M		
F	C	C	H	E	E	R	I	I	O					
G	A	I	A	H	A	L	O	C	U	S	T			
O	A	A	R	I	E	H								
O	O													

Return to Venice

The Polos left China in about 1292. Marco says that the expedition made a 21-month voyage, which departed from what is now Quanzhou, touched Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, and Sri Lanka, and then followed the Indian coast to Persia. The last leg of their journey took them to Constantinople and finally Venice. Because they had been away for 24 years, it is not hard to imagine that their relatives scarcely recognized them. By then, Marco was 41 or 42.

How far Marco traveled is hard to estimate. One writer who recently attempted to retrace Marco's steps covered more than 6,000 miles between Iran and China alone. Even with modern means of transport, that was a feat fraught with difficulties.

Marco's book is said to have been dictated to a certain Rustichello in a Genoa prison in 1298. Tradition has it that while commanding a Venetian galley, Marco was captured in a sea battle with the Genoese, who were at war with Venice. Rustichello, a fellow prisoner, had experience in writing prose stories in French or Franco-Italian, and Marco's company evidently stimulated him to write.

Marco was probably freed in 1299 when Venice and Genoa made peace. He returned to Venice, married, and had three daughters. He died in his home city in 1324 at the age of 69.

Doubt still lingers in some people's minds as to whether Marco did all that he claimed or simply narrated tales he had heard from other travelers. But whatever the sources of Marco Polo's *Description of the World*, scholars recognize its worth. "Never before or since," says one historian, "has one man given such an immense body of new geographical knowledge to the West." Marco Polo's book remains a testimony to man's fascination with travel, new sights, and distant lands.

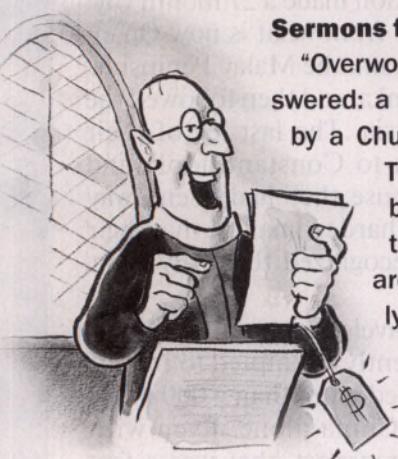


Watching the World

Sermons for Sale

"Overworked vicars struggling with their sermons have had their prayers answered: a new website offering homilies for all occasions has been launched by a Church of England lay reader," reports *The Daily Telegraph* of London.

The site's author, Bob Austin, says: "Preachers are getting busier and busier these days and sermons tend to go down to the bottom of the pile." He claims to provide "sound, ready-made sermons," which are "thought-provoking, inspirational and educational." The site currently lists "more than 50 'pulpit-tested' sermons covering a range of Biblical texts and themes," but it steers clear of extreme or doctrinally controversial views, explains the newspaper. Described as lasting "a congregation-friendly 10 to 12 minutes," they cost \$13 each.



Deepening Debt in Britain

"Debt in Britain is threatening to undermine the economy and leave one in four people with insurmountable financial problems," reports *The Daily Telegraph* of London. It adds: "The country has established itself as a 'pay later' nation saddled with £878 billion [\$1.49 trillion] in consumer debt." Excluding mortgage payments, the average Briton owes £3,383 [\$5,737] on credit cards, personal loans, and overdrafts. Thus, "a staggering number of adults are grappling with debts they fear they could default on at any time," especially if interest rates and unemployment rise. Frances Walker of the Consumer Credit Counselling Service advises: "If your monthly debt payments, excluding mortgage, add up to more than 20 per cent of

your monthly income, you are overexposed." In spite of these warnings, British vacationers were expected to add £3 billion [\$5 billion] to their debt during 2003.

Cows Worth More Than People?

The gap between the world's rich and poor keeps widening. Over the last 20 years, the market share of the least-developed countries (700 million inhabitants) has decreased from 1 percent to 0.6 percent of the world's total commerce. "The majority of the population in black Africa is poorer today than a generation ago," writes French economist Philippe Jurgensen in *Challenges* magazine. In Ethiopia, for example, 67 million people live on one third the wealth of Luxembourg's 400,000 inhabitants. Jurgensen notes that European farmers are enti-

ted to receive a daily subsidy of 2.5 euros per cow, whereas some 2.5 billion people live on less than that each day. Thus, in many parts of the world, "a poor person is worth less than a cow," says Jurgensen.

Music and Aggression

Researchers from Iowa State University and the Texas Department of Human Services (U.S.A.) used a series of five experiments involving over 500 college students in an attempt to determine the effects of violent songs. After listening to a number of violent and non-violent songs all sung by the same singer, the students underwent a series of tests designed to determine the students' level of aggressive feelings. The study, published by the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, concluded that violent songs may

increase hostile feelings and aggressive thoughts without provocation. "One major conclusion from this and other research on violent entertainment media is that content matters," said lead researcher Craig Anderson. "This message is important for all consumers, but especially for parents of children and adolescents," said Anderson.

Intoxicated Children

In Britain a survey of accident and emergency departments in 50 hospitals has revealed that "children as young as six are being admitted to hospital after binge drinking," reports *The Daily Telegraph* of London. In one hospital doctors and nurses reported treating as many as 100 intoxicated children a week during the summer vacation. "More than 70 percent of staff believed that children admitted to hospital for alcohol abuse were getting younger," says the paper.

Also, a recent government report shows that alcohol-related deaths in Britain have tripled in 20 years.

Drug Use Among Italian Adolescents

According to a survey conducted by the San Raffaele Institute of Milan, 42 percent of Italian students surveyed, aged 14 to 19, admit to using drugs. However, Mariolina Moioli, a director general at the Italian Ministry of Education, believes that the actual figure is higher. The most popular drugs among those polled are marijuana and hashish. Of those students who use drugs, 34 percent confessed to doing so at school, 27 percent in discotheques, and 17 percent at home. The survey also revealed that 82 percent of the students drink alcoholic beverages.

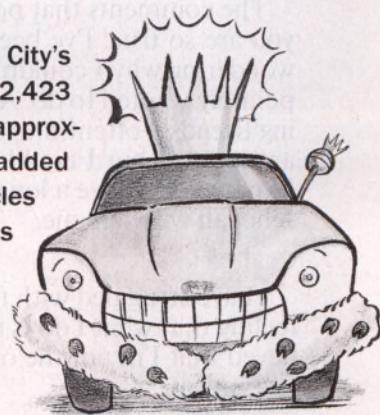
A "Colossal" Sea Monster

"A rare and deadly squid with eyes the size of dinner

plates and numerous razor-sharp hooks used to snag its prey has been caught by fishermen off Antarctica," says *The Daily Telegraph* of Australia. New Zealand marine biologist Steve O'Shea said: "I've seen some giant squid but this is sensational." Called the colossal squid (*Mesonychoteuthis hamiltoni*), the 330-pound specimen appears to be a juvenile. "This is a very aggressive animal," said American marine biologist Kat Bolstad. "If you fell in the water next to it you would be in big trouble." According to Reuters, "the colossal squid finds food by literally glowing in the dark, deep waters to light up prey for its massive eyes—the biggest of any animal. . . . Its eight arms and two tentacles have up to 25 teeth-like hooks—deeply rooted into muscle and able to rotate 360 degrees—as well as the usual suckers to ensure fish do not escape."

"King and Lord of the City"

"The vehicle has become king and lord of the city," reports Mexico City's *Reforma* newspaper. In 1970 there was one automobile for every 12,423 people in the metropolitan area. By 2003 that figure had increased to approximately 1 automobile for every 6 persons. So many autos are being added to the streets of Mexico City that in 2002, there were more new vehicles registered among Mexico City's 18 million inhabitants than childbirths registered. The downside is that vehicles are responsible for more than 80 percent of Mexico City's air pollution. Moreover, for some commuters, the trip to work can take up to three hours, largely because of the city's clogged highways. It is estimated that by the year 2010, the number of automobiles in Mexico City will grow by one million.



From Our Readers

Perfectionism I want to thank you for the articles “Young People Ask . . . Why Do I Feel That I Have to Be Perfect?” and “How Can I Stop Trying to be Perfect?” (July 22 and August 22, 2003) My obsession with doing things perfectly had become a weight I could no longer carry; it was robbing me of my joy. For fear of saying the wrong thing, I even avoided commenting at Christian meetings.

I am deeply grateful to Jehovah for these articles. They are helping me to keep my counterproductive thinking under control.

S. M., Italy

The articles are just what I needed to help me to deal with a problem I've had for 50 years. I thought that there was nothing wrong with trying to be perfect—that I was simply giving Jehovah my best. I wondered why I so often experienced difficulties with my children, coworkers, and Christian brothers. I realize now that some of my views are unbalanced and out of harmony with Jehovah's thinking. By being “righteous overmuch,” I have caused desolation to myself and others. (Ecclesiastes 7:16) Overcoming this problem won't be easy, but with Jehovah's help I'm willing to try.

C. H., United States

The comments that perfectionism can immobilize you are so true! I've been frustrated over the years, wondering why I couldn't accomplish things I so desperately wanted to do. And the points about not having friends—oftentimes no one seemed to want to be around me, but I couldn't figure out why. Now I know that I have a long, hard battle ahead and that Jehovah will help me.

L. R., United States

I have struggled with this problem for years, always feeling that what I do is not good enough. I feel so relieved that I'm not the only one struggling with perfectionism.

A. B., Canada

I grasp mentally that nobody can be perfect, but my feelings push me to believe otherwise. It did me much good to read that Jehovah does not expect perfection from us and that what counts with him is what is in our heart. I am grateful for these articles.

S. K., Germany

Fear of failing has often held me back from taking action. I have learned that perfectionism causes chronic anger, pessimism, depression, and low self-worth. I still haven't figured everything out, but I know that I want to develop a sense of humor about my mistakes.

A. I., Japan

I have suffered terrible mental stress and anxiety. I would berate myself, saying, “I am a worthless person.” Your articles presented a helpful outlook and warm encouragement. The heavy burden on my heart—the need to be perfect—has become lighter. The Scriptures have helped me to adjust my attitude and to develop a healthier outlook.

M. N., Japan

St. Petersburg We thank you for the article “St. Petersburg—Russia's ‘Window on Europe.’” (August 22, 2003) During our two-week honeymoon, we were able to see for ourselves the historic sights in St. Petersburg. Our visit to the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mariinsky Theater, the State Hermitage Museum, and Peterhof left an unforgettable impression on us. Thanks so much for this article. It served as our guide to this grand city!

A. and O. S., Russia

The Value of Our Natural Environment

Scientists and economists recently collaborated in a study of five natural habitats converted for human use and commercial profit. A tropical forest in Malaysia was razed for intensive logging, a tropical forest in Cameroon was converted to oil palm and rubber plantations, a mangrove swamp in Thailand was turned over to shrimp farming, a freshwater marsh in Canada was drained for agriculture, and a coral reef in the Philippines was dynamited for fishing.

The researchers came up with some surprising results. Had those five natural habitats been left in their wild state, their long-term economic value to the community would have been from 14 to 75 percent more than after conversion. In fact, an ecosystem loses, on average, half its value as a result of human interference, and each year, environmental conversion costs \$250 billion. By contrast, preserving natural systems would cost \$45 billion. The researchers say that "goods and services"—in the form of food, water, air, shelter, fuel, clothing, medicine, and storm and flood protection—provided in return are worth at least \$4.4 trillion, a 100-to-1 benefit-cost ratio, reports



London's newspaper *The Guardian*. Dr. Andrew Balmford of Cambridge University, England, who led the study, said: "The economics are absolutely stark. We thought that the numbers would favour conservation, but not by this much."

Sadly, even since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 11.4 percent of the earth's natural environments have been converted mainly because of ignorance of what is being lost and a desire for short-term financial gain. Ten years later at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, no clear solutions were forthcoming to resolve the dilemma. Dr. Balmford expressed his concern, saying: "One-third of the world's wild nature has been lost since I was a child and first heard the word 'conservation.' That's what keeps me awake at night."

Readers of the Bible, however, can be reassured by the Creator's promise found at Revelation 11:18. There it states that he will soon "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." The planet's natural ecosystems will then be restored for the everlasting benefit of mankind.



Welcome to the “Walk With GOD” District Convention

■ Millions will attend at hundreds of locations throughout the world. The first of the 211 three-day conventions in the United States will be held May 28-30, and the final one, September 10-12. Likely one of these three-day gatherings—generally held Friday through Sunday—will be in a city near you.

In most places the program will begin at 9:30 a.m. each day with a musical program. Friday's theme is “**This Is the Way. Walk in It.**” The welcoming address, “**Congregated to Let Jehovah Teach Us His Ways,**” will be followed by a part featuring interviews with ones loyally walking with God. After the talks “**Keep Providing What You Yourselves Are**” and “**Let God's Word Guide Your Steps Every Day,**” the morning session will conclude with the keynote address, “**Walk With God in Turbulent Times.**”

Friday afternoon's session will include a three-part symposium, “**Hosea's Prophecy Helps Us to Walk With God.**” Following it will be the talks “**Do Not Put Apart What God Has Yoked Together**” and “**Showing Respect for Our Sacred Gatherings.**”

The day's final discourse, “**Good News for People of All Nations,**” will provide encouragement to reach people of all languages with the good news.

The theme for Saturday is “**Keep Strict Watch on How You Walk.**” The morning's symposium, “**Walking Progressively**

as Ministers,” includes a part that offers further suggestions on reaching those who speak other languages. The morning program concludes with the important discourse “**Walking With Jehovah by Appointment,**” after which there is opportunity for qualified people to be baptized.

Saturday afternoon's talks include “**Avoid 'Any Cause for Stumbling'**” and “**Wholesome Activities That Refresh.**” The next presentations, “**Jehovah Is Our Shepherd,**” “**Buying Out the Opportunity Time,**” and “**Walking in the Path of Increasing Light,**” each feature encouraging interviews. The session will end with the sobering discourse “**'Keep on the Watch'—The Hour of Judgment Has Arrived.**”

Sunday's program theme, “**Go On Walking in the Truth,**” is emphasized in the talk “**Youths—Walk in the Path of Righteousness.**” Next will be a full-costume drama featuring the ministry of the apostle Paul. Following that will be a talk that emphasizes lessons from the drama. The afternoon program will feature the public address, “**Walking With God Brings Blessings Now and Forever.**”

For the location of the convention nearest to your home, you may contact the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses or write the publishers of this magazine. In its March 1 issue, our companion magazine, *The Watchtower*, listed all the convention locations in the United States, Canada, Britain, Ireland, and Malta.

