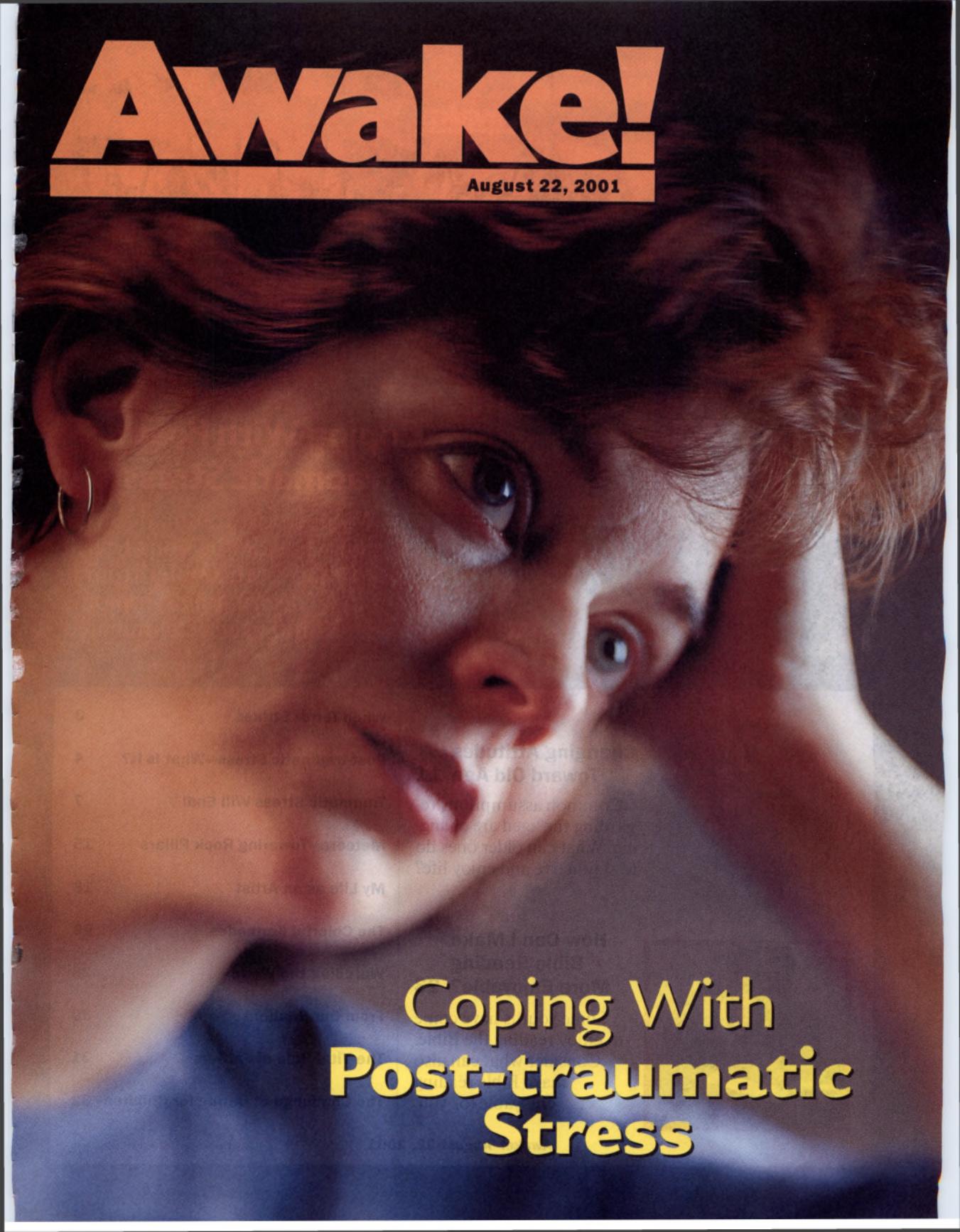


Awake!

August 22, 2001



**Coping With
Post-traumatic
Stress**



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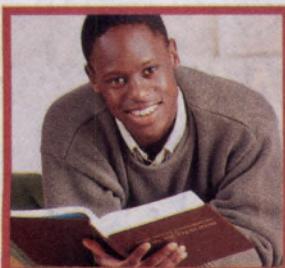
Coping With Post-traumatic Stress 3-10

What is post-traumatic stress, and what can be done to help those who suffer from its devastating symptoms? Will it ever be eliminated?



Changing Attitudes Toward Old Age 11

Common assumptions regarding the aged are changing. What can older ones do to stay active and enjoy life?



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Some youths have come to enjoy reading the Bible. Consider what can also make Bible reading enjoyable for you.

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When Terror Strikes

"I've got a knife! Shut up, or I'll kill you!"

IT WAS a lovely summer afternoon, and 17-year-old Jane,* one of Jehovah's Witnesses, had been roller-skating in a public park in Virginia, U.S.A. Suddenly the park seemed deserted, and she decided to leave. As she sat near her family's minivan removing her skates, a stranger approached her. With the chilling words above, he demanded sex, grabbed Jane, and tried to shove her inside the minivan. She screamed as loud as she could, but that did not stop the attack.

"I felt so utterly helpless," Jane recalled later. "Like a bug versus a giant. But I kept screaming and struggling. Finally, I called out to God, 'Jehovah, please don't let this happen to me!' That seemed to startle the attacker, who suddenly released her and fled the scene.

As the would-be rapist got into his car, Jane locked herself in her van, trembling. Grabbing the cell phone, she forced herself to be calm. She called the police and gave an accurate description of the suspect's car and its license number, which led to his arrest within minutes.

A Happy Ending?

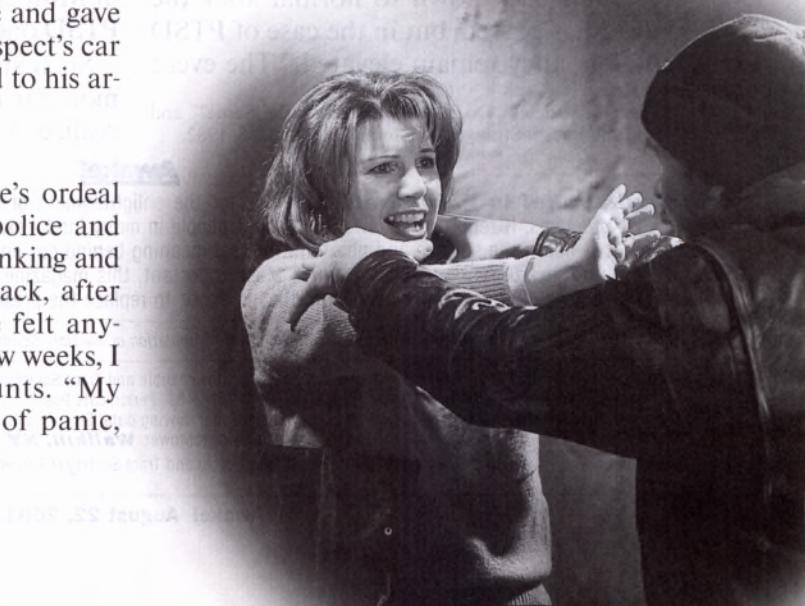
Yes, but not immediately. Jane's ordeal had only begun. Although the police and newspapers praised her quick thinking and clearheaded response to the attack, after the initial shock wore off, Jane felt anything but clearheaded. "After a few weeks, I began to fall apart," she recounts. "My body was in a continual state of panic,

which kept me from sleeping. After several weeks of this, I was unable to study or to focus mentally. I also had panic attacks. At school a classmate who looked a little like my attacker tapped me on the shoulder to ask the time, and I almost went to pieces."

She says: "I was so miserable. I lost contact with my friends, and the loneliness only added to the depression. I blamed myself for allowing the attack, and I grieved for the happy, trusting person I had been before it happened. I felt as if that person had died."

Jane was experiencing some of the classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). What is PTSD, and what can be done to help those who suffer from its devastating symptoms? The next article will answer these questions.

* The name has been changed.



Post-traumatic Stress What Is It?

YEARS AGO, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was usually called shell shock or combat fatigue and was studied primarily in connection with military veterans.* Today much has changed. You don't have to be a soldier to be diagnosed with PTSD. You only have to be a *survivor* of some traumatic event.

The event could be anything from a war to a rape attempt to a car accident. A fact sheet from the National Center for PTSD, in the United States, puts it this way: "To be diagnosed with PTSD, an individual must have been exposed to a traumatic event." And this event "must involve some type of actual or threatened PHYSICAL injury or assault."

Jane, mentioned in the preceding article, relates: "I have learned that sudden terror causes certain hormones to surge, and these hormones cause the senses to become hyperalert to danger. Ordinarily hormone levels fall back down to normal after the danger has passed, but in the case of PTSD sufferers, they remain elevated." The event

* See the articles "Do They Come Back the Same?" and "He Came Back a Stranger," in *Awake!* of August 8, 1982.

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.

Unless otherwise indicated, *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References* is used.

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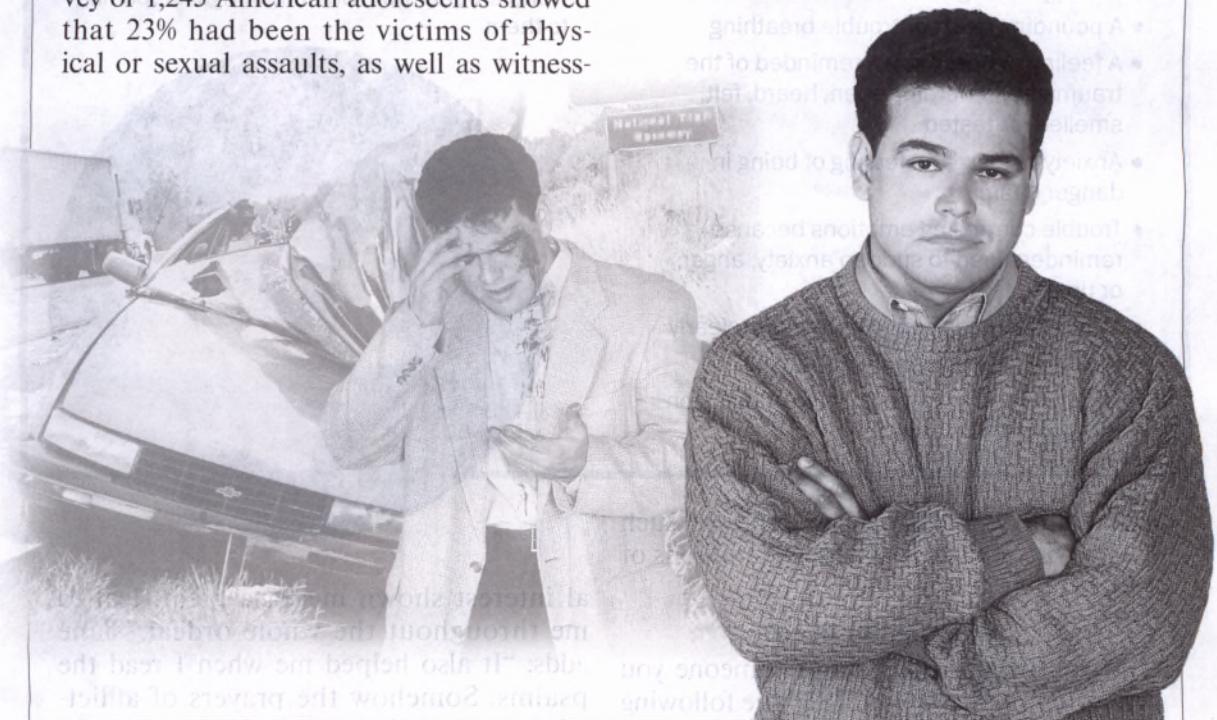
following many types of incidents. Authors Alexander C. McFarlane and Lars Weisaeth observe: "Recent studies have shown that traumatic events frequently happen to civilians during peacetime, as well as to soldiers and war victims, and that many survivors of such frequent events develop PTSD." Even medical procedures or heart attacks have triggered PTSD in some individuals.

"PTSD has turned out to be a very common disorder," explain the above-quoted authors. They further say: "A random survey of 1,245 American adolescents showed that 23% had been the victims of physical or sexual assaults, as well as witness-

es of violence against others. One out of five of the exposed adolescents developed PTSD. This suggests that approximately 1.07 million U.S. teenagers currently suffer from PTSD."

If the statistic is accurate, that means there are a lot of teenage sufferers in just

**A variety of traumatic events
can trigger PTSD**



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Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress

Many trauma survivors find themselves re-experiencing the trauma in their mind. Survivors usually can't control this or stop it from occurring. The consequences may include:

- Flashbacks—feelings that the trauma is happening again
- Bad dreams and nightmares
- A tendency to be very startled by loud noises or by someone unexpectedly coming up to them from behind
- A shaky feeling and sweatiness
- A pounding heart or trouble breathing
- A feeling of upset when reminded of the trauma by something seen, heard, felt, smelled, or tasted
- Anxiety or fear—the feeling of being in danger again
- Trouble controlling emotions because reminders lead to sudden anxiety, anger, or upset
- Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Agitation and a constant state of being on the lookout for danger

- An emotional shutdown or emotional numbness
- Trouble having loving feelings or feeling any strong emotions
- The feeling that surroundings are strange or unreal
- Loss of interest in things that were previously enjoyable
- Trouble remembering important parts of what happened during the trauma
- A feeling of being disconnected from the world around them and the things happening to them



one country! What can be done for such persons, as well as for the many millions of other sufferers worldwide?

What Can Be Done?

If you believe that you or someone you know may suffer from PTSD, the following are some suggestions.

Strive to maintain a spiritual program. “I always attended the meetings at our local Kingdom Hall,” explains Jane. “Even when I could not concentrate on what was being said, I knew that that was where Jehovah God wanted me to be. Those in the congregation were extremely loving and upbuilding, and the love and person-

al interest shown meant a great deal to me throughout the whole ordeal.” Jane adds: “It also helped me when I read the psalms. Somehow the prayers of afflicted ones seemed to speak for me. When I couldn’t say what I wanted to in prayer, I could just say ‘Amen.’”

Don’t hold back from encouraging the sufferer. If you have a loved one dealing with the horrible memory of some traumatic event, understand that he or she is not over-reacting or deliberately being difficult. Because of emotional numbness, anxiety, or an-

ger, he or she may not be able to respond as you would wish to the efforts you are making to be supportive. But don't give up! As the Bible says, "a true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress."—Proverbs 17:17.

The sufferer needs to recognize and avoid unwise coping strategies that cause further harm. These include use of illicit drugs and overindulgence in alcoholic beverages. Although alcohol and drugs may give promise of temporary relief, they soon make matters worse. They usually contribute to social isolation, rejection of the people who want to help, workaholism, uncontrolled anger, uncontrolled or overcontrolled eating, or other self-destructive behavior.

Consult with a competent health professional. It may turn out that the sufferer doesn't have PTSD, but if he or she does, effective therapies exist.* If you are receiving professional help, be honest with that person and ask for help to overcome any of the above behaviors.

Remember: Physical wounds are often the first to heal, but people suffering from PTSD can be wounded in many ways in body, mind, and spirit. The next article will discuss further ways that the sufferer and those around him can take part in the healing process and will also discuss the hope for all sufferers of post-traumatic shock.

* Jehovah's Witnesses do not officially promote or recommend any specific form of therapy, be it medical or psychiatric.

Traumatic Stress Will End!

PERHAPS you are a war veteran and you suffer from nightmares and flashbacks that make it seem as though the war has still not ended for you. Perhaps you are a victim of heartless violence such as rape and feel that a part of you died in the horror of the experience. Or it may be that a loved one died in a natural disaster or accident and continuing without that one is extremely painful.

Do you wonder if such feelings can be changed? We can answer with confidence: Yes, they can! In the meantime, all who suffer trauma can find comfort in God's Word, the Bible.

Helped to Endure Trauma

Nearly two thousand years ago, the apostle Paul underwent terrifying, life-threatening experiences. His descriptions of some of these are preserved in the Bible. "We do not wish you to be ignorant," Paul wrote, "about the tribulation that happened to us in the district of Asia, that we were under extreme pressure beyond our strength, so that we were very uncertain even of our lives. In fact, we felt within ourselves that we had received the sentence of death." —2 Corinthians 1:8, 9.

While it is not known exactly what happened on that occasion, it was certainly

traumatic. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27) How did Paul cope?

Reflecting on his ordeal in Asia, he wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation through the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God."—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

Yes, help for trauma survivors is available from "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort." How can you obtain such comfort?

How to Receive Help

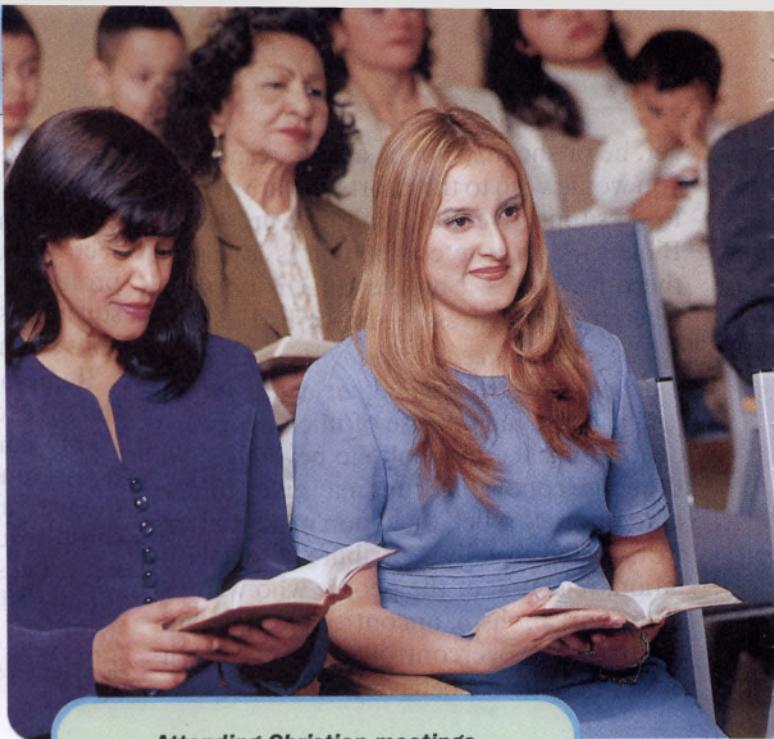
First—ask for help. If you feel emotionally paralyzed, remember that others have felt that way too. Those who have overcome such feelings are usually glad to assist others. Like the apostle Paul, they often feel that the comfort they received from God during their trial needs to be shared with "those in *any sort* of tribulation." Do not hesitate to approach one of Jehovah's Witnesses—any one of them with whom you feel comfortable—and request assistance in obtaining help from Jehovah, "the God of all comfort."

In Persevere in prayer. If prayer is difficult because you have feelings of anger, ask someone spiritually qualified to pray with you. (James 5:14-16) When you speak to Jehovah God, remember to "throw all your anxiety upon him, because *he cares for you*." (1 Peter 5:7) Over and over the Scriptures emphasize the personal concern that God has for each of his servants.

The writer of Psalm 94 may well have ex-

perienced something very traumatic, for he wrote: "Unless Jehovah had been of assistance to me, in a little while my soul would have resided in silence. When I said: 'My foot will certainly move unsteadily,' your own loving-kindness, O Jehovah, kept sustaining me. When my disquieting thoughts became many inside of me, your own consolations began to fondle my soul."—Psalm 94:17-19.

Some sufferers of traumatic stress are especially troubled by "disquieting thoughts," which can become at times an overwhelming torrent of panic or rage. However, heartfelt prayer can help "sustain" you until those feelings pass. Think of Jehovah as a loving parent and of yourself as a small child whom he lovingly protects. Remember the Bible's promise that "the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus."—Philippians 4:7.



Healing—whether physical, mental, or spiritual—is a gradual process. So it would be unrealistic to expect that prayer will bring instant peace to those seriously damaged by traumatic experiences. Yet, persistent prayer is vital. It will help keep the

Jane, mentioned in the preceding articles, drew comfort from many Bible passages in the Psalms. They include Psalm 3:1-8; 6:6-8; 9:9, 10; 11:1-7; 18:5, 6; 23:1-6; 27:7-9; 30:11, 12; 31:12, 19-22; 32:7, 8; 34:18, 19; 36:7-10; 55:5-9, 22; 56:8-11; 63:6-8; 84:8-10; 130:1-6. Do not try to read too many Bible passages at one time. Rather, take time to meditate on them and pray.

Reading God's Word and praying can help sustain you

sufferer from being overwhelmed and driven to despair by post-traumatic emotions.

Read and meditate on God's Word. If concentration is difficult, ask someone to read comforting Bible accounts with you. You might choose passages that reveal the depth of Jehovah's tender concern for his faithful ones, no matter how depressed or despairing they may feel.

Unprecedented Distress Now

Sadly, it should be no surprise that rapes, murders, wars, and needless violence abound today. Why? Because Jesus Christ characterized our time as one in which there would be an *“increasing of lawlessness.”* He added: “The love of the greater number will cool off.”—Matthew 24:7, 12.

In recent years traumatic stress has become all too common—often as a result of the very events that Jesus foretold. As



recorded in the Bible in Matthew chapter 24, Mark chapter 13, and Luke chapter 21, Jesus said that in this world's time of the end, there would be international wars, natural disasters, and increased lawlessness and lovelessness. Yet, as Jesus also observed, relief is not far off.

After describing a worldwide epidemic of trauma and the start of "great tribulation" to follow, note what Jesus said people should do: "Raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near." (Matthew 24:21-31; Luke 21:28) Yes, as world conditions worsen, we can be sure that great tribulation upon this distress-causing system of things will culminate in the end of all wickedness and the ushering in of a righteous new system.—1 John 2:17; Revelation 21:3, 4.

We should not be surprised that our deliverance will come only after wickedness and violence have reached their zenith. God's judgments in the past against the world of Noah's day and the vile inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah followed a similar pattern. Those past executions of divine judgment show what will happen in the future.—2 Peter 2:5, 6.

The End of Traumatic Stress

If you suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), you may wonder if your painful memories will ever be laid to rest. Yet, the answer surely is: Yes, they will be! At Isaiah 65:17, Jehovah God declares: "I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the

heart." Although the psychological scars of past trauma may seem permanent, this scripture assures us that someday their power to disturb will be entirely gone.

Today, over one year after the attempted rape, Jane is serving as a pioneer minister (full-time evangelizer) of Jehovah's Witnesses. "It was not until the trial was over and my attacker had been convicted—more than eight months after the attack—that I really felt like myself again," she said recently. "This time last year, I could not have imagined the peace and happiness I now enjoy. I thank Jehovah for the beautiful hope of everlasting life and the chance to share that hope with others."—Psalm 27:14.

If you are struggling with the despair and paralyzing emotional numbness of PTSD, that hope can help sustain you as well.

Soon all trauma
will be a thing
of the past



Changing Attitudes Toward OLD AGE

AT WHAT age are you old? The answer seems to depend on whom you ask. Teenagers will happily banish anyone over 25 to this category.

On the other hand, opera singers do not reach their prime until much later in life. And a report in Australia's newspaper *The Sun-Herald* claims regarding those intent on climbing the corporate ladder: "Today's truth is that if you haven't made it by 40, you never will."

Common Assumptions

Some may assume that people who are older are accident prone and slow to learn and are rapidly declining physically. Is it fair to make such assumptions? Well, according to statistics of the World Health Organization, in the whole European region, "one in every three road traffic deaths involves people younger than 25 years of age." Furthermore, the most rapid rate of physical decline happens between ages 30 and 40, and there is no evidence that a healthy person's intellectual ability decreases with age.

What about the assumption that older people are necessarily sick? "A common myth is that ageing and disease are synonymous," says *The Medical Journal of Australia*. The fact is, many older ones are enjoying a reasonable measure of health and don't consider themselves old. Some feel as did the American statesman Bernard Baruch, who said: "To me old age is always fifteen years older than I am."



Why, then, do older people often suffer discrimination and, at times, even outright prejudice? The answer revolves to a large extent around attitudes toward aging.

Attitudes Toward Old Age

"Americans are drunk on youth and have warped the media's view of the old," claims Max Frankel in *The New York Times Magazine*. "Old-timers have been virtually banished from the media business," he laments. This may help explain a modern paradox observed by *The UNESCO Courier*: "Never . . . has a society done so much for its oldest members. They benefit from economic and social protection, but the image society has of them is deeply negative."

Even the medical profession is not immune to this prejudice. According to *The Medical Journal of Australia*: "Many doctors, as well as the general community, believe that for people over 65 years of age it is too late for preventive care. . . . The negative attitude . . . has meant that older people have been excluded from many important studies."

This same journal asserts: "A negative attitude towards older people, labelling them as 'geriatric', can be used as an excuse to provide inferior medical care. Many common, but minor, functional problems such as reduced vision and hearing are

overlooked or accepted as a normal part of ageing. . . . A change in attitude towards older people is central to an effective preventive program."

"Perhaps the time has come to revise upwards the traditional definition of what constitutes old age, at least in developed countries," recommends the British medical journal *The Lancet*. Why is this important? The journal explains: "An altered definition might lift the gloom, doom, and dire predictions that are all too often used to bolster prejudices about 'tidal waves' of elderly

people consuming 'unfair shares' of scarce health resources."

A Gray Tidal Wave

The truth is that the gray wave is already here—and it is not just a wave but a rising tide. "Worldwide, the number of persons aged 65 and over will have increased fourfold between 1955 and 2025, and their percentage of the total population will have doubled," reports *The UNESCO Courier*.

The number of aged people in India is already greater than the entire population of France. And it is said that in the Unit-

They Stay Active and Enjoy Life

■ SOUTH AFRICA: Piet Wentzel, 77, is a full-time volunteer worker.

"I realize that to remain physically fit, regular exercise is important. For the past number of years, I have tended a small personal garden. I feel like a different person after such exercise. To get the most done, I have tried to be motivated by the principle, 'Indecision is the thief of time; procrastination is its chief accomplice.'"

■ JAPAN: Yoshiharu Shiozaki, 73, works as a real-estate consultant.

"I have lumbago, high blood pressure, and Meniere's disease. I use a bicycle to commute from my home to the office four days a week; the round trip is seven miles. This is good exercise for me, as it doesn't cause stress to my back yet strengthens the muscles of my legs. I endeavor to maintain peace with others, including neighbors. I try not to look for others' faults and mistakes. I have come to realize that people respond more quickly when encouraged than they do when criticized."

■ FRANCE: Léone Chalony, 84, is a full-time evangelizer.

"When I retired in 1982, it was hard because I loved my work as a hairdresser. I had no obligations, so I became a pioneer, as full-time evangelizers of Jehovah's Witnesses are called. Having many Bible studies with interested people has helped me to stay mentally active. I don't have a car, so I walk a lot. That keeps me healthy."

"I appreciate the importance of regular exercise."
—Piet



"I try not to look for others' faults."
—Yoshiharu



"Having many Bible studies keeps me mentally active."
—Léone



ed States, 76 million so-called baby boomers—those born in the 18 years following World War II—will retire over the next half century. While this trend toward an aging world population is causing concern for many economists and health-care workers, it is also putting pressure on some of our preconceived ideas about aging.

Rewriting the Script

Some may compare life to a three-act play. Youthful excitement and education are expected to dominate the first act. The responsibilities of raising a family and the re-

lentless pressure of work set the mood of the second act. For the third act, the actors are encouraged to retire to a chair away from the spotlight and wait dispiritedly for the final curtain to fall.

However, for various reasons, including remarkable advances in health care and hygiene during the 20th century, the length of time “actors” now spend offstage during the “third act” has increased by up to 25 years. Many are no longer content to be relegated to idle retirement. The swelling ranks of these active older ones

■ BRAZIL: Francisco Lapastina, 78, is a full-time volunteer worker.

“I do not usually get offended when someone hurts or ignores me. I assume that the person may be suffering pressures and problems. All of us have days when we are not very sociable. I try not to hold a grudge and to keep in mind that people have to put up with me. This has helped me to make many true friends.”

“I try not to hold a grudge.”
—Francisco



■ AUSTRALIA: Don MacLean, 77, still works a 40-hour week.

“Four years after bypass surgery on my heart, I continue to have excellent health. I did not view this operation as a permanently disabling chapter in my life. I continue to go for walks each day, as I have been doing for years. When I was young and observed others getting old before their time, I always resolved not to allow myself to adopt that frame of mind. I find real pleasure in getting to know people and promoting conversation. If we have a spiritual dimension to our lives, then we will experience what is described at Psalm 103:5: ‘[Jehovah] is satisfying your lifetime with what is good; your youth keeps renewing itself just like that of an eagle.’”

“Don’t get old before your time.”
—Don



■ JAPAN: Chiyoko Chonan, 68, is a full-time evangelizer.

“The key to maintaining good health is to avoid building up stress and getting exhausted. I try not to take things too seriously and find that having a change of pace from time to time helps me. Recently I started learning the abacus to exercise my fingers and my mind. I think it is good to start new things.”

“I think it is good to start new things.”
—Chiyoko



■ FRANCE: Joseph Kerdudo, 73, is a full-time volunteer worker.

“An important way to age gracefully is to stay active as long as possible. Working leads to satisfaction, and you need to keep an eye on your diet and make necessary adjustments. I think that when life has a purpose, it makes you different. I think that spirituality is very important in helping us stay in good health. Before I became one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, I was very indecisive and pessimistic. Knowing Bible truths is an extraordinary force that gives a person mental strength to cope with different situations.”

“Spirituality is very important.”
—Joseph



are starting to demand that the script be re-written.

A Huge Contribution

The widely held notion that most older people are dependent on others is simply not true. *The New York Times Magazine* reported that in the United States, "the majority of the old are self-sufficient, middle-class consumers with more assets than young couples . . . and [that] sociologists discern the emergence of a potent cohort of . . . well-off older people." Philip Kotler, professor of marketing at Northwestern University in the United States, commented in this regard. "Marketers," he said, "will soon consider the juiciest demographic target to be affluent consumers aged 55 and up."

The contribution made by active older people goes well beyond monetary influence. *The Sunday Telegraph* of Sydney noted that in Australia "grandmothers now provide half of all informal work-related child care, with more than a third of employed women having a grandmother look after their children when at work."

In such places as the French city of Troyes, the accumulated wisdom of the elderly is considered a valuable resource. This wisdom is being tapped when older ones are used outside school hours to teach children such skills as carpentry, glassmaking, stonecutting, construction, and plumbing. In addition to teaching, older ones are also going to school in great numbers to acquire various skills.

According to *The UNESCO Courier* of January 1999, "the Paris-based International Association of Universities of the Third Age" says that "there are more than 1,700 senior citizens' universities worldwide." Regarding these universities, the journal reports: "Although their structures and management methods differ widely from one country to another, universities for the el-

derly usually share a desire to help older people play a full part in cultural and social life." One such institution in Japan was reported to have 2,500 students!

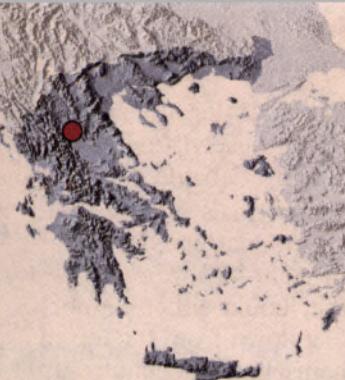
"The net contribution of older persons to their families and communities is vast, albeit difficult to quantify since much of it is unremunerated," says Alexandre Kalache, group leader of the World Health Organization's Ageing and Health Programme. He claims: "Countries . . . should see their ageing populations not as a problem but as a potential solution to problems . . . , first and foremost as a resource to be used."

Undeniably, our ability to enjoy our advancing years can be influenced by the perceptions and prejudices of others, but to a large extent, it is also determined by our own attitude toward life. What can you personally do to keep active, both mentally and physically, even if your body is growing older? Please read the box on pages 12 and 13, and note what some older ones say is their secret to staying active and enjoying life.

Strive to Maintain an Active Life

You will observe that a common characteristic of these active older ones is their maintenance of a meaningful work schedule—either for secular work or as volunteer workers. They also exercise regularly, keep an active interest in people of all age groups, and satisfy their fundamental spiritual needs. As you may notice, these secrets to a happy, active life will benefit young and old alike.

At present, the uncomfortable truth is that even as you read this article, you too are growing older. (*Ecclesiastes 12:1*) Wisely, though, you will pay heed to the summation in the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*: "Just as health sustains activity, it is an active life that stands the best chance of being a healthy one."



"Nothing can be more strange and wonderful than this romantic region, which is unlike anything I have ever seen either before or since. In . . . any other mountainous region where I have been, there is nothing at all to be compared to these extraordinary peaks."

—Robert Curzon,
English traveler, 1849.

WE ARE totally unprepared for the amazing spectacle we see as we approach the town of Kalabáka and the nearby village of Kastráki on the plain of Thessaly, Greece. Here is a stone "forest" of more than 20 enormous rock pillars—a jungle of detached precipitous rocks reaching hundreds of feet into the sky. Their summits are crowned by monasteries with wooden galleries and corniced rooftops.

This is the Meteora of Greece, where unique natural rocks are combined with incredible human endeavor. "Meteora"—from a Greek word meaning "raised up above the earth"—refers to this group of isolated rock pillars and to the more than 30 monasteries built on them. The average height of these rocks is 1,000 feet, with the highest rising about 1,800 feet from the ground.

As we draw closer, the shadows of the towering rocks are lengthening. The landscape of this strange world is ever changing as the sun casts different shadows among the rocks. In the winter the huge rocks rise stark and black out of a white carpet of snow.

How They Were Formed

There has been much speculation about how the rocks of the Meteora were formed. Many believe that millions of years ago, the plain on which the Meteora stands was submerged beneath a vast inland lake. According to one theory, a gigantic geologic upheaval in some way caused these rocks to protrude upward. *Experiment* magazine explains that some geologists believe "that these rocks must have been given the form they have today between the years 2000 and 1000 B.C.E."

METEORA

Towering Rock Pillars

Robert Curzon, quoted at the outset, wrote about Meteora: "The end of a range of rocky hills seems to have been broken off by some earthquake or washed away by the Deluge, leaving only a series of . . . tall, thin, smooth, needle-like rocks." Interestingly, ancient Greek mythology also attributes the formation of the mountains of Thessaly to a flood, or deluge, caused by the gods.—Genesis 6:1-8:22.

Monasteries in the Air

Whatever the geologic explanation for Meteora might be, since the ninth century C.E., these rocks have attracted attention. Modern mountaineers, who climb the Meteora with special climbing equipment, can perhaps best appreciate the feat of early religious hermits who settled in the caves and

fissures of the rocks. How the monasteries were built on the top of these virtually inaccessible rocks is still being debated.

How did those in early times get up to and down from their lofty monasteries? Well, as stated by the book *Meteora—The Rock Monasteries of Thessaly*, 'they could either clamber up wooden ladders let down from the top of the cliffs or allow themselves to be hauled up in a net lowered from a windlass in the monastery above. In either case the visitor had to rely on the good faith and the doubtful engineering of the monks.' Asked how often the rope that held the net was changed, a former abbot is reported to have said: 'Only when it breaks.' It was not until 1925 that steps were hacked out of the rock to make access much easier.

The first religious hermits who climbed up the pillars were Varnavas, sometime between 950 and 965 C.E., and Andronikos

▼ Background: Y. Yannelios/Greek National Tourist Organization

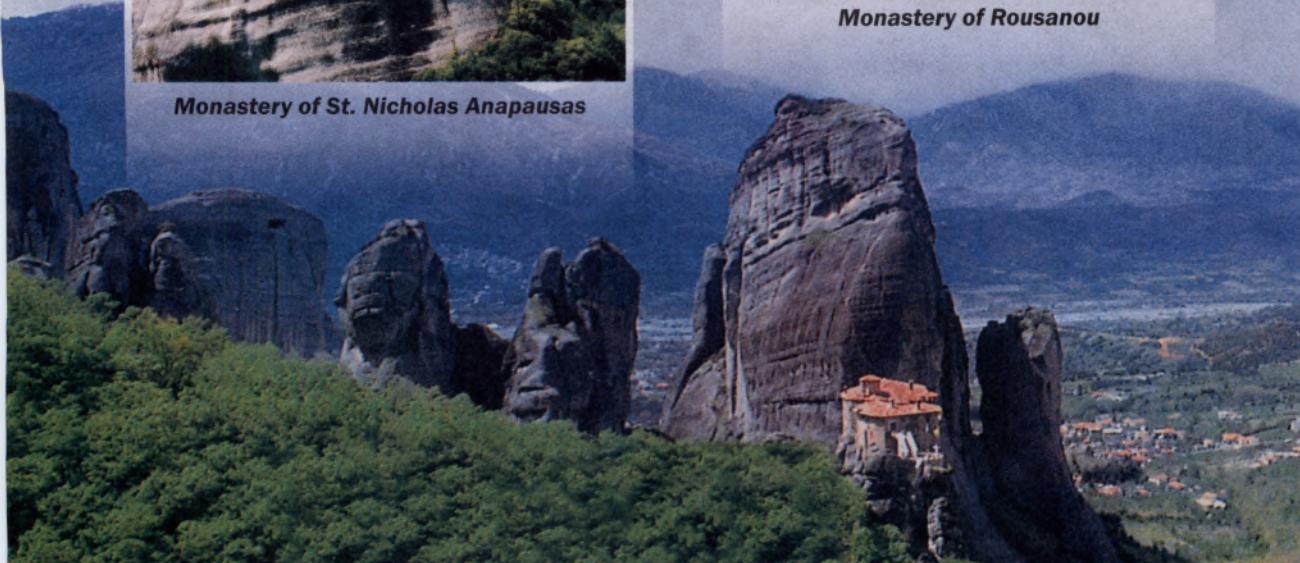


Monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas

▲ M. Thorne/H. Armstrong Roberts



Monastery of Rousanou



from Crete, in 1020. Other monks from all over Byzantium followed, swelling the number of the monastic houses on top of the rocks to 33. By the 16th and 17th centuries, the communities had reached their greatest importance, but they have been in decline ever since.

"Look at us now!" cried the abbot of one of the monasteries. "Ah, . . . the young don't want us any more!" Indeed, only six of the monasteries, two inhabited by nuns, are still open. Abandoned monastic complexes can be found on various Meteora rocks.

A Rich Cultural Showcase

Today the rock monasteries form one of the most interesting spots on the cultural map of Greece. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, they are a unique treasure chest of cultural heritage. A recent concern

of the Greek State is that the cultural wealth of the Meteora be preserved. Renovated buildings and museums have been opened for visitors. What do they contain?

Well, apart from such things as portable icons, ecclesiastical robes, and music codices, they contain rare historical Bible manuscripts. Among them is the parchment Codex 591, dated 861-62 C.E., which contains interpretative discourses on the Bible book of Matthew.

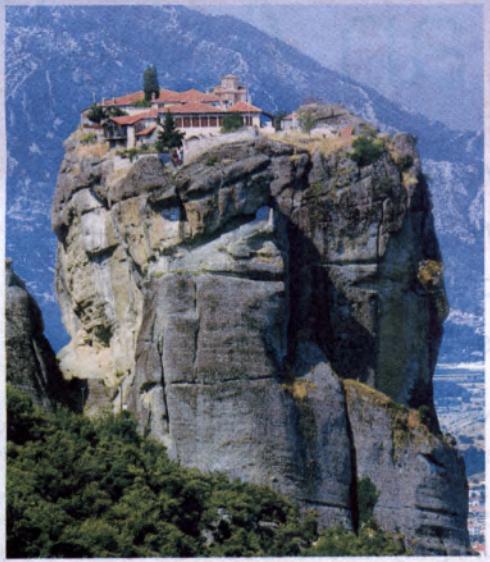
Powerful natural forces have indeed formed a unique spectacle. If you ever visit Greece, why not include Meteora in your itinerary? And make sure that you take along an ample supply of film because you will have the urge to use your camera often.

—Contributed.

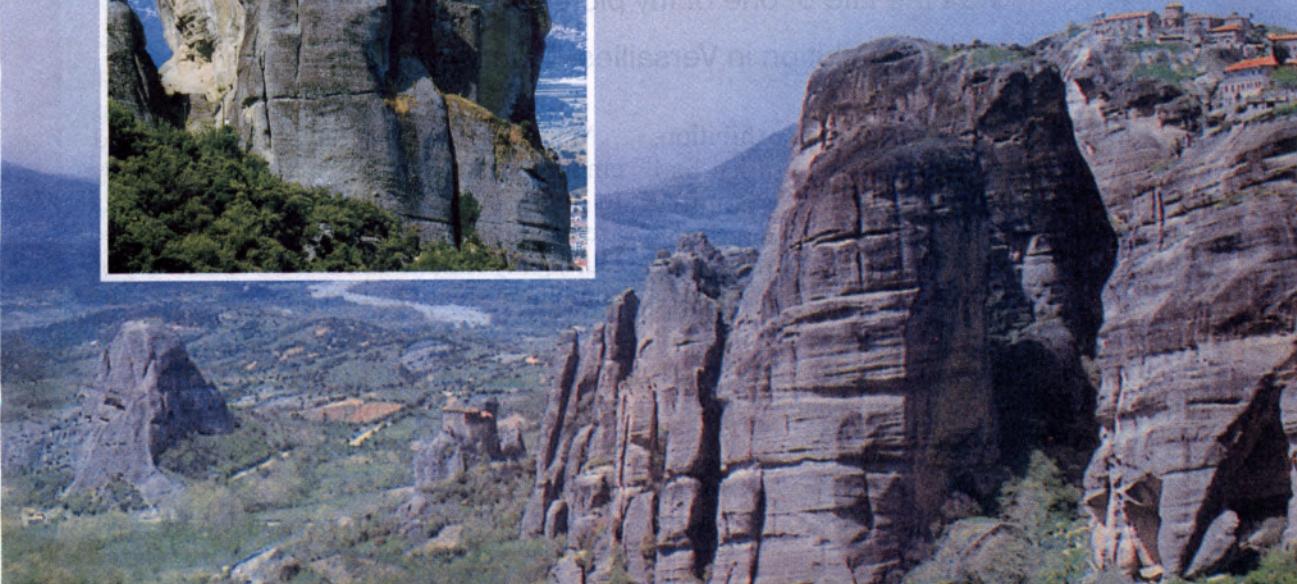
Monastery of the Great Meteoron



Monastery of the Holy Trinity



▲ R. Kord/H. Armstrong Roberts ▲





My Life as an Artist

AS TOLD BY SHIZUKO KAWABATA

"Jehovah's Witnesses, the Beautiful People"

"Who Are Declaring the Good News All Over the World"

was the title of one of my pictures on display at an art exhibition in Versailles, France, in 1999.

LESS than a week before the exhibition, Jehovah's Witnesses in France had distributed throughout the country 12 million tracts that drew attention to the government's unfair treatment of them. For my picture praising the Witnesses, I was given a special award. Later, the person in charge of presenting it said: "You have courage, but I have courage too. That is why I am awarding you the special prize."

Many artists try to convey sensations and emotions in their pictures. This is what I try to do. I paint what I feel, and my pictures are bright, reflecting my joy and happiness. During my childhood I discovered the joy of combining creativity and painting.

Why I Started Painting

I was born in 1920 to well-to-do parents in Morioka, Japan. My older sister and I had tutors who taught us Japanese dancing, flower

arranging, the tea ceremony, the koto (Japanese zither), piano, singing, and so on. I hated all of it. When the tutors came, I often ran off and hid. The servants had to search for me and drag me back.

It was the rigidity of the lessons that I detested. People I had never before met decided how I should dance, arrange flowers, and serve tea. I felt cramped, as if there were no way to think up things for myself and set personal goals. When I painted pictures, though, no one looked over my shoulder. No one told me what to do. Here was the freedom I craved.

Since I had no tutor for art, I could be creative and improvise, and nobody criticized me. Gradually I became bolder. At about the age of 12, I began taking my father's silk ties and painting directly on them. Soon after that, we made dresses at school. The teacher was shocked when she saw that I had cut out half of the front and replaced it with white material. Like my father, though, she made no comment.

Dreams and Reality

As early as elementary school, I said that I would grow up to be an artist. My goal did not change, and I wanted to go to a university to study art; but my parents would not allow this. They said that in Japan an arts graduate would be considered unacceptable as a bride. So I took a course in domestic skills.

I liked foreign poetry and foreign books and read them a great deal. At the time, however, these were criticized as enemy literature. Even owning such literature was dangerous. At school I had studied French for five years under a French teacher, but conditions changed in Japan so that even interest in foreign languages was viewed with suspicion. Freedom of speech was denied us.

In 1943, as World War II raged, I was flattered to hear that after looking at 40 photo-

graphs of young women of marriageable age, a man had selected me as a possible wife. I later learned that his mother and her friend had visited our neighborhood to take a secret look at me. Afterward, their family sent a formal proposal of marriage to our family, and I was talked into accepting it. I met the man just once before our wedding.

After we were married, massive air raids threatened our lives daily, and finally our home went up in flames with the rest of the city. Survivors sought refuge in the mountains, but even there we could hear the sirens and see the warplanes. It was terrifying. Everyone suffered. The ten years after the war were also truly bitter.

Besides our three children, my mother-in-law and six of my husband's brothers and sisters lived with us. Although we employed servants, we all had to work in the fields in order to eat. During that time I was very sad and forgot how to laugh. But I was afraid that putting my feelings into words would invite misunderstanding. Gradually, though, I found I could express my feelings through my art.

Gaining Recognition as an Artist

Even a person with an artistic flair must expend a tremendous amount of effort before worthwhile results are realized. I bought books on art, and I studied under a number of Japan's top artists. None of them

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Help for Depressed Teens

The Maya—Yesterday and Today

Did God Condone the Slave Trade?

recommended that I change the style that I had already developed as a youth.

Art critics began taking notice of my work, yet I painted for my own satisfaction, not to show my paintings to others. In time, though, I began to wonder what people thought of my pictures. So in 1955, I held my first exhibition in Tokyo's Ginza. It was entitled "Silent Struggle, Silent Speech, My Diary," and it expressed everyday life in picture form. The exhibition was a success.

Meeting the Witnesses

In 1958 our family moved to Tokyo because my husband and I wanted our children to enter good schools and have the best education possible. My life revolved around painting. It had become my custom to spend about five hours a day painting. At night I would go out with my artist friends, and my husband went out with others. We had no idea how to bring up our children.

My husband's work took him away a good deal, so rearing the children became my responsibility, and I lost confidence. As a child, I had attended a Catholic mission school, and I wondered if some kind of Bible education would help. Across the road from our house in Omori, Tokyo, was a Lutheran church, and I suggested to the children that we go there. But we never made it to the church.

Instead, the very next day—early in 1959—one of Jehovah's Witnesses called at our house. I quickly assembled the children, and we all sat down to listen. The Witness explained from the Bible that we are living in a marked time when God will soon rid the earth of wickedness. I ordered four Bibles along with Bible literature and readily accepted her offer to call each week to teach us. I asked how much the monthly tuition fees would be and was amazed to learn that

Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept payment for their teach-

ing. How different from all the tutors I had known!

My daughters readily accepted Bible truths, and we even began having a regular group study in our home each week. But after a few studies, I began to feel uneasy. For me it was a painful period, so sometimes I would try to hide or go out when it was time for my personal Bible study.

My problem was that I could see that everything the Bible said was correct and that I should conform to its guidance. At the same time, though, I was determined to become a good artist, and I believed that I had to maintain free thinking to be creative. As a result of the turmoil I was feeling, my painting suffered. My pictures were being relegated to back corners at exhibitions.

My Trip to Paris

I felt that a visit to Paris would help me improve my pictures. So in 1960, I went there, since a major exhibition to introduce Japanese art to France was being held. I was the only female artist from Japan to attend. In Paris the difference in living conditions, clothes, conceptions, color—everything—thrilled me. The exhibition lasted four days, and to my surprise, the country's leaders attended the exhibition. Yet another surprise was that women were fascinated by the kimonos I wore. I was determined to stay longer.

Not understanding how to have money sent from Japan, I began selling my kimonos. Thus, I was able to spend the next three months studying works on display in art galleries. Often I recalled the words of the artist whose picture had hung next to mine at the exhibition. He said: "I paint the brightness of the sun. Your painting is naturally dark and black because you are influenced by Oriental philosophers."

A married couple from the Paris branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses visited my

apartment. After several visits, I finally agreed to accompany them to a Christian meeting. When I arrived, I was stunned by what I saw. One lady was wearing a beautiful red broad-brimmed hat. Another wore a dress of brilliant green. The clothes worn reflected a sense of style and good taste, so that my view of the Witnesses underwent a complete change.

The program also impressed me. Seeing the same procedures being followed on both sides of the globe, with the same teachings, made me realize that this group and its activity were far from ordinary. My heart was deeply touched, as I realized that I was associating with people led by God.

Making Decisions

Upon returning to Japan, I began to study the Bible seriously. I discovered that our Creator's guidelines allow for more freedom than I had imagined. Lovingly, he has given us individual personalities as well as individual talents and the freedom to cultivate them. So I came to realize that becoming one of Jehovah's Witnesses did not mean giving up one's love for the arts.

My daughters and I progressed with our Bible studies. One daughter symbolized her dedication to Jehovah by water baptism in 1961, and the other in 1962. To this day, both have remained faithful servants of God. Yet, I still held back. In 1965, Lloyd Barry, who then had oversight of the preaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, encouraged me by saying: "Just think what wonderful pictures perfect people will paint in Paradise!" The following year I was baptized.

The Effect on My Painting

Looking back, I can see how the changes in my life and personality have affected my painting. My earlier pictures were dark and gloomy, reflecting the pain, suffering, and hopelessness I felt. But then I learned from the Bible about our Creator, his mar-

velous qualities, the happiness that comes from praising him, and the proper standards by which to live. As my feelings changed, so did my pictures.

I now spend a lot of time sharing the Bible's message with others, doing this on a regular basis. Talking with people about the qualities of God, as well as his wonderful purpose to make this earth a paradise under the rule of his Son, Jesus Christ, brings me great joy and contentment. This Bible-based activity stimulates me, and I just have to pick up my paintbrush and give expression to my feelings. And as my happiness has continued to grow over the years, my pictures have become brighter.

Emphasis on the Bible

I receive requests to exhibit my paintings from all over the world—from Sydney, Vienna, London, New York. But it is Europeans who admire my pictures the most. Experts of the Louvre Royal Academy of Arts in Paris have asked: "How is it that a Japanese can be so moved by the Bible and Christianity

When I was in Paris



that her pictures express a joy never seen in centuries of religious art?"

The Bible psalmist David expressed his feelings through music, and he used his musical talents to teach others the wonders of God. My aim is the same. I want to praise Jehovah. I strongly desire that people sense in my pictures the joy that can be had from knowing Jehovah and his wonderful qualities. An art critic said about my titles: "The artist's own words are cleverly avoided, and she objectively gets the Bible to talk." It thrills me that people recognize the power of the Bible in my pictures.

In 1995 the World Council of Arts, which is an international art organization with headquarters in Tokyo, awarded me first place among the world's top-ranking artists. The council reported regarding my paintings: "The artist quotes words from the Bible for titles . . . All of her pictures have the Bible depicted in them, but this is exactly what life is about for an artist who walks with God."

The above was a reference to the fact that I often include an image of an open Bible in my paintings. Recently, I have combined printed pages of the Bible with my pictures. So the eye of a viewer is drawn to my selected title as well as the words in the Bible and then to the way that I depict these in my paintings.

In 1999 some of my pictures were exhibited in Bangkok, Thailand. One was called "How Wonderfully Jehovah God Made the Earth, Giving It to Man as a Dwelling Place," and another, "Prayer of King David: 'Jehovah, Let the Heart of This People Be One With You.'" I was invited to the palace of the king of Thailand along with a few other artists. The king wanted to discuss my pictures with me, and he asked me many questions. I was able to talk with him at length and include comments about my Bible-based beliefs. Afterward, I made a gift to him of a picture.

During the past 35 years, I have also served on a committee to judge the work of other artists. Pictures that I like express emotion. To me a picture is good when it leaves me with a good impression, causing me to feel inner peace. I greatly admire the pictures that appear in the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses, which accomplish their purpose of faithfully representing the message of the Bible.

Blessings as a Servant of God

As a result of my painting, I have enjoyed unique opportunities to give a witness about Jehovah God and his grand purposes for the earth. This has been true during interviews for magazine articles and on television programs. In fact, no matter where I go or whom I talk to, I try to let people know that it is the faith, joy, and happiness that comes from serving Jehovah God that enables me to produce my pictures.

I am convinced that if I were to give up my faith, I could not paint as I do. But because I am one of Jehovah's Witnesses and because the truth of God's Word fills me with joy and happiness, for these reasons I can paint.

With my two daughters today



YOUNG PEOPLE ASK . . .

"At times the Bible is hard to understand, and that can be discouraging."—Annalieza, 17 years old.

"I found the Bible boring."
—Kimberly, 22 years old.

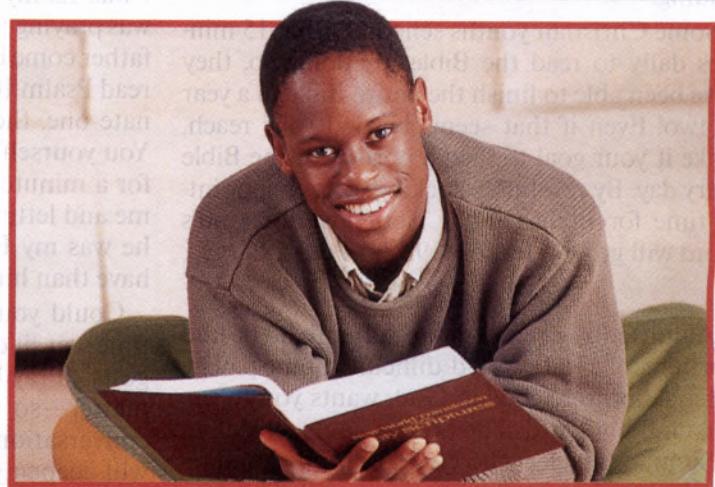
MANY people do not enjoy reading anything. So a book as large as the Bible may seem overwhelming—even for avid readers. "To me, the Bible was a thick book that contained many big words that were hard to understand," says Tammy, who is 17 years old. "Reading the Bible requires a lot of concentration and endurance."

In addition, homework, household chores, and recreation may consume much of your time and energy. This too can make it hard to concentrate and enjoy reading the Bible. Alicia, who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses, also takes time to prepare for and attend Christian meetings and to share her beliefs with others. She admits: "Bible reading can be difficult because there seems to be an endless amount of things to do."

Yet, Alicia, Tammy, and many other youths have met the challenge. Now they read the Bible regularly and take pleasure in it. You can too! Consider three things that you can do to make Bible reading more enjoyable.

Make Time for Bible Reading

"I think young people say that Bible reading is boring because they haven't done it enough," says Kelly, who is 18. Just as you en-



How Can I Make Bible Reading More Enjoyable?

joy a sport or a game that you play often, you will enjoy Bible reading as you do it regularly.

But what if you have very little free time? The apostle Paul advises: "Keep strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise but as wise persons, buying out the opportune time for yourselves, because the days are wicked." (Ephesians 5:15, 16) You can 'buy out time' by spending less time on nonessential activities like watching TV. The term Paul used for "time" can mean a time that is appointed for a specific purpose. What could be your appointed time to read the Bible?

Many read the Bible in the morning, after considering the Scriptural text and comments found in the booklet *Examining the Scriptures Daily*.^{*} Others prefer reading before going to bed at night. Choose a realistic time that works for you, and adapt as needed. Alicia observes: "Flexibility is really

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

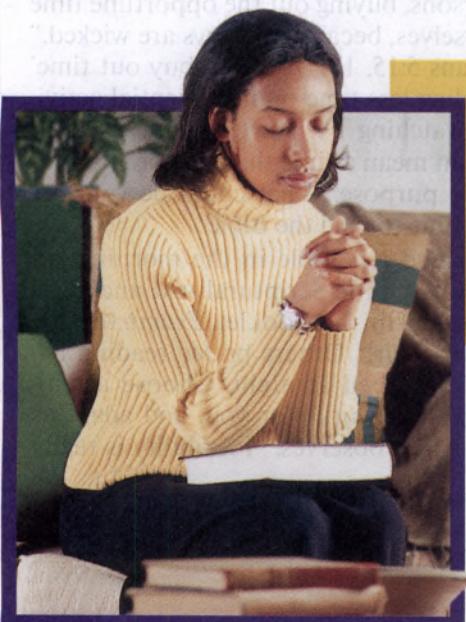
the key to my keeping a regular schedule for reading."

Some Christian youths schedule 10 to 15 minutes daily to read the Bible. By doing so, they have been able to finish the entire Bible in a year or two! Even if that seems beyond your reach, make it your goal to read a portion of the Bible every day. By resolutely sticking to your appointed time for Bible reading, your love for God's Word will grow.—Psalm 119:97; 1 Peter 2:2.

Pray for Wisdom

Admittedly, even regular Bible readers find portions of God's Word difficult to grasp. The Bible's Author, Jehovah God, wants you to understand his Word. The book of Acts tells of an Ethiopian traveler who could not fully comprehend a prophecy in Isaiah chapter 53. The man was willing to ask for help, and Jehovah's angel sent the missionary Philip to explain the prophecy to him.—Acts 8:26-39.

Effective Bible reading, then, does not begin with reading at all, but with prayer. Before opening their Bible, some make it a practice to pray to Jehovah for the wisdom to understand and take to heart the lessons in their reading. (2 Timothy 2:7; James 1:5) God's spirit can even bring back to your mind Bible verses that will help you to answer questions or cope with trials.



Prayer and research will enhance your Bible reading and help you to unlock the meaning of the Scriptures

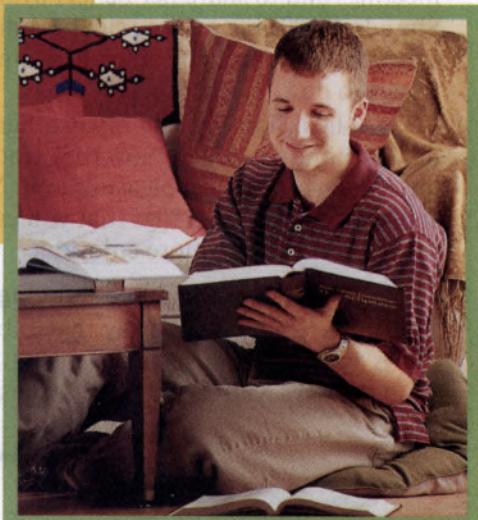
One young Christian man remembers: "When I was 12, my father left our family. One night I was praying in bed, begging Jehovah to make my father come back. I then picked up my Bible and read Psalm 10:14: 'To you [Jehovah] the unfortunate one, the fatherless boy, commits himself. You yourself have become his helper.' I paused for a minute. I felt that Jehovah was talking to me and letting me know that he was my helper; he was my Father. What better father could I have than him?"

Could you make it your habit to pray each time you sit down to read the Bible? Adrian suggests: "Pray before reading—and after, for that matter—so that it really becomes a two-way conversation with Jehovah." Heartfelt prayer will deepen your resolve to stick to your Bible-reading schedule and will strengthen your relationship with God.—James 4:8.

Make It Live

Kimberly, quoted at the outset, found the Bible to be boring. True, the Bible is a very old book—written far before the advent of the computer, the television, or the airplane—and Bible characters died thousands of years ago. Nevertheless, the apostle Paul wrote: "The word of God is alive and exerts power." (Hebrews 4:12) How can such an ancient book exert power?

In the days of the copyist Ezra, thousands of men, women, and "all in-



telligent enough to listen" were gathered together in Jerusalem to listen to a reading of the Law of Moses. At that time the Law was already over 1,000 years old! Yet, Ezra and his assistants "continued reading aloud from the book, from the law of the true God, it being expounded, and *there being a putting of meaning into it*; and they continued giving understanding in the reading." When these men explained the Scriptures and put life into the reading, what resulted? "All the people went away to eat and drink and to send out portions and to carry on a great rejoicing, for they had understood the words that had been made known to them."

—Nehemiah 8:1-12.

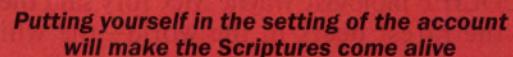
How can you 'put meaning' into your Bible reading? Cathy, who finds reading a challenge, reads aloud to focus her attention. Nicki tries to put herself in the setting of the account. "I imagine how I would feel in that situation," she says. "My favorite story has always been the account of Ruth and Naomi. I can read it over and over again. When I moved to a new city, I drew comfort from this story because I could imagine how Ruth felt going to a strange place and not knowing anyone. I saw how she put her trust in Jehovah, and it really helped me to do that too."

—Ruth, chapters 1-4.

For the Bible to 'exert power,' meditation is needed. Each time you read, take time to reflect on the scriptures you read and to consider how you will use what you have learned. You may want to refer to Bible study aids published by Jehovah's Witnesses to enrich your reading.*

Persevere!

Sticking to a Bible-reading schedule is not easy. Even the best Bible-reading program may



Putting yourself in the setting of the account will make the Scriptures come alive

need to be adjusted from time to time. How can you persevere in your goal to read the Bible daily?

Your friends and family can help. Fifteen-year-old Amber says: "I share a room with my sister. Some nights I am so tired that I just want to go to sleep, but my sister reminds me to do my reading. So I never forget!" If you find a particular scripture or passage to be interesting, talk about it with others. This will heighten your appreciation for God's Word and may even stimulate their interest in Bible reading. (Romans 1:11, 12) If you neglect your Bible reading for one day or longer, don't give up! Pick up where you left off, and be more determined than ever to stick to your schedule.

Never forget the rich benefits that come from daily Bible reading. By listening to Jehovah through his Word, you can enjoy a close relationship with him. You will come to perceive his thoughts and feelings. (Proverbs 2:1-5) These precious truths from our heavenly Father will prove to be a protection. "How will a young man cleanse his path?" the psalmist asked. "By keeping on guard according to your word." (Psalm 119:9) So begin—and stick to—a Bible-reading routine. You may find it to be far more enjoyable than you ever thought it could be!

* The October 1, 2000, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 16-17, gives a number of practical suggestions to help you dig deeper into the Bible.

THE COLORFUL KERMODES

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN CANADA

"They stand on their hind feet, they sit on their rear ends . . . , they even snore when they sleep. . . . They're intelligent, they're curious, they learn fast and adapt well, and they seem to experience the same sort of moods we do."

WILDLIFE biologist Wayne McCrory said the above about one of the rarest bears in the world—the white black bear of Canada's northwest coast. The scientific world was first introduced to this bear in 1900 by William Hornaday, a member of the



New York Zoological Society. He was cataloging bearskins from Victoria, British Columbia, and came across an unusual pelt. It was creamy white with a light-golden tint and was similar in shape to the pelt of the black bear.

Intrigued by the finding, Hornaday invited Francis Kermode, the director of British Columbia's Provincial Museum, to assist in collecting more information on what Hornaday thought was a new species of bear. In 1905, in recognition of Kermode's efforts in obtaining specimens and information, Hornaday named the bear *Ursus kermodei*—Kermode's bear.

Kermodes are members of the black bear family, yet they are not always the color that their name suggests. The native Indian Tsimshian-speaking people, who live in Kermode-bear country, call the bear *Moksgm'ol*, or white bear. There have also been sightings of orange, chestnut-red, gold, bright-yellow, blue-gray, and even patchy black-brown-white bears.

Biologists are still not sure why there are white Kermodes. One suggestion is that a random genetic mutation may be responsible for the distinct color. Actually, only 1 in every 10 Kermodes sighted is white. Kermodes of Canada's Pacific northwest coast are certainly unique and deserve more than a casual look.

Visiting Kermode Territory

Kermodes can be seen in an area of approximately 29,000 square miles along the north coast of British Columbia. If you travel northwest from Vancouver some 400 miles, you come to Princess Royal Island and the Douglas Channel area near Kitimat. Some 100 miles inland, to the northeast, is the logging community of Terrace, located along the Skeena River. This region is the heart of Kermode country. It has been described as the wildest and richest wilderness of Canada's West.

An experienced wilderness guide who knows the behavior of the Kermode is needed if you are to get even a glimpse of this white wanderer. The best time to sight one is in October, when the streams of British Columbia are

alive with thousands of spawning salmon. During this annual event, Kermodes come down from the highlands to feast on a banquet of salmon. Describing the banqueting bears' eating ritual, one eyewitness said: "Selecting the specimen they want, they put one paw on the head, then strip the skin off from the gills back, exposing the flesh on which they feast."

What They Are Like

Kermodes may appear to be friendly, cuddly, and playful, but in actuality, like all bears, they can be unpredictable and dangerous. Reportedly, they have poor vision. Their small tapered nose and long nostrils are designed to maximize their sense of smell. Although they seem to move awkwardly, they are very fast. Some have been clocked at speeds of over 30 miles an hour for short distances!

Full-grown females are from four to six feet in length and weigh between 100 and 400 pounds. Males are larger and occasionally exceed 500 pounds. When Kermodes stand on their hind legs, they tower at eight to nine feet. They are also good swimmers. A fisheries patrol officer, in fact, observed one swimming from a nearby island to the mainland. As he maneuvered his boat near the bear, it surprised him by diving and swimming underwater, surfacing only for air.

Encounters With Humans

When bears come to associate unnatural food sources with people, they frequently lose their wariness of man and can become overly aggressive and dangerous. Such bears are often destroyed. So the next time you see a bear in the wild and it is begging for food, remember that if you feed it, you may be not only inviting danger to yourself but also contributing to its early death.

Reflecting on this intriguing bear, we cannot help but be impressed with the variety that exists in the bear family. How wonderful and delightful are God's creative works! And what a responsibility man has to care for such fascinating creatures!

WATCHING THE WORLD

Fake Fossil

"For 116 years it graced the halls of the National Museum of Wales at Cardiff—the fossilised skeleton of a 200m[illion]-year-old predator that once cruised the Jurassic seas," says Britain's newspaper *The Guardian*. "Then curators at Cardiff decided the remains of the ocean-going carnivore ichthyosaurus needed a brush up—and realised that they had been taken in." "When we stripped off five layers of paint we found it was an elaborate forgery," said conservator Caroline Buttler. "It was an amalgam of two types of ichthyosaurus plus a clever attempt at fake parts." Instead of disposing of it, the museum will put it on display as an example of a fake fossil.

Contaminated Mountain Lakes

Mountain lakes are not as clean as they are thought to be. "Even the highest lakes, such as the Schwarzsee above Sölden [Austria], are full of pollutants," reports the German magazine *natur & kosmos*. Fish in high-altitude lakes have a DDT level that is as much as 1,000 times higher than fish found at lower altitudes. Why? In tropical countries the poisonous chemical becomes airborne through evaporation and is carried away by air currents to other parts of the world. Over cold spots—like mountain lakes—the DDT particles condense and fall as precipitation. The "ice-cold mountain lakes work like cold

traps," says the magazine, and "snatch the DDT from the atmosphere." DDT—an insecticide toxic to humans and animals—has been banned in Europe for over 20 years, but it is still being used in developing countries.

Personalized Tombs



"Eccentric graves are the new funeral fashion," reads the French newsmagazine *L'Express*. Tomb producers offer to erect personalized monuments in 25 different colors, in new designs, and in materials such as stained glass or metal. Monuments already made include sculptures of a parachute, a dog and cow, a train wreck, and a huge barrel—ordered by a wine merchant. One major company states that it makes at least 80 replicas of motorbikes a year to decorate graves. According to the article, local regulations may only allow for a headstone and a slab, but French law gives support to individual beliefs and grants owners of a cemetery plot "freedom of construction."

Beware of Lead in Jewelry

"If your child is likely to chew or suck on jewellery which may contain lead, discard the items immediately,"

advises a Health Canada report. Laboratory tests of inexpensive costume jewelry typically purchased for children revealed that most samples had a lead content of between 50 and 100 percent. "Absorbing even low amounts of lead may have harmful health effects on the intellectual and behavioural development of infants and young children," says the report. Lead content is, of course, difficult to determine without a testing kit. So in view of the normally low cost of children's jewelry, the best strategy might be that recommended in the *National Post* newspaper: "When in doubt, throw it out."

Natural Habitat —Key to Conservation

"Habitat protection [is] the key to wildlife conservation," says the *Times of Zambia* newspaper. The report states that the greatest factor influencing the decline of wildlife populations is habitat destruction. "Overgrazing, fires, soil erosion, [and] cultivation" are among the culprits. "Obviously agriculture is important and there is no way we can do away with it," the article explains. But in areas where agriculture "is not so beneficial due to poor soils," natural habitats could be preserved, says the *Times*. When domestic animals are brought into these areas, they have difficulty coping with parasites such as ticks and mites, but "wild animals have a natural way of dealing with such pests," from wallow-

ing in mud and rolling in dust to being pecked clean by birds.

Witnesses Gain Court Victory in Russia

The *New York Times* of February 24, 2001, reported: "Jehovah's Witnesses won a potentially far-reaching victory today [February 23] in a Moscow court over prosecutors who had sought to ban the group under a 1997 law that prohibited religious sects that incite hatred or intolerance." The trial had been suspended on March 12, 1999, and five experts were appointed to study the beliefs of the Witnesses. The case was in recess for nearly two years. After it was convened on February 6, 2001, it took less than three weeks for the court to find the prosecution's charges to be groundless. However, the prosecution asked the Moscow City Court to order a retrial. On May 30 that request was granted, and the case was remanded back to the trial court to try the case again. "The Russian Orthodox Church, which bitterly opposes missionary activities," said the *Los Angeles Times*, "was one of the main proponents of the 1997 religion law, which forced many denominations to go through a difficult registration process."

Making a Profit From Donated Clothing

"Only a tiny amount" of donated clothing actually reaches those in real need, says the German newspaper *Südwest Presse*. In Germany each year, over 500,000 tons of clothing are donated to help the needy. But, in general, the

organizations that collect the clothes sell them to commercial enterprises, making donated clothing a business worth several hundred million German marks. Often the collectors do not know what happens to the donated items. The article states: "If you want to make sure your clothes really benefit the poor, you will have to pass them on to the needy yourself or send them to trusted persons in the crisis area."

Why Children Have Trouble Communicating



According to the *Berliner Morgenpost* newspaper, the spokesman for a pediatricians' association in Berlin puts the blame for communication problems of the young on excessive television viewing and computer usage. He said that children, especially preschoolers, should spend less time watching TV or sitting in front of a computer and more time communicating with and being stimulated by real people. Additionally, new research, says *The Sunday Times* of Britain, suggests that "growing numbers of people in their twenties and thirties are suffering from severe memory loss" and the inability "to distinguish between important and unimportant facts" because of an "increasing reliance on computer technology."

Disappearing Languages

A joint Brazilian and German project plans to document native Brazilian languages threatened with extinction, reports Brazil's newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*. Researchers hope to preserve the Trumai, Aweti, and Cuiucuro tongues by creating a digital data bank of texts and sounds. According to linguist Aryon Rodrigues, only 180 of Brazil's original 1,200 native tongues have survived. Of these, at least 50 are spoken by fewer than 100 people. In the case of one language, Makú, the only speaker is a 70-year-old widower living in the north of Brazil. Rodrigues says that the preservation of native languages is vital to conserving the traditional knowledge of a people.

Trash Troubles in Mexico City

Thirty percent of Mexico City's trash stays on public roads to become potentially harmful pollution, said a recent report in the Mexico City newspaper *El Universal*. Aarón Mastache Mondragón, secretary of environment, indicated that only 10 percent of Mexico City's trash is recycled and that about 48 percent is not biodegradable. Based on data from the National Institute of Recyclers, a cardboard ticket takes a month to break down; a bamboo branch, from one to three months; a cotton towel, from one to five months; a woolen sock, a year; painted wood, a little over a year; a tin can, 100 months; an aluminum can, from 200 to 500 years; and a glass bottle, more than a million years.

FROM OUR READERS

Education I am writing to express my thanks for the series "Education That Leads to a Better Life." (December 22, 2000) It truly showed how Jehovah, through his organization, is trying to reach all who are right-hearted. I was moved when I read how the local television station and newspapers covered the release of *Awake!* in the Samoan language. It illustrated the fulfillment of Jesus' words at Acts 1:8: "You will be witnesses of me... to the most distant part of the earth."

J. D., United States

Runaway Dads I am 15 years old and would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the "Young People Ask..." articles "Why Did Dad Leave Us?" (November 22, 2000) and "How Can I Cope Now That Dad Has Left Us?" (December 22, 2000) I have had feelings varying from anger to grief and despair. The articles showed that I am not alone in this situation and that my feelings are quite normal. Please continue writing such wonderful articles.

S. L., Germany

I am 10 years old, and I feel as if I have been waiting for these articles my whole life! I suffered so much when Dad left us. The articles came at the right time.

M. D., Germany

Life Story Thank you for the article "Provided With a Hope That Sustains Me." (December 22, 2000) I have harbored hatred for my father because from the time I was a child, I have watched him abuse my mother. I knew in my head that hatred was wrong, but the feelings were very difficult to control. But then I read of how Tatjana Vileyska tried to overcome hatred for the man who had murdered her mother. I would like to imitate her.

A. K., Japan

Reading of Tatjana's traumatic experience in losing her parents moved me to tears. Such personal experiences are a constant reminder to me that many people all over the world are enduring tremendous difficulties with success and finding joy despite their personal struggles.

J. R., United States

I have just finished reading the gripping story of Tatjana Vileyska. Her story is one that I won't soon forget. To go through what she experienced before learning the truth from the Bible and still survive with a smile on her face is nothing short of a spiritual miracle.

S. S., United States

Saving Marriages Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the series in the *Awake!* of January 8, 2001, "Can We Save Our Marriage?" A year ago my wife and I were having marital problems. We were both raised in homes where anger was unleashed regularly. So we would say words that really hurt each other, and things would get out of hand. But we have begun to apply Bible principles, and we are now very happy.

R. O., United States

As a congregation elder, I have found that one of the most challenging situations I face is trying to assist those who feel that they are trapped in a loveless marriage. To be sure, we have had more than enough Scriptural counsel through the publications over the years. However, by looking at the cover of the magazine, I could see that it was going to be just what we need to provide more direct assistance to such ones. The articles did not disappoint me!

L. R., United States

The Vital Role of Fathers

"INCREASING numbers of young men want to take an active role in raising their children. Eighty-two per cent of men aged 21 to 39 chose to have a work schedule that allowed more time with their families," says Canada's *Toronto Star* newspaper concerning a recent Harvard University study. According to the study, in which 1,008 U.S. men and women ages 21 to 65-plus were surveyed, 71 percent of young men said that they "would give up some of their pay for more time with their families."

Why do many fathers want to be more involved with their children? David Blankenhorn, one of the founders of the National Fatherhood Initiative, which promotes responsible, committed fatherhood, noted that in a 1994 survey of 1,600

U.S. men, 50 percent said that their fathers were emotionally absent during their childhood. Many of to-

day's fathers do not want to see this pattern repeated.

Fathers who are actively involved with their children can be a wholesome influence. Referring to research published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *The Toronto Star* said that when fathers eat meals with their children, go on outings with them, and help with homework, there are "fewer behaviour problems, higher levels of sociability and a higher level of school performance among children and adolescents."

The foregoing highlights an arrangement for raising children that is as practical today as when first penned over three thousand years ago. The Originator of the family specifically instructed fathers to be actively involved in raising their children. (Ephesians 3:14, 15; 6:4) Fathers were counseled to inculcate a love for God in the hearts of their children and to speak to them of God's regulations and commandments. God told them to do this 'when they sat in their house and when they walked on the road and when they lay down and when they got up.'

—Deuteronomy 6:7.

Parenting is a shared responsibility. The Bible admonishes children: "Listen . . . to the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother." (Proverbs 1:8) The role of the father is vital. It includes supporting and respecting the mother and sharing in child-rearing tasks. It also requires spending time reading to and talking with the children. This fills a vital emotional need of children.

Unquestionably, the Bible is the most reliable source of counsel and sound principles for a well-adjusted family. A father who actively provides for the spiritual, emotional, and material needs of his family is fulfilling his God-assigned responsibility.



THE CHALLENGE OF CARING FOR CHILDREN

Britain is a prosperous Western country. Yet, it is estimated that every year more than 100,000 of its children—twice as many as previously believed—run away from home. As a result, 1 in 7 suffers violence or sexual assault.

"When children feel alienated and rejected, running away can seem a sort of solution," says Ian Sparks, chief executive of the Children's Society, adding: "This issue cuts across class boundaries—children are almost as likely to run away from a leafy suburb as an inner-city estate."

