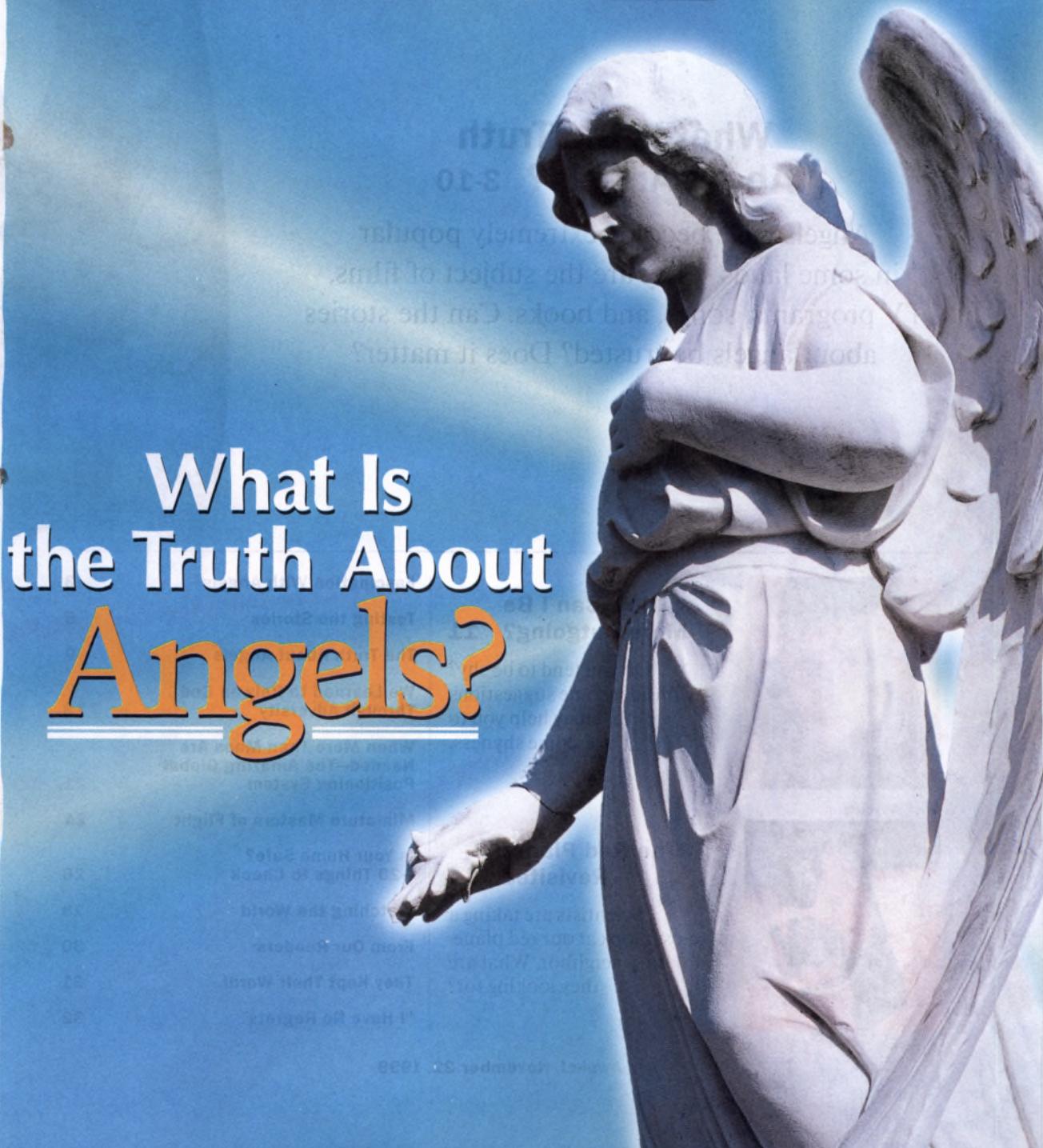


# Awake!

November 22, 1999



## What Is the Truth About Angels?

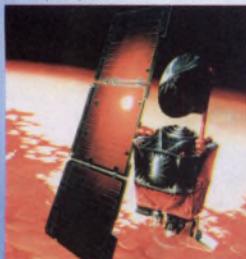
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# Fascination With Angels

*"We 'all' have angels guiding, guarding us . . . If we leave them alone and present ourselves, like children, in total trust and love and humble gratitude, then they will pour their blessings on us overwhelmingly. They play with us. They look after us. They heal us, touch us, comfort us with invisible warm hands, and always they try to give us what we want."—From the book "Angel Letters."*

YOU must admit that this popular view of angels does have appeal. According to the view of what some term "the new spirituality," each of us has been assigned at least one angel, an angel whose duty it is to comfort us and protect us from harm. Your angel is said to be both powerful and loving. He does not require obedience or worship, and never will he judge or reprimand you. He is always at your side, devoted to your welfare and eager to fulfill your every wish. Many today sincerely believe these things.

Belief in angels, of course, is not new. They have played a major role in the religious beliefs of people since ancient times. This is reflected in art. Representations of cherubs, a type of angel, adorned the ancient Jewish tabernacle and temple. Angels decorate churches and cathedrals throughout Christendom. Museums are filled with paintings and sculptures of angels.

### Angel Popularity

In recent times, angels have become extremely popular in some lands. Movies often portray angels as humans who have died and have returned to earth to perform good deeds. In one film, angels help a losing baseball team. In another, a guardian angel assists a teenage boy to avenge the murder of his girlfriend. The angel-helper theme also thrives in a popular program shown on U.S. television.

Songs about angels abound. During recent decades in the United States, 1 popular song in every 10 has mentioned an angel. By the mid-1990's, more than 120 "angel boutiques" had opened in America. These stores sell angel figurines, pendants, and stationery—even baby rattles adorned with angel images. Seminars and newslet-

ters supposedly teach people how to contact these celestial beings. Magazines, newspapers, and talk shows relate stories about people's encounters with angels.

### Hundreds of Books

Then there are the books. One large bookstore in New York City offers over 500 different books that discuss angels, particularly guardian angels. Such books promise to show their readers how to contact guardian angels, learn their names, talk with them, and enlist their help. These books contain many tales of how angels have appeared in times of need, lifting people out of the way of oncoming cars, curing deadly diseases, giving comfort to those in distress, and protecting soldiers on the battlefield. Such angels perform services "without requiring any sign of re-

Many feel  
that they have  
personally  
encountered  
angels

pentance, conversion, or doctrinal allegiance." But rarely do such modern-day "encounters" motivate people to make changes in their lives. Those who claim to have had such experiences are usually left with little more than a warm feeling.

In an age of stress and crisis, these stories may seem like incredibly good news. But can they be trusted? Does it matter?

### **Awake!**

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

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# Testing the Stories

PEOPLE respond to modern-day stories of angelic encounters in several ways. First, there are the believers. They argue that because such stories are so numerous and so widespread, they must be true. Second, there are the skeptics. They point out that there is no solid evidence to support the claims. Widespread belief, they argue, does not make some-

thing true. After all, people once believed in mermaids. Third, there are those on neutral ground. Expressing this neutral view, the book *Angels—Opposing Viewpoints* states: "Many people claim to have seen angels. These sightings can't be proved; they are believed on faith. Neither can skeptics disprove them, however, and few try."

Many people agree that the Bible is a

## Modern-Day "Encounters" With Angels and Aliens

Many people today claim that they have seen angels and spoken with them. Others say that they have had contact with aliens from other worlds. The book *Angels—An Endangered Species* lists the similarities between these accounts, claiming that both may have a common explanation.\* Following is a summary of some similarities listed in the book.

1. Both angels and aliens come from other worlds.
2. Both are advanced life-forms, either spiritually or technologically.

\* The explanation common to both is that wicked spirits, or demons, are evidently behind many such "encounters." As the Bible says, "Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14)—See *Awake!*, July 8, 1996, page 26.

3. The friendly variety are youthful and beautiful in appearance, and they are kind and full of compassion.

4. Both have little trouble with language, speaking clearly in the language of the listener.

5. Both are masters of flight.

6. Appearances of both angels and aliens are accompanied by brilliant light.

7. Both appear fully dressed, commonly in either robes or close-fitting tunics. White or blue are favorite colors.

8. Both are usually the same height as humans.

9. Both express concern about the plight of humanity and the planet.

10. The evidence of both alien and angelic encounters is the testimony of the beholder.

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reliable source of information about the spirit realm.\* It can help us to evaluate modern angel stories. As you probably know, the Bible assures us that angels are real, powerful, glorious spirit creatures. The Bible contains accounts of angels delivering messages and rescuing God's servants from harm.—Psalm 104:1, 4; Luke 1:26-33; Acts 12:6-11.

The Bible also indicates that there are evil angels. These spirit creatures deceive and mislead humans, turning them away from God. (2 Corinthians 11:14) For good reason, the Bible cautions: "Do not believe every inspired expression, but test the inspired expressions to see whether they originate with God." (1 John 4:1) For example, before we would believe the predictions of a self-proclaimed prophet, we would wisely measure what he says against the Word of God, which he might claim to represent. Surely, we should expect the modern-day accounts of angelic appearances to stand up to the same scrutiny. How, then, do stories of modern-day angelic encounters compare with what is recorded in Scripture?

#### **Angels Are Not What Many Believe**

Let us begin by clearing up two widespread misconceptions about angels. Contrary to popular belief, angels did not begin

their lives as humans. They existed in heaven long before God created life on earth. The Bible says that at the time when God "founded the earth . . . , all the [angelic] sons of God began shouting in applause."—Job 38:4-7.

Another modern misconception is that angels are permissive and tolerant of wrongdoing. Instead, faithful angels uphold God's righteous standards and act according to his direction. They are in the service of God, not humans.—Psalm 103:20.

#### **Angels Are Interested In Our Spiritual Welfare**

Among current angel stories, rescue accounts abound. In one best-selling book, we read of a young girl who is gently led from a burning house by an unseen hand. Another book tells of two college students stranded in a blizzard. Suddenly, a truck appears and tows them to safety, yet it leaves no tracks! Elsewhere, another story tells of Ann, who is stricken with cancer. Three days before she is

to enter the hospital for surgery, a tall stranger comes to her door. He introduces himself as Thomas and says that he has been sent by God. Thomas holds up his hand, and Ann feels a hot, white light pass through her body. When she arrives for her surgery, the doctors are astounded. Her cancer is gone!

These stories raise an obvious question. If everyone has a guardian angel, why are some people rescued, whereas many are not?

"For those who  
choke too easily  
on God and  
his rules, . . .  
[New Age] angels  
are the handy  
compromise . . .  
kind,  
nonjudgmental.  
And they  
are available  
to everyone,  
like aspirin."  
—Time magazine

\* For information that shows why the Bible is a reliable source, see the brochure *A Book for All People*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

Countless millions have died from disease, wars, famines, and natural disasters. Surely, many earnestly prayed for help. Why didn't a guardian angel save them?

The Bible offers help with this question. It points out that God is not partial. (Acts 10:34) Furthermore, while God's loyal angels are interested in our physical welfare, they are more interested in our *spiritual* welfare. The apostle Paul suggested this in question form: "Are [angels] not all spirits for public service, sent forth to minister for those who are going to inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14) Physical help brings temporary benefits, but spiritual help can bring eternal benefits.

Many angel stories seem frivolous. Angels are said to help a tired mother change the sheets on a bed, to remind a shopper to buy matches, and to help drivers find parking places. A young woman in Scotland says with a giggle: "I've parked my car on a yellow line in St Mary's Street for the past three weeks and asked my angel to surround

it with love and compassion. If any traffic warden does approach they'll be so overwhelmed with feelings of love that they'll leave my car alone. I've never had a ticket yet." Little wonder that some compare the modern-day guardian angel to a fairy godmother or a Santa Claus for grown-ups.

#### Faithful Angels Do Not Contradict God's Word

Angel books are full of adages and advice supposedly from the spirit realm. For instance, one book claims to contain teachings passed on from the archangel Michael to a woman in Colorado, U.S.A. Among the "sayings" from Michael is this: "All roads lead to God. All beliefs, all truths of light lead to God." In contrast, Jesus said that there are only two religious roads and that only one of them leads to God's favor and everlasting life. The other leads

***The Bible contains true accounts of angels appearing to people***



to disapproval and everlasting destruction. (Matthew 7:13, 14) Clearly, these statements cannot both be true.

Where do the “angels” of “the new spirituality” stand on marriage and morality? In one book the reader learns of Roseann, who was told by her “angel”: “You have many to reach, and being with [your husband] is not where your life’s path is anymore. You love him and he loves you, but it is time to separate.” She got a divorce. Yet, the Bible shows that God hates a divorcing without proper grounds. (Malachi 2:16) Another story tells of a couple who commit adultery, convinced that the angels look on with rejoicing and surround them with an aura. But the Bible says: “You must not commit adultery.”—Exodus 20:14.

Could it be that these modern-day messages update the Bible? No, God’s Word does not change. The apostle Paul wrote to some in the first century: “I marvel that you are being so quickly removed from the One who called you with Christ’s undeserved kindness over to another sort of good news. But it is not another; only there are certain ones who are causing you trouble and wanting to pervert the good news about the Christ. However, even if we or *an angel out of heaven* were to declare to you as good news something beyond what we declared to you as good news, let him be accursed.”—Galatians 1:6-8.

#### **“Calling All Angels!”**

Should we call upon angels for help in dealing with problems and dangers in life? This is the topic of many books. Here are two examples. The book *Ask Your Angels* is said to show readers ‘how they can draw on the power of angels to reconnect with their lost inner selves and to achieve their goals.’ A similar book is *Calling All Angels!: 57 Ways to Invite an Angel Into Your Life*.

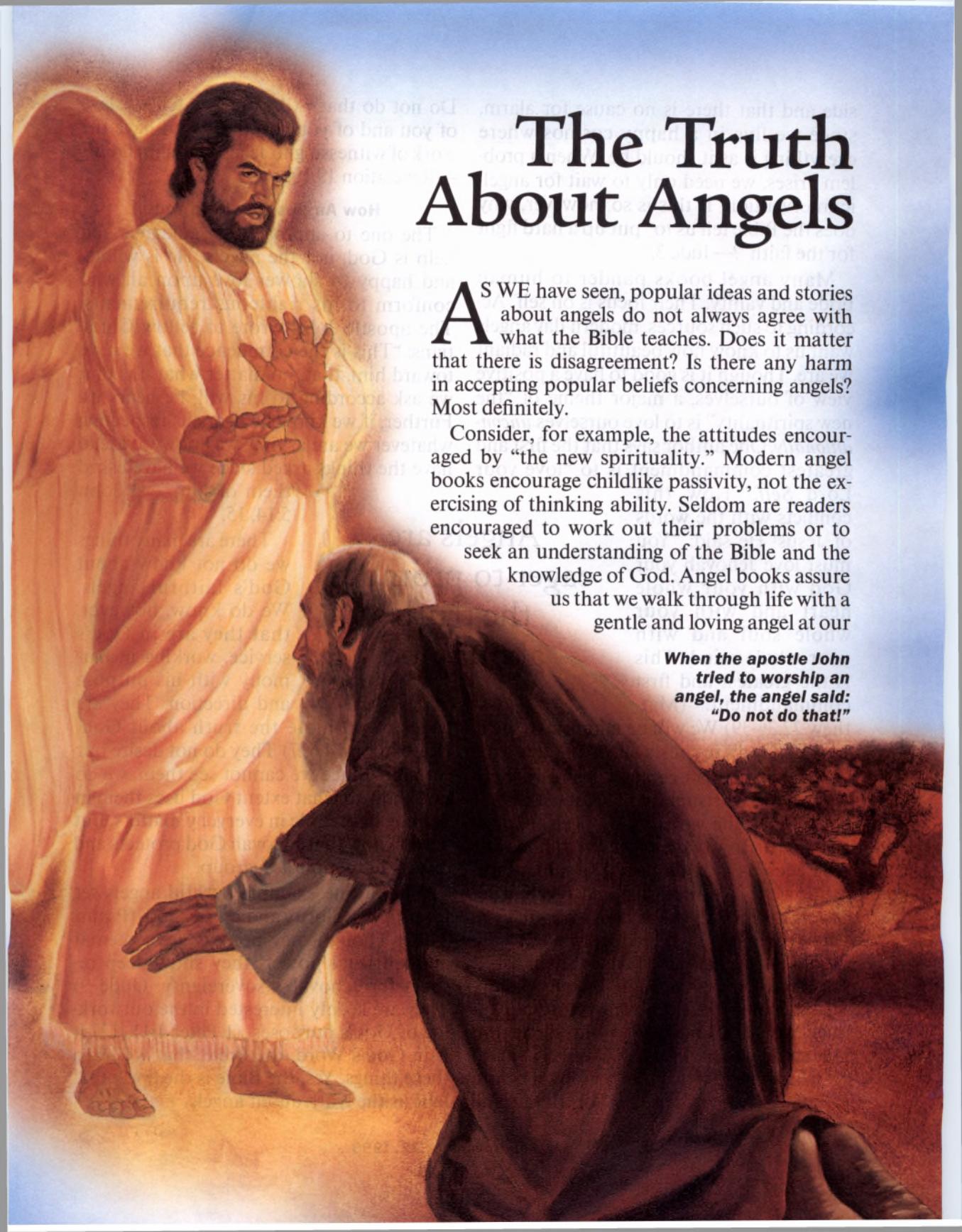
Never, though, does the Bible encourage

us to call upon angels. Jesus made this point clear in the model prayer. He said: “You must pray, then, this way: ‘Our Father in the heavens . . .’” (Matthew 6:9) Similarly, the apostle Paul wrote: “In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God.”—Philippians 4:6.

#### **In the Name of Angels**

“The new spirituality” places great importance on learning the names of angels. Popular books offer the supposed names of thousands of angels. Why? It is not to satisfy idle curiosity; it is to summon them. This is closely associated with magic. The *Encyclopedia of Angels* states that along with ritual, magical objects, and invocations, “the use of ‘names of power,’ or names of specific spirits, releases powerful vibrations that open the door between the physical realm and the realm of the spirits, enabling the magician to . . . communicate with spirits.” Yet, the Bible states plainly: “You must not practice magic.”—Leviticus 19:26.

The Bible itself reveals the names of only two faithful angels, Michael and Gabriel. (Daniel 12:1; Luke 1:26) In providing these names, the Bible shows that angels are unique spirit persons. Why were not more names given? Likely the reason was to prevent people from elevating angels to a position of undue honor—something to which the angels themselves do not presume to aspire. Thus, when Jacob asked an angel to reveal his name, the angel refused. (Genesis 32:29) Later, the angel who appeared to Joshua identified himself not by name but as the “prince of the army of Jehovah.” (Joshua 5:14) Similarly, when Samson’s father asked an angel his name, he was told: “Just why should you ask about my name, when it is a wonderful one?” (Judges 13:17, 18) God’s faithful angels want us to honor God and call upon him, not them.



# The Truth About Angels

AS WE have seen, popular ideas and stories about angels do not always agree with what the Bible teaches. Does it matter that there is disagreement? Is there any harm in accepting popular beliefs concerning angels? Most definitely.

Consider, for example, the attitudes encouraged by "the new spirituality." Modern angel books encourage childlike passivity, not the exercising of thinking ability. Seldom are readers encouraged to work out their problems or to seek an understanding of the Bible and the knowledge of God. Angel books assure us that we walk through life with a gentle and loving angel at our

***When the apostle John tried to worship an angel, the angel said: "Do not do that!"***

side and that there is no cause for alarm, since we live in a happy cosmos where everything is as it should be. When a problem arises, we need only to wait for angelic intervention. If this is so, however, why does the Bible tell us to "put up a hard fight for the faith"?—Jude 3.

Many angel books pander to human pride and vanity. Their focus is on self. According to such sources, modern-day angels want us to know how beautiful and radiant we are. Though it is good to have a positive view of ourselves, a major theme of "the new spirituality" is to love ourselves *unconditionally*. One author says that the first and greatest commandment is to "love your Lord *Self*." How this conflicts with the words of Jesus! He said: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment." (Matthew 22:36-39) We will be happiest in life if we seek God's interests ahead of our own.

Placing angels at center stage runs counter to true Christianity. The apostle Paul condemned the worship of angels. (Colossians 2:18) To worship means "to honor or reverence as a divine being or supernatural power." Yet, honoring and reverencing angels is precisely what many popular angel books encourage readers to do. Recall, though, what happened when Satan asked Jesus to offer him a single act of worship. Jesus replied: "It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service." (Luke 4:8) Later, when the apostle John fell down before an angel, the angel said to him: "Be careful!

Do not do that! All I am is a fellow slave of you and of your brothers who have the work of witnessing to Jesus. Worship God." —Revelation 19:10.

#### How Angels Can Help You

The one to approach for guidance and help is God, not the angels. He is willing and happy to shower love upon all who conform to his righteous requirements. The apostle John wrote to fellow Christians: "This is the confidence that we have toward him, that, no matter what it is that we ask according to his will, he hears us. Further, if we know he hears us respecting whatever we are asking, we know we are to have the things asked since we have asked them of him."—1 John 5:14, 15.

There are many things we do not know about God's faithful angels. We do know, however, that they are in God's service, working in harmony with his purpose and direction. They are

## Angels are eager to promote the truth about God

eager to promote the truth about God. (Revelation 14:6, 7) They do not desire our worship. Since we cannot see them, we do not know to what extent God uses them in helping his people in everyday matters. But we do know that Jehovah God protects and directs his people as a group.

What a fine example faithful angels set for us! They glorify and praise God. (Psalm 148:2) Though they possess great mental and spiritual power, they show deep respect for Jehovah's sovereignty. (Jude 9) They are keenly interested in the outworking of God's purposes. (1 Peter 1:11, 12) It is in God's Word, the Bible, that we learn these things. Yes, the Bible is the book that tells us the truth about angels.

## YOUNG PEOPLE ASK . . .

"I've never been very conversational. I felt that if I said something, I would be shunned. My mother is very shy, and I guess that's why I became the same way."—Artie.

**D**O YOU sometimes wish that you were a little less shy—and a bit more friendly and outgoing? As our preceding article in this series pointed out, shyness is a common trait.\* So there is nothing really wrong with you if you tend to be quiet, serious, or reserved. But *extreme* shyness can be a real problem. At the very least, it can hinder you from enjoying friendships. And it can also make it hard for you to feel comfortable or function well in social settings.

Even adults often battle shyness. Barry<sup>#</sup> is an elder in the Christian congregation. But he tends to clam up in a group. He admits: "I don't feel that I have the ability to say anything that is meaningful." His wife, Diane, has a similar problem. Her solution? She says: "I like to be with people who are outgoing because I feel that they can take over the conversation." What are some ways for you to become more outgoing yourself?

### Quit Putting Yourself Down

First, you may need to reassess your view of yourself. Are you constantly putting yourself down, telling yourself that others

## How Can I Be More Outgoing?



won't like you or that you don't have anything worth saying? Having negative feelings about yourself can only hinder you from being outgoing. After all, Jesus said: "You must love your neighbor *as yourself*"—not *instead of* yourself! (Matthew 19:19) So it's healthy and proper to love yourself to a reasonable degree. It can give you the confidence that you may need in order to approach others.

If feelings of low self-worth afflict you, you may find it helpful to read chapter 12, "Why Don't I Like Myself?", in the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*.\* That information may help you to see that you have much to offer as a person. Why, the fact that you are a Christian demonstrates

\* See the article "Young People Ask . . . Why Can't I Be More Outgoing?" in our October 22, 1999, issue.

<sup>#</sup> Some of the names have been changed.

\* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

that God sees something valuable in you! After all, Jesus said: "No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him." —John 6:44.

### Take an Interest in Others

Proverbs 18:1 cautions: "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing." Yes, if you keep to yourself, you will likely focus too much attention on yourself. Philippians 2:4 encourages us to be 'keeping an eye, not in personal interest upon just our own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others.' When you focus your attention on the interests and needs of others, you are less self-conscious. And the more you care about others, the more likely you are to be moved to take the initiative to get to know them.

For example, take Lydia, a woman who has come to be known as a symbol of friendliness and hospitality. The Bible tells us that after she heard the words of the apostle Paul and got baptized, she entreated Paul and his companions: "If you men have judged me to be faithful to Jehovah, enter into my house." (Acts 16:11-15) Although a new believer, Lydia took the initiative to get to know these brothers—and no doubt she received many blessings as a result. After Paul and Silas were released from prison, where did they go? Interestingly, they went back to the home of Lydia!—Acts 16:35-40.

Likewise, you will find that most people will respond to interest that you show in them. How can you make a start in doing this? Here are a few helpful suggestions.

• **Start small.** Being outgoing does not mean turning into a flamboyant extrovert or a busy socialite. Work on talking to individuals, one at a time. You could make a goal of starting a conversation with at least one person every time you attend a Christian meet-

ing. Try to smile. Practice maintaining eye contact.

• **Break the ice.** 'How?' you might ask. Well, if you really have an interest in others, it's usually not hard to find things to talk about. A youth in Spain named Jorge says: "I've noticed that simply asking others how they are doing or asking them about their work helps you to get to know them better." A youth named Fred suggests: "If you don't know what to say, just start asking people questions." Of course, you don't want people to feel that they are being interrogated. If a person seems resistant to answering questions, try sharing some information about yourself.

Mary, the parent of a teenager, says: "I have found that the best way to make people feel comfortable is to have them talk about themselves." Young Kate adds: "It helps to compliment people on their dress or something else. You make them feel that they are liked." Of course, be genuine, and avoid empty flattery. (1 Thessalonians 2:5) People will generally respond to sincere words that are kind and pleasant.—Proverbs 16:24.

• **Be a good listener.** "Be swift about hearing, slow about speaking," says the Bible. (James 1:19) After all, a conversation is an interchange—not a solo performance. So if you tend to be shy about talking, this may actually work to your advantage! People appreciate good listeners.

• **Join in.** Having mastered the art of one-on-one conversation, move on to talking in groups. Again, Christian meetings are an ideal place to acquire this skill. Sometimes the easiest way to get involved in a conversation is to join one that is already in progress. Of course, discernment and good manners are essential here. Don't barge into what is obviously a private discussion. But when it is clear that a group is engaged in light conversation, try to become part of it. Be tact-

ful; don't interrupt and try to take control. Try listening for a while. As you get comfortable, you may be inclined to make a few comments.

• *Don't expect perfection of yourself.* Sometimes youths worry too much about saying the wrong thing. A girl in Italy named Elisa recalls: "I was always afraid that if I said something, it was going to come out wrong." However, the Bible reminds us that all of us are imperfect, so perfect speech is just not possible for us. (Romans 3:23; compare James 3:2.) Says Elisa: "I realized that these are my friends. So they will understand if I say something wrong."

• *Keep your sense of humor.* Granted, putting your foot in your mouth is embarrassing. But as Fred observes, "if you just relax and laugh at yourself, the moment soon passes. You make a mountain out of a molehill when you allow yourself to get flustered, frustrated, or worried."

• *Be patient.* Realize that not everyone will respond immediately. An uncomfortable lapse in conversation doesn't necessarily mean that the person doesn't like you or that you should give up trying to talk. Sometimes people are merely preoccupied—or shy like you. In such situations, it may help to give the person a bit more time to warm up to you.

• *Try talking to adults.* Sometimes adults, especially mature Christians, are quite sympathetic toward youths who are battling shyness. So don't be afraid to try to start a conversation with an older person. Says Kate: "I can relax around adults because I know

adults won't judge me, ridicule me, or give me a hard time like kids my age might."

### Motivated by Love

While these suggestions may help, there is no easy formula for overcoming shyness. In the long run, it is not a matter of applying some clever technique or procedure. It comes down to 'loving your neighbor as yourself.' (James 2:8) Yes, learn to care about other people—especially your Christian brothers and sisters. (Galatians 6:10) If you have genuine love in your heart, you

#### **Take the Initiative and Join conversations!**



will overcome fear and insecurity and reach out to others. As Jesus said, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." —Matthew 12:34.

Barry, mentioned at the outset, observes: "The more I get to know other people, the easier it is for me to talk to them." In other words, the more you practice being outgoing, the easier it will become for you. And as you find yourself making new friends and feeling more accepted by others, you will no doubt feel the results were well worth the effort!

# THE RED PLANET REVISITED

Two "detectives" from Earth have been sent to our next-door neighbor in the solar system, Mars. They were sent to answer some fundamental questions about the geologic past of the red planet as well as its present condition.

FROM the earliest times, Mars has fired the human imagination. Our ancestors sensed that there was something unusual about the bright, red heavenly body that moved across the night skies out of step with the rest of the stars. The ancient Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans named the planet after their gods of war and of death, unaware of the fact that its reddish color was merely evidence of a landscape covered with iron oxide dust.

In more recent times, as astronomers turned increasingly powerful telescopes to the solar system, they could not help but notice that our reddish neighbor has seasons, icy poles, and other features reminiscent of those of Earth. In the 20th century, the initial surveys of Mars were made by a number of space probes, or spacecraft, including orbiters and landers, sent by the Soviet Union and by the United States. Then came the Mars Pathfinder mission, which riveted the attention of millions of television viewers in July 1997.\*

Presently, the Mars Global Surveyor orbiter is gathering data on the red planet. While these missions have provided a wealth of information, many fundamental questions regarding Mars still remain.

## Where Is the Water?

A common element to these questions is water. Scientists speculate that in the distant past, Mars was very different from what they see today. They describe a planet that used to have a warmer climate, moist air, and running rivers lacing its surface. However, somehow the water vanished, leaving a dry, dusty, windswept orb that makes even Earth's deserts seem lush. Where did the water go? Where can water presently be found on Mars, and in what form? How does water influence the weather and the climate of Mars?

\* See the article "A Robot Explores Mars," in the June 22, 1998, issue of Awake!

"It's a detective story," says Norman Haynes, former head of the Mars Exploration office at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, in Pasadena, California. "The real trick on Mars is to find out what happened to the water." Scientists hope soon to move closer to an answer. About every two years, when Earth and Mars are favorably aligned, researchers plan to launch robotic probes to chisel away at the Martian mystery.

The latest pair of such "detectives"? A polar-orbiting weather watcher and an on-site robot chemist that will give scientists a better look at the Martian underground. Their names: Mars Climate Orbiter and Mars Polar Lander.

## Going to Mars

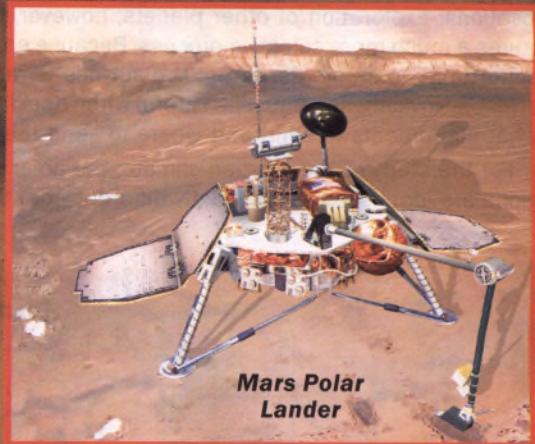
The Mars Climate Orbiter was launched on December 11, 1998, from the Kennedy Space Center, at Cape Canaveral, Florida, and began its nine-month journey to Mars. It was designed to maintain a 250-mile-high orbit, from which it was to monitor the planet's atmosphere, surface features, and polar caps. Observations were to last a complete Martian year—that is, 687 Earth days.

On September 23—the day the climate orbiter was scheduled to start observing Mars—scientists at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory said that they had lost communication with the weather orbiter. "We believe the spacecraft came in at a lower altitude than we thought it would," said Richard Cook, project manager of the mission. "That potentially resulted in the loss of the mission." That mission was to monitor the seasonal changes on the surface of the planet and to provide researchers with important clues regarding the planet's early climate history.

Scientists hope that not everything is lost. This is because the second spacecraft—the Mars Polar Lander—is on its way to Mars. It was launched on January 3, 1999, and is scheduled to arrive at Mars in



Mars Climate  
Orbiter



Mars Polar  
Lander

## Did Life Come From Mars?

Meteorite ALH84001—which is believed to have come from Mars—was discovered in Antarctica in 1984. In August 1996 some researchers at NASA's Johnson Space Center and at Stanford University announced that the potato-size rock contains evidence, but not clear proof, of life on Mars—organic compounds, mineral deposits, and fossilized microbes. The implication was that life on Earth may have originated on Mars.

However, just about everyone else in the scientific community now agrees that this meteorite cannot provide any solid evidence that life came from Mars. "I think it's very unlikely they have remnants of biological activity," said William Schopf, of the University of California, Los Angeles. Similarly, Ralph P. Harvey, of Case Western Reserve University, said: "Although life on Mars is an appealing concept to so many of us, ALH[84001] evidently contains scarce proof of it."\*

\* For credible evidence on the question of the origin of life on Earth, see chapters 3 through 5 of the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

early December of this year. Where should this lander touch down to yield maximum results?

### Where to Land?

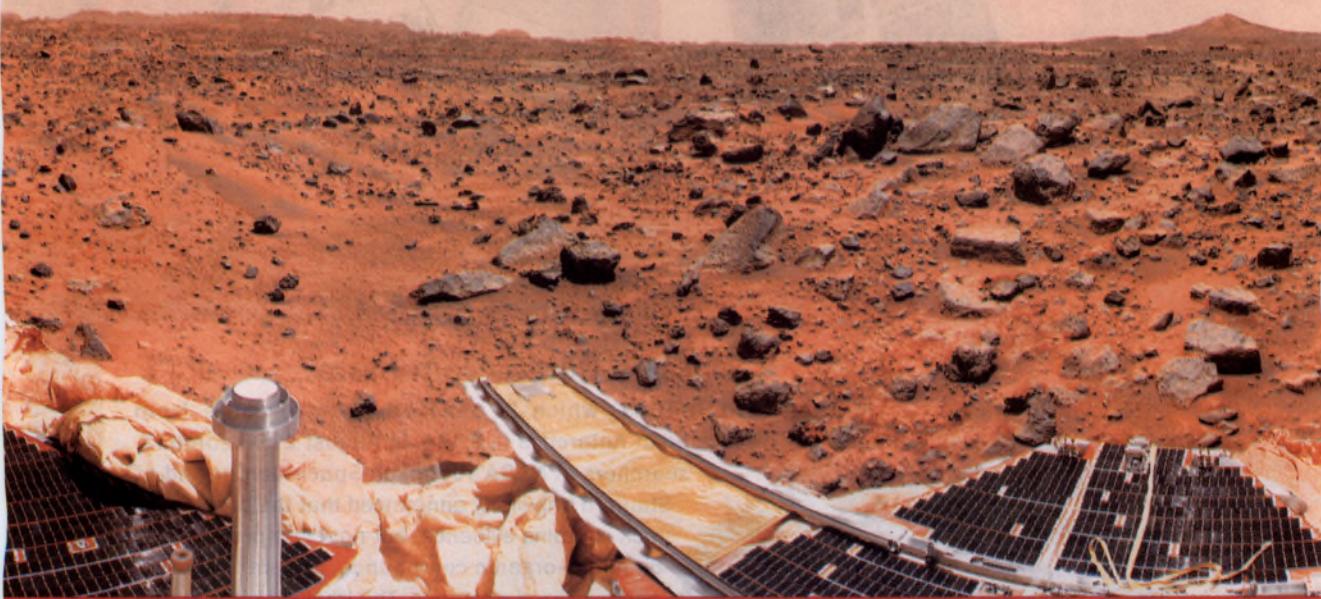
Remember, the water question is paramount in Mars exploration. Where is the ideal place on that planet to study water? Weather, climate, and the water cycle on Earth are studied by comparing the results of thousands of individual studies conducted using a wide variety of instruments in many different locations. Exploration of other planets, however, requires a much more selective process. Because each opportunity to study Mars from the surface is rare, scientific investigators must be careful when deciding what instruments to send and where to send them.

For the study of the Martian climate, the polar regions are ideal sites—albeit vastly different from the

rock-strewn floodplain where Mars Pathfinder settled two years ago. The polar regions are where the seasonal extremes occur. It is thought that seasonal dust storms deposit a thin layer of dust in the polar regions. When winter comes, the dust is frozen beneath carbon dioxide and water ice. Over time, many layers have built up. "These layers preserve a record of [Mars'] climate history," says Ralph Lorenz, of the University of Arizona. Experts believe that the exploration of this new territory will be a significant step in Mars research. How so? What will the lander do after it has landed?

### Looking Beneath the Surface

A spiderlike machine standing three and a half feet tall, the lander has three legs as well as a six-and-a-half-foot robotic arm with a scoop at the end.

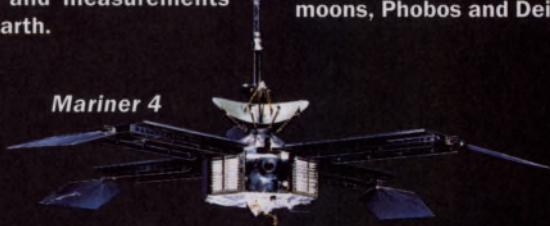


## Forty Years of Mars Exploration

■ In 1960 the Soviet Union launched the first planetary probes, aimed at Mars. The probes did not reach orbit.

■ On July 14, 1965, Mariner 4, from the United States, flew past Mars and transmitted photographs and measurements back to Earth.

■ In 1971, Mars 3, a Soviet probe, dropped a capsule that made the first soft landing on Mars. Mariner 9, a U.S. probe, reached Mars that same year and photographed most of the planet's surface. Mariner 9 also photographed the planet's two small moons, Phobos and Deimos.



Its mission will start before touching down on Martian soil. Just before reaching the atmosphere of the red planet, the lander will release a pair of pods, each about the size of a basketball.

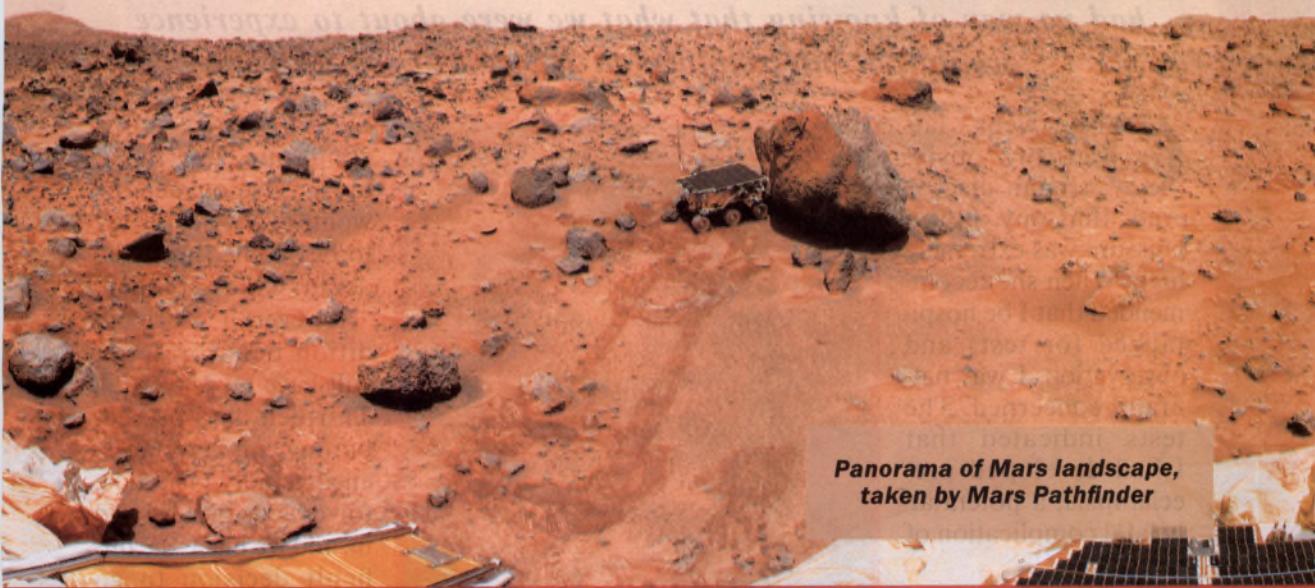
These projectiles will free-fall to the surface and hit the ground at about 450 miles per hour. The pods are designed to shatter on impact and release a pair of smaller probes that will be driven as deep as three feet into the soil. Once buried, the probes will release tiny drills and begin testing the chemical makeup of the Martian soil. The first goal will be to trace any water that might lurk frozen underground.

Shortly after the probes reach the ground, the lander will follow, descending by parachute. Equipped with cameras and sensors, the lander is designed to study the terrain and weather of Mars. It

will snap pictures both during its descent and after it has landed on the ground. The microphone it carries will record for the first time the sound of the Martian wind. The lander is scheduled to function for about 90 days after touchdown.

### An Urge for Exploration

Of course, it will take scientists years to study and analyze the data collected during this mission, which is part of a 16-year effort to learn more about Mars. Besides NASA, the European, the Japanese, and the Russian space agencies are also involved in this endeavor. Ultimately, scientists hope that future missions will return Martian soil samples to Earth-based laboratories for analysis. These may help them finally answer the question of what happened to the climate of our red planetary neighbor, Mars.



Panorama of Mars landscape,  
taken by Mars Pathfinder

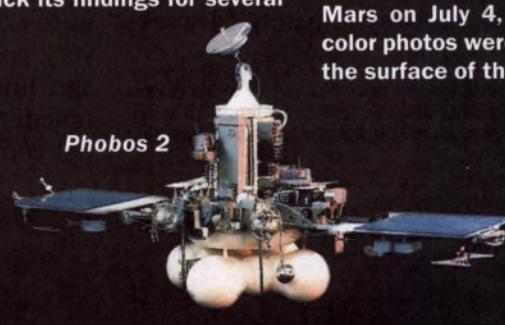
■ Two U.S. probes, Viking 1 and Viking 2, landed on Mars in 1976. The probes operated for years, carrying out complex experiments.

One of the  
Viking  
landers



■ In 1988, Soviet scientists launched two spacecraft, Phobos 1 and Phobos 2, to Mars. Phobos 1 failed during the flight, but Phobos 2 reached Mars and sent back its findings for several days.

Phobos 2



■ In 1992 the United States launched the Mars Observer probe, which failed in its mission.

■ The Mars Pathfinder, carrying the Sojourner rover, landed on Mars on July 4, 1997. Stunning color photos were sent back from the surface of the red planet.

# WE LEARNED TO RELY ON GOD THROUGH ADVERSITY

• AS TOLD BY ROSIE MAJOR •

*I was five months pregnant with my first child when my mother-in-law noticed that my legs looked unusually swollen. On that day in March 1992, my husband, Joey, and I had no way of knowing that what we were about to experience would put our reliance on Jehovah to the test.*

ONE week later my obstetrician discovered that my blood pressure was extremely high. When she recommended that I be hospitalized for tests and observation, I was naturally concerned. The tests indicated that I had developed preeclampsia, a potentially fatal complication of pregnancy.\*

The doctor in the hospital strongly recommended inducing labor immediately to protect me and the baby. My husband and I were stunned. "But the baby is barely 24 weeks

\* Preeclampsia involves a restriction of a pregnant woman's blood vessels, resulting in poor blood flow to her organs as well as to the placenta and the developing fetus. Although the cause is unknown, there is some evidence to suggest that the disease is inherited.



*Our daughter JoAnn*

old!" I gasped. "How could our baby possibly survive outside the womb?" "Well, I'll try to buy some time," the doctor kindly replied. "However, if your condition deteriorates, I will have to deliver it." Thirteen days passed, but my condition worsened rapidly. The doctor called my husband in, and we made the difficult decision to go ahead with the delivery.

## The Delivery

The night before the delivery, Dr. McNeil, a pediatrician, met with

us to explain what we could be facing with a very premature baby—possible brain damage, lungs that might be too immature to function properly, and a host of other potential complications. I prayed for "the peace

of God that excels all thought" and for the strength to accept and cope with whatever happened. (Philippians 4:7) The following morning our baby was delivered by cesarean section. She weighed a mere one pound and ten ounces. We named her JoAnn Shelley.

Five days later I went home empty-handed. My little daughter remained in the hospital's special infant care unit, fighting for her life. After two weeks JoAnn developed pneumonia. We were thankful when she stabilized, but only days later she developed a bowel infection and had to be moved to the intensive care area of the unit. Within another six days, JoAnn recovered somewhat and even began putting on some weight. We were jubilant! But our joy was short-lived. Dr. McNeil informed us that JoAnn was anemic. He suggested trying to obtain the synthetic hormone erythropoietin (EPO) to stimulate JoAnn's red blood cell production. The branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses here in the Bahamas contacted representatives of Hospital Information Services in Brooklyn, New York. They quickly provided Dr. McNeil with the latest data on the availability and use of EPO, and he began treatment with it.

#### **Problems Ahead**

Several anxious weeks passed. JoAnn was by now battling an infection in her bowels, seizures causing occasional apnea (periods without breathing), a low hemoglobin count, and bronchial pneumonia. We feared that any of these problems might be the proverbial straw that would break the camel's back. But JoAnn slowly gained ground. At three months of age, she was still in the hospital and weighed only three pounds. But for the first time in her life, she was breathing on her own without supplementary oxygen. Her hemoglobin was rising to a normal level. The doctor said that if she put on one more pound, we could take her home.

Three weeks later JoAnn suffered a serious apnea attack. Tests failed to reveal the cause. The apnea attacks became persistent and always came in association with feeding. Finally, it was found that JoAnn had gastroesophageal reflux. Her esophagus was not closing after she ate, so the contents of her stomach came back into her throat. When this occurred, it choked her and stopped her breathing.

In early October, JoAnn contracted a virus in the baby unit. Many of the premature babies there were dying from it. In that weakened state, JoAnn suffered what seemed to be the longest apnea attack she had ever had. All attempts at reviving her failed. The pediatrician was at the point of giving her up for dead, when unexplainably she began breathing—only to start having seizures immediately. Once again she was put on the ventilator, and we were certain that this was the finale for JoAnn. But she pulled through, and we were grateful to Jehovah.

#### **Learning Greater Trust In Jehovah**

The problems we faced before JoAnn was born could be compared to falling off a boat near the dock, where we could just swim to shore. Now it seemed as if we had fallen off a boat in mid ocean, with no land in sight. Looking back, we realize that before her birth we had sometimes relied too much on

#### **IN OUR NEXT ISSUE**

**The 20th Century  
—Critical Years of Change**

**Delightful Duet Singers**

**The Underground World of Paris**

ourselves. But through our experiences with JoAnn, we have learned to trust in Jehovah in situations that have no human solution. We learned to do as Jesus advised—to deal with one day at a time. (Matthew 6:34) We learned to lean on Jehovah, although at times we did not even know exactly what to pray for. We now thank Jehovah for the Biblical wisdom and “the power beyond what is normal,” which make it possible for us to cope with such severe difficulties.—2 Corinthians 4:7.

In times of crisis, I often found it difficult to maintain my emotional balance. I could think of nothing but JoAnn. My husband, Joey, was invaluable in providing spiritual balance. I am so grateful to him for this.

#### **JoAnn Comes Home**

JoAnn's health gradually improved. One day she literally pulled the ventilator tube out of her mouth. Dr. McNeil now felt that JoAnn could come home. We were ecstatic! In preparation for her homecoming, we learned how to tube-feed her. We also set up an oxygen supply, rented a heart-and-breathing monitor, and took a course in emergency resuscitation. Finally, on October 30, 1992, JoAnn was discharged from the hospital. She had spent 212 days in the special infant care unit, and so had we.

From the beginning, family members and members of the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses proved to be a real gift from Jehovah. They came and cleaned the house

and yard, cooked meals, helped us to get to the hospital, and watched JoAnn so that I could get some sleep. In the process we came to see beautiful facets of their personalities that we had not known. For example, some shared spiritual thoughts that had helped them through difficulties of their own.

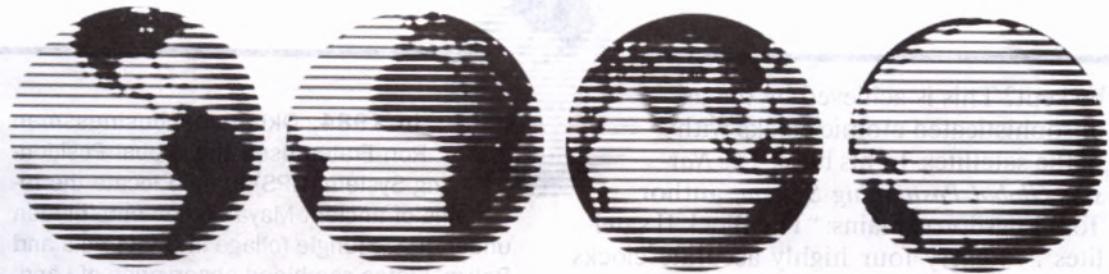
#### **Our Life Today**

We have worked hard to provide the best medical attention available for JoAnn's many problems. When she was 19 months of age, we learned that JoAnn has cerebral palsy—a result of brain damage. Then, in September 1994, she underwent major surgery for the gastroesophageal reflux. In 1997, JoAnn began to experience life-threatening seizures. Happily, with adjustments in her diet, the seizures ceased. JoAnn's health problems have delayed her physical development. But she now attends a special school and is doing well. She cannot walk, and her speech is very limited, but she accompanies us to all our Christian meetings and in our house-to-house ministry. She seems happy.

Jehovah has provided us with much comfort during these trialsome times. Our determination is to continue to rely on and “exult in Jehovah” despite unexpected difficulties. (Habakkuk 3:17, 18; Ecclesiastes 9:11) We keenly anticipate God's promised Paradise earth, where our darling JoAnn will enjoy perfect health.—Isaiah 33:24.



**Despite her limitations,  
JoAnn is a happy child**



# WHEN MORE THAN MAPS ARE NEEDED

## THE AMAZING GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN AUSTRALIA

**T**HE young hiker's face was covered with perspiration from her exertion on such a hot day. Her shoulders wriggled to ease the weight of her heavy backpack filled with provisions needed for survival. She carefully unfolded and examined her hiker's map, but, to her dismay, nothing in the surrounding terrain looked familiar. Before long, a desperate feeling of uneasiness began to stir deep inside her. "Don't tell me I'm lost," she moaned.

But suddenly she brightened. Reaching into her backpack, she pulled out an instrument in a protective case and keyed in some information. Within moments she began to smile. Now, she quickly adjusted her pack and headed off with the assurance of someone who knows exactly where she is going.

Why was this hiker able to find her way out of a seemingly hopeless situation so quickly and easily? Because she made use of a remarkable aid known as the Global Positioning System (GPS). This enabled her to know exactly where she was and showed her which way to go. Just what is this amazing system, the GPS?

The full name is the Navstar Global Positioning System. Navstar is an acronym for

Navigation Satellite Time and Ranging System. GPS was first developed for the U.S. military, but it is now available for use by anyone anywhere in the world. The first satellite needed for the operation of GPS was launched in 1978. Now, the complete system utilizes 21 Navstar satellites plus 3 active on-orbit spares. These are sent into 10,898-nautical-mile orbits, and each orbit is tipped at 55 degrees with respect to the equator. In this configuration at least four satellites are available from any location on the earth's surface at all times.

### Split-Second Timing Vital

The satellites transmit radio pulses at specific, known times, and by measuring the exact time a pulse arrives, the Navstar receiver can determine the distance to the satellite. The pulse takes about one eleventh of a second to travel to the earth. The receiver then multiplies this figure by the speed of light, which supplies the distance to the satellite with astonishing accuracy. However, measurement of time must be exact because a mismatch of as little as one millionth of a second will result in an error of about 980 feet!

How can such unbelievably accurate time

be kept? This is achieved by the use of sophisticated atomic clocks within the satellites. In his book *The Navstar Global Positioning System*, author Tom Logsdon explains: "The Block II satellites . . . carry four highly accurate clocks—two cesium atomic clocks and two rubidium atomic clocks. These clocks are so stable and accurate they would lose or gain only about one second every 160,000 years".

In practice, a receiver, such as the one used by our hiker described at the outset, picks up signals from four or more satellites and calculates a distance to each of them. The ranges are then used to resolve the current latitude, longitude, and altitude of the portable receiver. The result is then displayed by the GPS receiver. At least four satellites are needed for accurate positioning. The portable receivers are light and inexpensive and are roughly comparable in size and cost to a portable telephone.

#### **Superior to Conventional Maps?**

GPS receivers indicate not only the exact location of the receiver but also, if details regarding the desired destination are entered correctly, the direction to be taken. In that respect then, devices such as GPS are superior to the most accurate conventional maps. For example: When finding your way using a map, you can be hindered by such variables as high trees or even dense vegetation. Featureless terrain (especially oceans and deserts), darkness, and fog are just some of the other things that can make using a map difficult or even completely ineffective. Of course, the GPS receiver does not do away with the need for maps, but it works very well when used in conjunction with maps and charts. It can be used to great advantage in guiding ships into foggy harbors and in keeping track of cargo containers in busy ports, as well as for many other commercial uses.



**In 1984**, Oklahoma businessman Ron Frates used the Global Positioning System (GPS) to help locate the remains of ancient Maya settlements hidden under dense jungle foliage in Guatemala and Belize. Frates combined observation of Landsat photographs and precise navigation by GPS. "We were able to map the extent of the Mayan civilization on the Yucatan in about five days," reported Frates and his colleagues. "Working on foot it would have taken at least one hundred years."

As development of GPS progresses, the following are some of the other uses being found for it.

- Tracking hazardous ice-bergs.
- Forecasting the weather.
- Precision landing of aircraft.
- Finding sunken ships.
- Tracking and navigational systems for automobiles.
- Accurate distribution of fertilizer.

So it was that our hiker was guided by this unique satellite system, which gave an overview of her exact position and provided precise information when it was most needed. Furthermore, she was given instruction as to the correct direction in which to walk, and she eventually reached safety. Yes, just when she thought she was lost, she was helped by the amazing Navstar Global Positioning System!

# WHAT THE GPS CAN SHOW

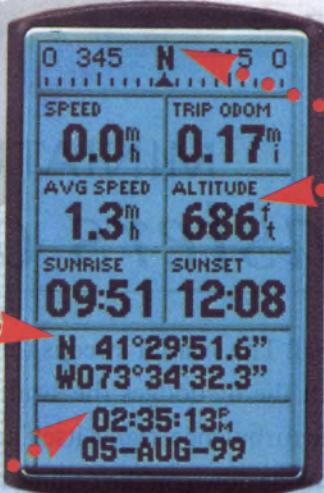
Your exact location

Longitude and latitude coordinates are displayed

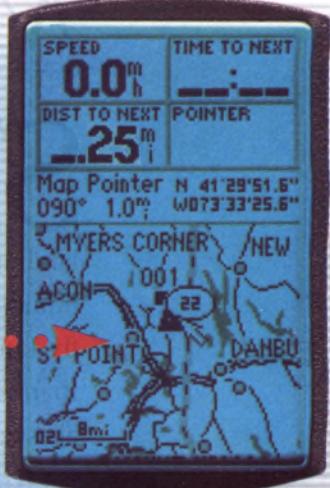
The time and date

Antenna

Actual size

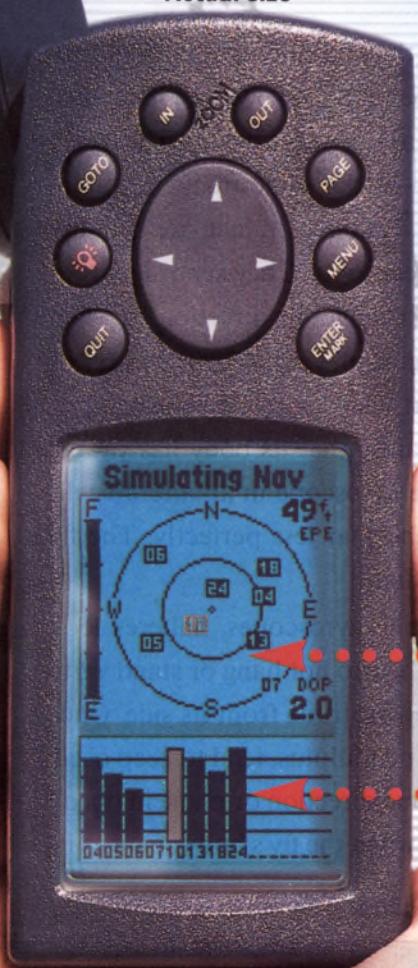


- A tracking compass
- Your altitude



A map reference

This can be zoomed in or out. If driving, you can use this to direct you to a destination you have never been to previously



Your bearing

A compass guide and pointer can lead you back home and display the distance you have yet to travel



Satellite status

This sky view shows which of the 24 satellites your receiver can "see"

Signal strength

If some satellites get blocked (shaded bar), the receiver uses alternates to maintain your position fix



# MINIATURE *Masters of Flight*

**S**WISH! The swatter sweeps through the air at the fly aloft. But the fly dodges the swatter, buffets for a moment in the turbulence, rights itself and then, by flipping over and landing upside down on the ceiling, mocks your crude attempt to liquidate it. A fabulous piece of flying! Indeed, the ubiquitous fly family boasts the most aerobatic fliers in the insect realm, thanks in part to two marvelously engineered balancing appendages called halteres.

Like tiny reeds with knobs on the end, the two halteres protrude from a fly's thorax, just behind its two wings. (See illustration on next page.) When a fly's wings begin to beat, the halteres also begin to beat—at the same frequency, hundreds of times every second. Halteres, in fact, are like tiny gyroscopes that help the insect to fly. They send signals to the fly's brain whenever the fly changes its direction, as when the little fellow is buffeted by a gust of wind or by the flurry of a swatter or a newspaper that whistles by perilously close. The halteres tell the fly instantly that its body has yawed, rolled, or pitched, just as the gyroscope in an aircraft tells the pilot the same things, albeit far less perfectly. The fly quickly and easily corrects its flight.

Unlike conventional spinning gyroscopes, halteres look more like pendulums. But they do not hang or stand vertically relative to the fly; they protrude from its side. Once set in motion, halteres, like pendulums, tend to keep oscillating, or swinging, in the same direction or plane in obedience to the laws of motion. So when the fly's body changes its





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▼ Animals/Jim Harter/Dover Publications, Inc.

**Soldier fly (enlarged), with halteres indicated**

orientation in space, exterior forces twist the oscillating halteres at their base, where nerves sense the twist. The brain analyzes these nerve signals and automatically directs the wings to right the fly—all at lightning speed.

Halteres, in fact, are one of the special assets unique to flies, a two-winged family of some 100,000 kinds that includes horseflies, houseflies, blowflies, fruit flies, tsetse flies, sand flies, and crane flies. Their ingenious gyroscopes give flies a degree of aerial maneuverability that outstrips that of any other family of flying insects. Indeed, this oft-despised insect gives proof of the Creator's scientific genius.

**Housefly****Crane fly**

# IS YOUR HOME SAFE? 20 THINGS TO CHECK



“**H**OME, at last!” Perhaps you breathe a sigh of relief when you return from a hectic day’s work, happy to be safe and secure at home. But are you really safe? Ironically, some people face serious dangers at home that they may be unaware of. Especially those with small children should take thoughtful precautions to minimize the number of accidents in the home. Using the following checklist, why not make an inspection of your home and note any changes that need to be made?

**✓ Plants.** If you have small children, make sure that none of your plants are poisonous. Remember, curious toddlers will put almost anything in their mouths.

**✓ Drapes.** Keep drape cords out of reach. They can entangle—and even strangle—small children.

**✓ Drawers and cupboards.** Consider installing safety latches. This will keep children from touching sharp implements and dangerous cleaning products.

**✓ Stairway.** Is it well-lit and free of clutter? Have you installed safety gates to help keep toddlers from falling?

**✓ Stove.** Keep the handles of pots and pans turned toward the back of the stove, especially while cooking.

**✓ Broiler.** Clean it frequently. A grease-filled broiler pan can cause a kitchen fire.

**✓ Fire extinguisher.** Keep at least one in the home, and make sure everyone of responsible age knows how to use it.

**✓ Cribs.** Slats should be close together. The space around the mattress should not be large enough to allow an infant's head to get caught.

**✓ Windows.** Safety bars will protect children from falls and can easily be removed by an adult in case of a fire.

**✓ Vitamins and medicines.** Keep these in a locked cabinet or in a place that is inaccessible to children.

**✓ Bathtub.** Never leave a small child in the tub unattended. It takes little time—and little water—for a child to drown.

**✓ Microwaves.** Remember that food gets hot fast in a microwave. A baby's formula, for example, can be scalding even though the bottle itself is just warm.

**✓ Furnace.** Have your furnace checked periodically for carbon monoxide leaks.

**✓ Barbecue grills.** Make sure children are a safe distance from the grill when it is hot.

**✓ Garage door.** Instruct children never to run under a garage door while it is moving, especially if it is electrically operated.

**✓ Smoke detectors.** Keep them clean, and check them regularly. Change the batteries each year.

**✓ Electrical cords and outlets.** Discard frayed electrical cords. It is best if unused outlets have safety covers or inserts.

**✓ Electrical appliances.** Keep appliances away from the tub or the sink. Ground fault circuit interrupters can prevent shock.

**✓ Toy chests.** Equip a toy chest with one or more air holes and with hinges that keep the lid from dropping suddenly.

**✓ Iron.** Keep your iron—including its dangling cord—out of the reach of children.

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### Blindness Warning

"More than 200,000 Canadians have glaucoma and only half of them are aware of it," says the newspaper *The Prince George Citizen*. A leading cause of blindness, glaucoma slowly causes nerve cells at the back of the eye to die. The result is a gradual loss of peripheral vision, while central vision is spared until the last stages of the disease. Many who are affected do not seek treatment because they feel no pain and can still drive, read, and perform most tasks. According to the Glaucoma Research Society of Canada, those at greatest risk include the elderly, people who have a family history of glaucoma, black persons over 40, and people who have high pressure within the eye. "If we can get people at high risk to see their doctor, that is half the battle," said Dr. Neeru Gupta, director of the glaucoma unit at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. "The point is that early detection and treatment can save sight."

### Urban Noise Versus Sweet Dreams

During the day, over 40 million Italians—about 72 percent of the population—are exposed to excessively high noise levels, according to the Italian Ministry of the Environment. Among the possible ill effects of prolonged exposure to such noise are accelerated heartbeat, variations in arterial pressure and respiratory capacity, gastritis, and nausea, reports *Corriere della Sera*. In big cities the noise from traffic interferes with normal sleep. Ur-

ban nighttime noise levels can exceed 70 decibels, increasing the risk of a reduction in deep sleep and dreaming. Says Lucia Venturi, scientific director of the Italian environmental association Legambiente: "It is estimated that each of the 18 million people who live in large urban areas loses 30 minutes of sleep every night. This would amount to 22 sleepless nights per person each year."

### Praise Intelligence or Effort?



Many parents believe that praising children's intelligence is good for them. However, new research indicates that such praise may actually undermine their motivation and future performance, reports *Columbia Magazine*, of New York's Columbia University. According to Professor Carol Dweck, it is much better to praise children for their hard work, which bolsters their ability to deal with life's challenges. "Kids praised for their intelligence are more concerned with how smart they look and will often sacrifice a chance to learn something important in order to shine," notes Dweck. On the other hand, the report noted that those praised for their effort and perseverance are more likely to focus on learning and overcoming failure. "So these kids will sacrifice

a chance to look smart in order to learn," observes Dweck. "And they are very resilient because they don't take the failure personally."

### Airborne Arsonists

Crows are suspected of starting two fires in Kamaishi, Japan. In the first case, firemen who went to extinguish a grass fire near a grave site found evidence of the crows' complicity. The *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* explains: "The crows picked up cakes that had been placed on a grave, and immediately afterward, a fire started in the direction to which they flew. Some of the incense sticks, which had been left burning, were also missing, and candles, apparently dropped by the crows, were found where the fire broke out." About a year later, reported the *Daily Yomiuri* newspaper, a fire started on a mountainside in the same area. There, a fire fighter saw a flying crow carry a burning cardboard box in its beak and drop it in a nearby river. Fire fighters discovered another burned box near the spot where the fire began. Where may the crows have found their torches this time? It turns out that a nearby resident had been burning empty potato chip boxes in a brazier.

### Dangerous to Be Armed

"Car hijack victims who carry guns are almost four times more likely to be shot than those who do not," states the South African newspaper *The Natal Witness*. The report adds that "victims with guns were four times more likely to be robbed of their firearms than they were likely to use them." An exami-

nation of police station dockets showed that attackers fired their weapons at their victims in 12 percent of hijacking cases. However, the figure rose to 73 percent when victims drew a weapon in self-defense. Researcher Antony Altbeker concluded: "While owning a gun may make you feel safer, it does not translate into actual security."

#### **"Turtle Motorway"**

In December each year, 10,000 green turtles return to tiny Ascension Island in the Atlantic Ocean to breed. Using satellite tracking, British and Italian scientists have recently discovered a "turtle motorway" between the island and the animals' feeding grounds around the Brazilian coastal city of Recife, reports *The Times* of London. At the end of their seven-month nesting season, all the turtles take the same route back to Brazil for the first 200 miles. They then diverge slightly and head toward separate feeding grounds. But what about the young hatchlings, which are not strong enough to swim the 1,200 miles back to Brazil? They drift on ocean currents throughout the Atlantic and Caribbean, feeding on jellyfish and plankton. It is thought that after five or six years, each one makes its individual way to the Brazilian feeding grounds. Then, at about 20 years of age, they join in the mammoth migration back to Ascension Island to breed.

#### **More Child Soldiers**

"The continued use of children in hostilities has grown from an estimated 250,000 two to three years ago to 300,000 today," reports *Go Between*, a publication of the United Nations Non-Governmental Liai-

son Service. Child soldiers—some as young as eight years of age—are presently involved in over 30 conflicts around the world. According to Olara Otunnu, the UN secretary-general's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, "children have been compelled to become instruments of war, recruited or kidnapped to become child soldiers, thus forced to give violent expression to the hatreds of adults." To combat the increase in the number of child soldiers, the United Nations Children's Fund supports a proposal "that would raise the age of recruitment into armed forces to 18 years and urges that recruitment below that age be deemed a war crime," says the publication *Facts & Figures 1998*.

#### **Seniors Using the Internet**



"The newest Web demographics study suggests that seniors [age 50 and older] are using the Internet in greater numbers than was previously thought," reports journalist Maria Seminario of ZDNet. According to Tim Cobb, president of the organization that conducted the survey, "this is evidence that the Web is becoming increasingly mainstream and is no longer just the domain of the technologically sophisticated." For example, at least 40 percent of adults over age 50 in the United States now have a home com-

puter, and 70 percent of them reportedly surf the Web.

#### **AIDS—The "Leading Infectious Disease Killer"**

"AIDS is now the [single] leading infectious disease killer in the world," notes Peter Piot, executive director of the United Nations AIDS program. *Science* magazine reports that in 1997, AIDS was the seventh-worst killer worldwide. But during 1998 it outstripped all others except ischemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, and acute lower respiratory disease, which are noninfectious diseases. AIDS also became the number one killer in Africa, exceeding even noninfectious diseases. In Africa alone, AIDS took approximately 1,830,000 lives last year—twice as many as did malaria, the second-leading killer on that continent.

#### **Stressed Moms —Stressed Babies**

When an expectant mother lives with a high level of stress, the growth of her unborn baby may be adversely affected, reports the Canadian newspaper *National Post*. According to Pathik Wadhwa, of the University of Kentucky College of Medicine, in Lexington, Kentucky, the uterine environment "shapes the baby's development, and a lot of maternal stress may predispose babies for higher risk of disease." Stressed moms are also "more likely to deliver premature babies," says the report. Researchers at Clemson University, in South Carolina, suggest that "relaxation exercises can help stressed pregnant women lower their blood pressure, fostering a healthier in utero environment."

## FROM OUR READERS

**Children in Crisis** I wish to express my appreciation for the series in the April 8, 1999, issue, "Children in Crisis—Who Will Protect Them?" I think that the dramatic subject of child abuse should be a constant spur to awaken public opinion. It is our duty to protect the world of our children. May you keep on in your good work.

P. P., Councillor's Office for Children,  
City of Rome, Italy

It is shocking to think that at the threshold of the 21st century, many children are still working as slaves and being used to kill others. Even harder to accept is the fact that most of them have little prospect of a better life. Once again, *Awake!* has accurately portrayed the plight of the world's children.

S. R. B., Brazil

I am now divorced, after 36 years of marriage. I learned that my husband had molested my own dear daughters for years. (He was not a Christian.) I was thrown completely off balance when I learned of this. No one seemed to understand the gravity of sexual abuse or the unspeakable pain innocent ones suffer. So I thank Jehovah that you have written about this epidemic.

N. M., United States

**Care for Elderly** I really appreciated the item "Show That You Care." (April 8, 1999) Many older ones in nursing homes are forgotten by their families. But a couple of months ago, a few of us decided to discuss the Bible with some people in a nearby nursing home. Afterward, we played music for them on the piano and talked to them. We plan to visit them regularly now.

C. V., United States

**African Storm** I am 12 years old, and I want to thank you for the article "After the Storm, Christianity Prevailed." (March 8, 1999) I thought the brothers who helped those in trouble were great! It reminded me

of the way our brothers helped others after the great Hanshin earthquake in Japan. The article encouraged me to be courageous and to do good things for others.

R. K., Japan

**Sleeping Infants** Thank you for the article "How Should a Baby Sleep?" (March 22, 1999) I lost my first child of two and a half months to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). If only I had had this information! Despite having two other splendid children, I still feel an immense and indescribable pain.

A. D., Italy

*A number of significant risk factors exist for SIDS. (See "Watching the World" in the January 22, 1997, issue of "Awake!") Still, in many ways SIDS continues to be a medical mystery. Parents who have lost a child to SIDS should therefore not hold themselves responsible for that tragedy. The in-depth discussion of SIDS in our January 22, 1988, issue has proved comforting to many grieving parents.—ED.*

**Celiac Disease** We received the article "Coping With Celiac Disease" (March 22, 1999) three months after we learned that our six-year-old has it. In Russia this sickness is practically unknown even among doctors. How nice it is that our Christian brothers and sisters will understand why our daughter is on a special diet! This article has strengthened us and assured us that Jehovah always cares for the needs of his people.

V. P. and L. P., Russia

**Wanting Things You Cannot Have** I just finished reading the article "Young People Ask . . . Why Can't I Have the Things I Want?" (March 22, 1999) I would like to thank you for this article because it made me realize that I can't have everything I want. But as the article said, Jehovah knows our needs, and I'm very happy that I have a simple life.

C. K., Canada



## They Kept Their Word!

**ANTONIO**, who was in his last year of high school, wanted to give an informal witness to his classmates. So he suggested that his history teacher show the video *Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault*. Although skeptical, the teacher agreed, saying that she would show the video on the following day.

"At the beginning," relates Antonio, "the teacher was watching the video with an air of superiority; but when she realized that eminent historians were narrating the history of Jehovah's Witnesses in the concentration camps, she paid close attention. At the end she thanked me for suggesting the video."

During the next lesson, the teacher tried to describe the work of the *Bibelforscher*, as Jehovah's Witnesses were known at that time in Germany; but she realized that it

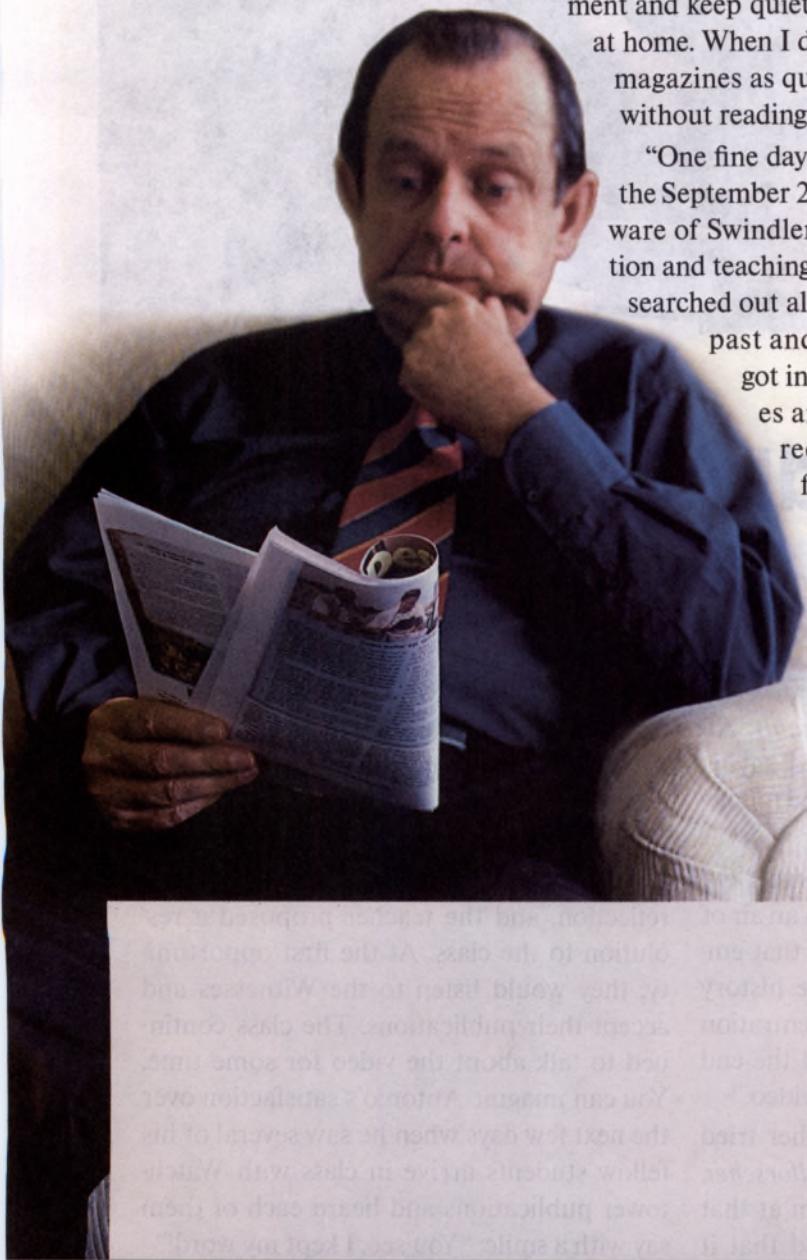
would be better to let Antonio do it. Antonio explained the Witnesses' role in society and some of their doctrines. He concluded by saying: "Obviously, people can't get any benefit from the precious message we bear if they don't listen to us, if they slam their doors in our faces, or if they don't read our publications."

All Antonio's classmates agreed with this reflection, and the teacher proposed a resolution to the class. At the first opportunity, they would listen to the Witnesses and accept their publications. The class continued to talk about the video for some time. You can imagine Antonio's satisfaction over the next few days when he saw several of his fellow students arrive in class with Watchtower publications and heard each of them say with a smile: "You see, I kept my word!"

# "I Have No Regrets"

"I enjoy reading newspapers, novels, and poetry, but I never had any interest in reading *Awake!*" writes a man from northern Brazil. "Whenever I saw Jehovah's Witnesses coming, I would close the door of my modest apartment and keep quiet so they would not suspect that I was at home. When I did speak to them, it was to accept the magazines as quickly as possible and put them away without reading them."

"One fine day I had nothing to read, so I picked up the September 22, 1997, *Awake!* with the cover title 'Beware of Swindlers!' Its clear presentation of information and teachings left me spellbound. Without delay, I searched out all the copies that I had acquired in the past and had laid around the house. Then I got in touch with one of Jehovah's Witnesses and subscribed to *Awake!* I have been receiving the magazine and reading it for eight months now, and I have no regrets."



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