

# Awake!

MAY 2007

## Coping in a World of unequal opportunities

ALSO: IS YOUR LIFE  
PREDESTINED? PAGE 12

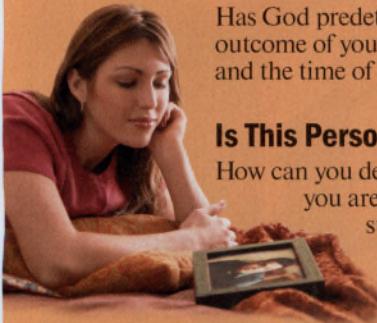


# Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING 34,267,000  
PUBLISHED IN 81 LANGUAGES

## Is Your Life Predestined? 12

Has God predetermined the outcome of your every action and the time of your death?



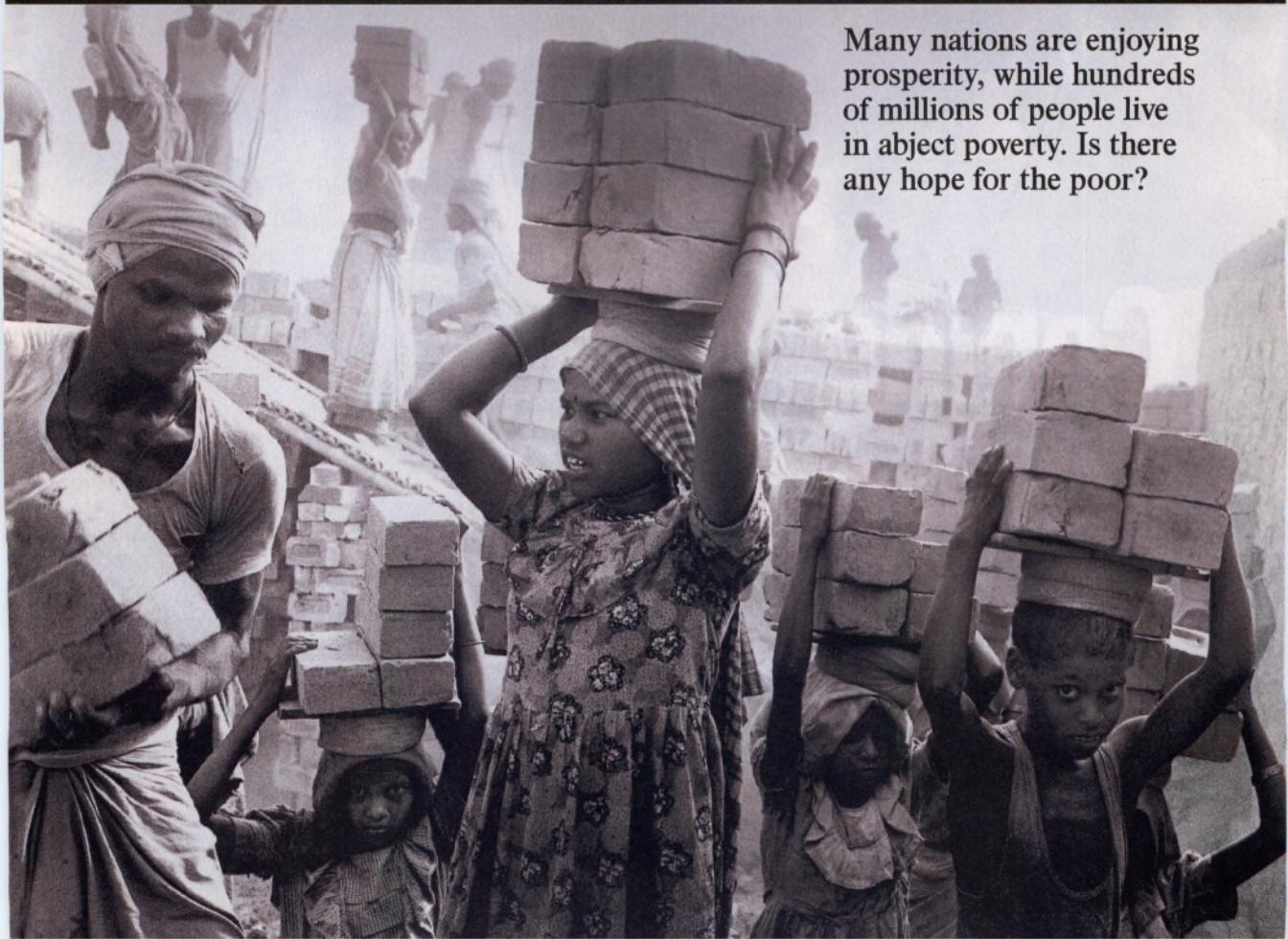
## Is This Person Right for Me? 18

How can you determine if the person you are dating would make a suitable marriage partner?

- 3 Prosperous Times—For Whom?
- 4 Why So Many Poor in a World of Riches?
- 7 What Hope for the Poor?
- 11 Watching the World
- 14 Meet the People of East Timor
- 21 A Slave to Alcohol No More
- 23 A "Black Swan" on the Canals of Venice
- 26 An Emperor for Lunch
- 28 Why Visit a Dentist?
- 31 How Would You Answer?
- 32 Who Are the Real Followers of Christ?

## COPING IN A WORLD OF UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITIES 3-10

Many nations are enjoying prosperity, while hundreds of millions of people live in abject poverty. Is there any hope for the poor?





© Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Pictures

# PROSPEROUS TIMES FOR WHOM?

**W**E LIVE in a prosperous world. Do you find that hard to believe? Actually, some nations cannot spend all their money. It has been estimated that the 2005 gross world product, the total value of goods and services produced in that year, exceeds \$60 trillion. That vast production, spread over earth's population, comes to about \$9,000 for each person now alive. And it is increasing.

**The three richest people in the world are wealthier than the 48 poorest nations combined**

But global prosperity is part of a great irony. According to a recent United Nations publication, the wealth of the world's three richest *individuals* is greater than the combined gross domestic product of the 48 poorest *nations*. And the UN Development Programme states that 2.5 billion people are trying to survive on less than \$2 a day. Hundreds of millions are undernourished and cannot obtain clean drinking water.

In the United States, sociologists are studying a group they term the "near poor." The risk of such ones falling into poverty is great. Over 50 million people there find themselves in that condition despite the country's great wealth.

Why is it that worldwide a flood of money is pouring into treasures and bank accounts but a flood of misery still covers hundreds of millions of poor people? Why do so many have so little opportunity to benefit from the world's growing wealth?

**Child laborers in this brick factory earn about 50 cents a day**

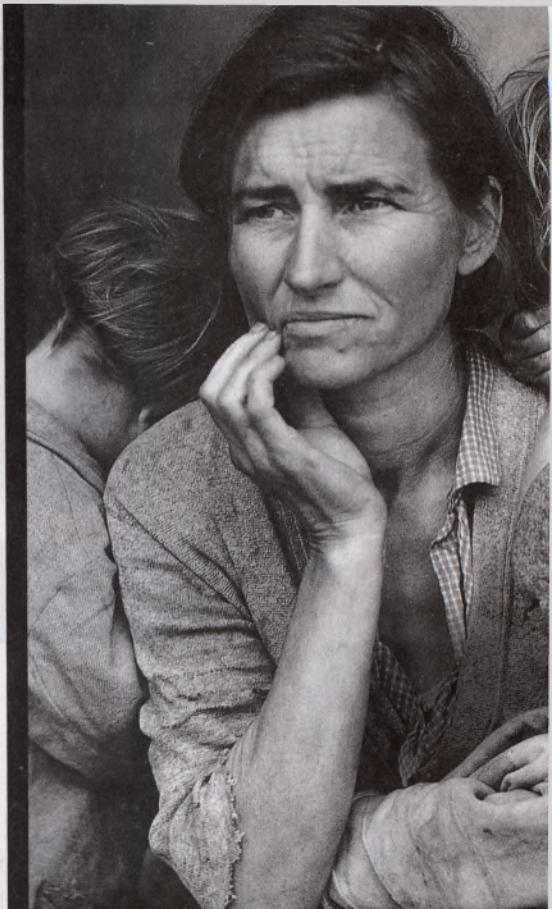
© Fernando Moleres/  
Panos Pictures

# WHY SO MANY POOR IN A WORLD OF RICHES?

**Y**OU always have the poor with you," said Jesus Christ in the first century C.E. (Matthew 26:11) From Jesus' time down to the present, there has always been a large number of impoverished people. But why does poverty afflict so many in a world of such great wealth?

Some believe that people become poor because they make bad decisions. That may be true in some cases. Those who choose to indulge cravings for alcohol, drugs, and gambling may easily lose their material assets. But not all poor people are poor as a result of their own bad judgment.

Many have lost jobs because of changes in industry. Many working people have seen their life savings consumed by skyrocketing medical costs. And of the hundreds of millions of impoverished people in



*A migrant mother with her three children during the Great Depression of the 1930's*

the developing world, most are poor through no fault of their own. The causes of poverty are often beyond the control of its victims, as the following shows.

**Awake!®**

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

*Awake!* (ISSN 0005-237X) is published monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **Changes of address** should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label). **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Awake!*, c/o Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589. © 2007 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

Vol. 88, No. 5 Monthly ENGLISH



## The Struggle to Live

gives us an idea of the situation of some in the United States who live on the edge of an economic cliff: "A run-down apartment can exacerbate a child's asthma, which leads to a call for an ambulance, which generates a medical bill that cannot be paid, which ruins a credit record, which hikes the interest rate on an auto loan, which forces the purchase of an unreliable used car, which jeopardizes a mother's punctuality at work, which limits her promotions and earning capacity, which confines her to poor housing." That child and its mother live with disaster hanging over them, even though they live in the world's richest nation.

Dorothea Lange, FSA Collection, Library of Congress

### A Lesson From the Past

In the early 1930's, the world was in the grip of the financial catastrophe that came to be known as the Great Depression. In one country millions lost their jobs and hundreds of thousands of families lost their homes. But while many went hungry, farmers poured immense quantities of milk into ditches and government officials forced farmers to kill millions of farm animals.

Why that waste? The economic system stipulated that farm products and other commodities be sold for a profit. Milk, meat, and grain had great value to the poor. But when those foodstuffs could not be sold profitably, they were deemed worthless and were disposed of.

Food riots broke out in many cities. Some citizens, unable to buy food for their fami-

In his book *The Working Poor—Invisible in America*, author and journalist David K. Shipler

lies, snatched what they needed at gunpoint. Others starved. Those events happened in the United States. Early in the Great Depression, that country's mighty financial system failed those with the lowest incomes. Instead of according the first importance to the needs of all citizens for food, shelter, and work, the economic system viewed those needs as mere side issues to the moneymaking process.

### Conditions Today

The world economy recovered from the Great Depression, and now many people appear to be richer and more secure than ever. Amid the great abundance that exists, however, the poor often have little opportunity to improve their lot in life. Reports of famine and poverty in the developing world are so common that many tire of reading them. However, when refugees are driven to starvation because of war, when stores of food rot because of political manipulation, and when market forces push the cost of life's necessities to levels that the poor cannot pay, we are

**Languages:** Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech,<sup>#</sup> Danish,<sup>+</sup> Dutch,<sup>+</sup> English,<sup>++</sup> Estonian, Finnish,<sup>+</sup> French,<sup>++</sup> Georgian, German,<sup>++</sup> Greek, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,<sup>++</sup> Japanese,<sup>++</sup> Korean,<sup>++</sup> Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Myanmar, Norwegian,<sup>+</sup> Polish,<sup>++</sup> Portuguese,<sup>++</sup> Romanian, Russian,<sup>+</sup> Serbian, Sesotho, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,<sup>++</sup> Swahili, Swedish,<sup>+</sup> Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Xhosa, Zulu

<sup>#</sup> Audio cassettes also available.

<sup>+</sup> CD also available.

<sup>++</sup> MP3 CD-ROM also available.

Publication of *Awake!* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

**Would you welcome more information?** Write Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address: **America, United States of:** Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Ghana:** P. O. Box GP 760, Accra. **Jamaica:** P. O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **New Zealand:** PO Box 75142, Manurewa, Manukau 2243. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City 300001, Edo State. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** Private Bag WG-5001, Westgate.

## Are Good Intentions Enough?

In November 1993, inside a government building in Washington, D.C., a group of officials were trying to handle a serious problem. With hundreds of millions of dollars available, those officials wanted to benefit homeless people in the United States. As they talked, policemen, firefighters, and emergency medical workers gathered at a bus stop across the street. Ambulance personnel were picking up the body of a homeless woman. She had died in front of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the government agency responsible for helping people with no place to go.

A reporter for *The New York Times* later interviewed a worker at HUD, who commented on the number of emergency personnel and vehicles present at the scene: "It's just strange to see how many resources a person gets after they die—not a fraction of that beforehand."

seeing the results of a system unable to care for its most vulnerable subjects. The world economic structure neglects millions of impoverished humans.

In truth, no economic system of human origin has adequately met the material needs of all mankind. Some 30 centuries ago, a keen observer of life drew this conclusion: "I myself returned that I might see all the acts of oppression that are being done under the sun, and, look! the tears of those being oppressed, but they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, so that they had no comforter." (Ecclesiastes 4:1) In these days of great material bounty, acts of financial oppression still abound.

Millions now have little opportunity to lift themselves from the abyss of poverty. Yet, many people have learned to deal with their economic problems successfully. These have also come to look forward to a better life in the future.

***In sweatshops like this one, the average salary is \$14 a month and laborers may be forced to work 70 hours a week***

© Fernando Moleres/Panos Pictures





# WHAT HOPE FOR THE POOR?

**T**HREE is nothing wrong with working hard for a living, as long as those who work hard receive a proper wage. Notice the comments of a Bible writer: "I have come to know that there is nothing better . . . than to rejoice . . . and also that every man should eat and indeed drink and see good for all his hard work. It is the gift of God."—Ecclesiastes 3:12, 13.

But as we have seen, the world economic system demands hard labor but often gives workers an inadequate reward. Many remain poor, struggling to survive from day to day. Rarely do they feel inclined to "rejoice" and "see good" because of the life they lead. The wealth of the world has reached remarkable levels, but perhaps half of humanity is left out when it comes to sharing all that bounty.

## God's Interest in the Poor

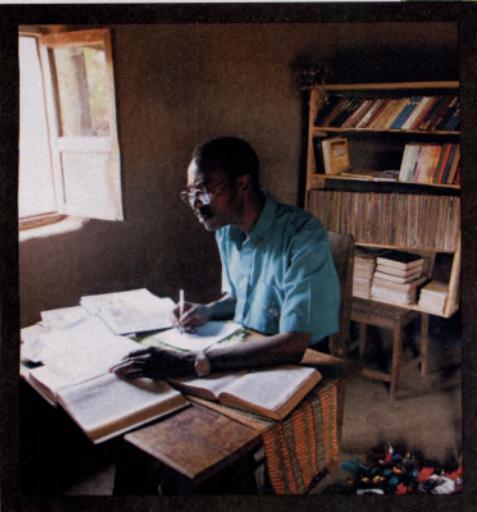
Mankind's Creator, Jehovah God, is not pleased with this situation. Jehovah views the poor with compassion. We read in the Bible:

"[God] is sure not to forget the outcry of the afflicted ones." (Psalm 9:12) Jehovah is a God who cares about the poor.

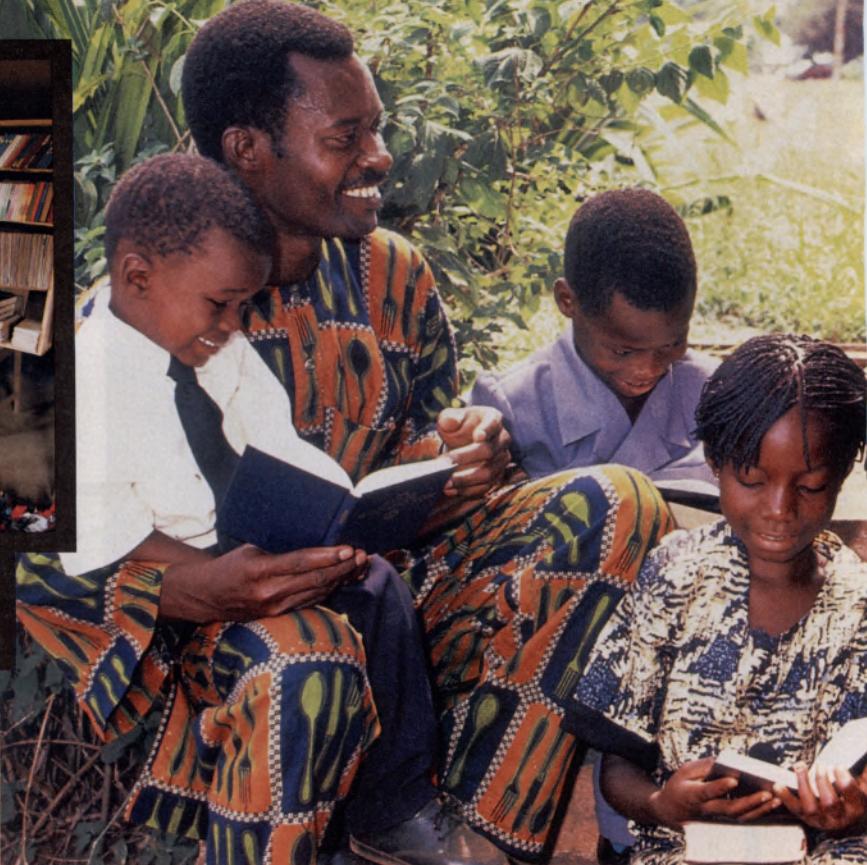
Regarding Jehovah, the Bible says: "To you the unfortunate one, the fatherless boy, commits himself. You yourself have become his helper." (Psalm 10:14) Notice how this Bible verse refers to afflicted people as individuals.\* Yes, God looks at each one and considers his or her needs. To him each person is precious and worthy of attention. Jehovah invites people from all economic levels to learn from him and enjoy his friendship.

One thing people learn from God is to show compassion and fellow-feeling for others. Jehovah's Witnesses consider themselves a large spiritual family. They value one another as individuals—among them true Christian love flourishes. The Lord Jesus Christ once told his followers: "All you are brothers." (Matthew 23:8) Thus, all who take

\* Two other Bible verses that highlight God's concern for suffering humans are Psalm 35:10 and Psalm 113:7.



**Bible principles are practical whether we are rich or poor**



up true worship become part of a brotherhood that does not discriminate on the basis of wealth. They care for one another and build one another up in times of trouble.

The Bible contains principles that can mitigate the effects of poverty. The Scriptures show that God condemns polluting the body—as by the use of tobacco—and abusing alcohol. (Proverbs 20:1; 2 Corinthians 7:1) The person living by those principles saves money that would otherwise be wasted on harmful habits. He avoids illness caused by smoking and drunkenness and the subsequent expense of medical treatment. The Bible also teaches people to reject materialistic thinking and greed. (Mark 4:19; Ephesians 5:3) By respecting God's Word in these matters, a person also avoids wasting his money on gambling.

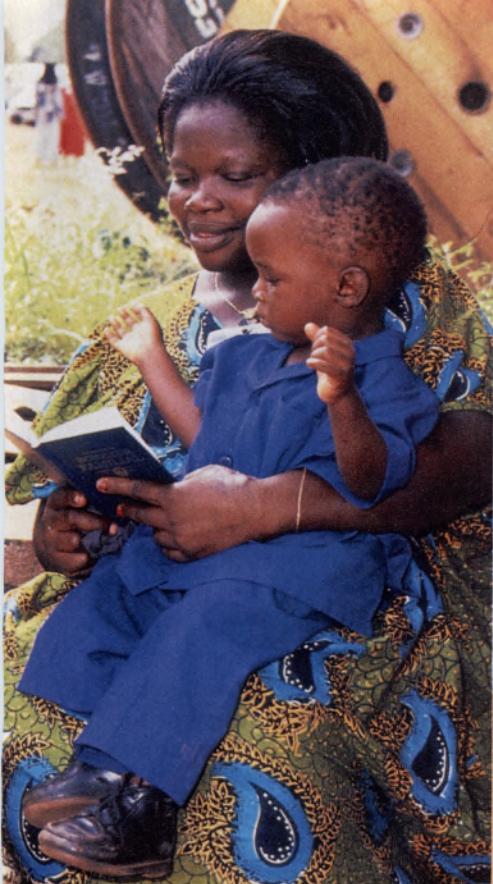
The Bible provides principles for daily living that are practical, even amid severe poverty. Note the following experience:

In a land with high unemployment, a factory worker put her job at risk by asking for

time off to attend Christian meetings. Her supervisor could easily have fired her. Instead, he surprised her and the other employees by granting her request. Moreover, the supervisor told her that he wanted her to continue working at his factory and praised her as "an exemplary worker." Why?

That worker, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, lived according to Bible principles. Wishing to 'conduct herself honestly in all things,' she did not lie or steal and thus built up a reputation for honesty. (Hebrews 13:18) In obedience to the inspired principle found at Colossians 3:22, 23, she carried out her work "whole-souled." This means that she obeyed her employer and was careful to give a full day's work for each day she was paid.

Of course, we live amid an economic system in which selfishness rules and profits are all-important. Some who deeply respect Bi-



## A beautiful future is open to you

ble principles may still have to struggle to acquire the food, clothing, and shelter they need. But such ones have a clean conscience before their Creator and look forward with confidence to better times ahead, thanks to Jehovah, “the God who gives hope.”—Romans 15:13.

### A Permanent Solution to Poverty

The Bible reveals the strong feelings Jehovah has against those who promote the unfair oppression of the poor. God’s inspired Word says: “Woe to those who are enacting harmful regulations and those who, constantly writing, have written out sheer trouble, in order to push away the lowly ones from a legal case and to wrest away justice from the afflicted ones . . . , for the widows to become their spoil, and that they may plunder even the fatherless boys!” (Isaiah 10:1, 2) Whether they willingly neglect the poor or they do so

in ignorance, those who control the economic workings of human society today are part of an oppressive system that Almighty God is going to replace.

The prophet Isaiah asks such oppressors a serious question: “What will you men do at the day of being given attention and at the ruin, when it comes from far away?” (Isaiah 10:3) Jehovah will put them out of business by destroying the unjust system that they perpetuate.

But God’s purpose includes more than taking action against oppressors. He will give righthearted humans a way of life free of injustice. By means of a superior form of government, he will allow all humans to lead satisfying, joyful lives free of poverty. To prosper at that time, you will not need a large inheritance of money, good connections, or business acumen. How can we be sure that such changes will take place?

Jesus Christ, the one Jehovah has appointed to rule mankind, referred to that wonderful future as the “re-creation.” (Matthew

# Should I Move to Where Things Are Better?

God's Word does not tell people where they are to live and work. Bible principles, however, can help a person determine whether moving to another country for economic reasons is advisable. Note the following questions and the Scriptural principles that apply.

**1. Am I being led on by unfounded rumors?** Proverbs 14:15 states: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps." After he moved to a wealthy country, a man from Eastern Europe said: "I heard that here money grows like leaves on trees. I am still looking for those trees."

**2. Do I have a balanced view of my family's needs?**



Am I confusing needs with unrealistic desires? Family heads are obligated to provide materially for their wife and children. (1 Timothy 5:8) But fathers are also responsible to God for educating their children morally and spiritually. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Ephesians 6:4) A father may be able to provide more in a material sense if he moves away. But he cannot provide the moral and spiritual training his children need if he

does not see them for weeks, months, or years at a time.

**3. Do I realize that a prolonged absence from my wife exposes the two of us to adultery?** God's Word warns married couples to consider the sexual needs of each other. —1 Corinthians 7:5.

**4. Do I understand that entering a country illegally can bring serious consequences from the ruling authorities?** True Christians are obliged to obey the laws of the land. —Romans 13:1-7.

19:28) This word carries the idea of a renewal, a new start of human life. By using the term "re-creation," Jesus emphasized that Jehovah will give righteous humans an opportunity to live life as our loving Creator wills. Among the many benefits he will bring to mankind at that time is the permanent removal of the economic load that weighs so many down.

The Bible prophetically states regarding the rule of Jesus Christ: "He will deliver the poor one crying for help, also the afflicted one and whoever has no helper. He will feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one, and the souls of the poor ones he will save. From

oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul, and their blood will be precious in his eyes."—Psalm 72:12-14.

This beautiful future is open to you. But for you to meet God's requirements for life in that new world, it is vital that you first learn and then do the will of the true God. Make wise decisions based on knowledge of God's Word. Live in expectation of the wonderful future God holds out to all mankind. You will not be disappointed. God's Word promises: "Not always will the poor one be forgotten, nor will the hope of the meek ones ever perish."—Psalm 9:18.

## China's Water Crisis

China suffers from "water pollution and a shortage of clean water." Most cities are equipped with wastewater treatment plants, but many lack the funds to run them. "Most of the country's rivers, lakes and canals are polluted by discharges of untreated industrial and domestic wastewater as well as pesticide-laden runoff from farms," reports *The Wall Street Journal*. Moreover, "some 300 million people don't have access to clean drinking water." The picture is "grim," says the *Journal*, and the situation is deteriorating.

## "Who Are You? Jehovah's Witnesses?"

Last year on the beaches of the Italian Isle of Elba, tourists were approached by young Catholics who had accepted an invitation by the bishop of the diocese of Massa Marittima-Piombino. He had told them that if they wanted to be Christians and remain such, they should proclaim their faith. This surprised vacationers. According to the newspaper *Il Tempo*, the most common response the youths received was, "Who are you? Jehovah's Witnesses?"

## Music Linked to Sexual Activity

Teenagers who listen to music with "raunchy, sexual lyrics" are likely to "start having sex sooner than those who prefer other songs," says one study reported on by the Associated Press. "Songs depicting men as 'sex-driven studs,' women as sex objects and with explicit references to sex acts are more likely to trigger early sexual behavior than those where sexual references are more veiled and relationships appear more committed," said the report. It noted that "parents, educators and teens themselves need to think more critically about messages in music lyrics."

## Wasteful Consumers

During 2004, Australians threw away 5.3 billion dollars (\$4.1 billion, U.S.) worth of uneaten food, reports The Australia Institute, a research organization. This is more than 13 times the amount Australians donated for overseas aid in 2003. Overall, the total amount Australians waste on goods and services that are never or rarely used amounts to over \$10.5 billion (\$8.1 billion, U.S.) annually—more than that country spends on universities and roads.

■ The current drawn by electrical devices left in standby mode accounts for some 5 percent of an average Canadian household's electric bill.—*NATIONAL POST, CANADA*.

■ The results of one poll indicated that Russians believe the most important issues to be tackled by government include fighting "against corruption" and "curbing soaring prices."—*PRAVDA, RUSSIA*.

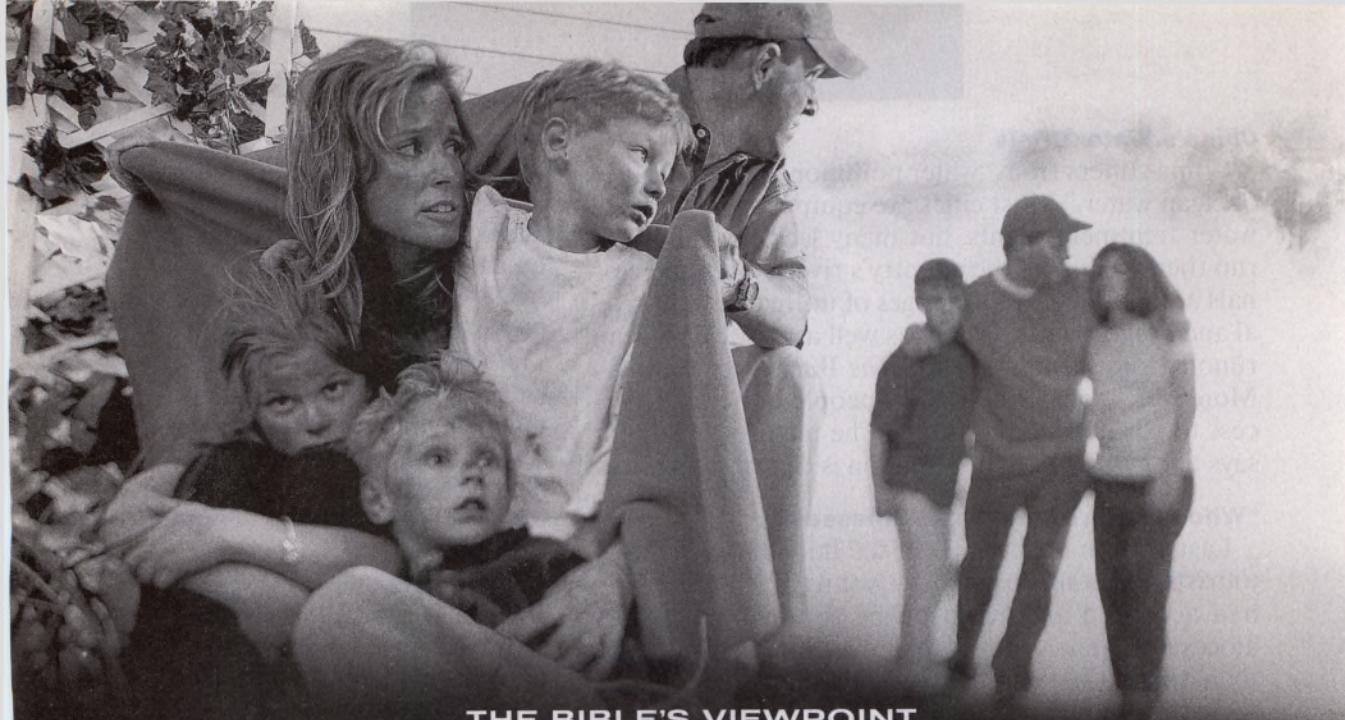
■ According to one survey, some 26.4 percent of fifth and sixth graders in Taiwan "have had thoughts of taking their own life."—*THE CHINA POST, TAIWAN*.

■ "While technology has helped shrink the average U.S. workweek over a century by 38%, employees have no more leisure time, thanks to longer commutes, more adult schooling and increased household chores."—*FORBES, UNITED STATES*.

■ Emissions of greenhouse gases in industrialized nations rose 1.6 percent between 2003 and 2004, reaching "the highest level in more than a decade."

—*REUTERS, OSLO, NORWAY*.





#### THE BIBLE'S VIEWPOINT

## Is Your Life Predestined?

*One morning two men were driving to work when they decided to take a shortcut along a street where one of them used to live. On the way they saw flames shooting out of the windows of a house. They stopped their truck and used a ladder they had with them to rescue a mother and five children.*  
*"Maybe it was fate," said a newspaper report of the incident.*

MANY people feel that whatever happens to them, good or bad, has been decided by a force greater than themselves. For example, the 16th-century Reformer John Calvin wrote: "We define predestination as the eternal design of God, whereby he determined what he wanted to do with each man. For he did not create them all in the same condition, but foreordains some to everlasting life and others to eternal damnation."

Does God really ordain ahead of time what our actions and our final destiny are going to be? What does the Bible teach?

#### The "Logic" of Predestination

Some who believe in predestination reason basically as follows: God is omniscient. He knows everything, even what is going to happen in the future. He knows what each person is going to do with his life, and he already knows the exact moment and manner of each person's death. So, according to their thinking, when the time comes for an individual to make a decision, his choice cannot be other than the way God has foreseen and foreordained it; otherwise, God would not be all-knowing. Does this reasoning seem sound to

you? Consider what its logical consequences would be.

If some force has already determined your future, then trying to take care of yourself is useless. Choosing to smoke or not to smoke would make no difference to your health or that of your children. Wearing a seat belt while riding in an automobile would have no effect on your safety. But this is faulty logic. Statistics show that people who take precautions suffer fewer fatal consequences. Carelessness can result in tragedy.

Consider another line of reasoning. If God chooses to foreknow everything, then even before he made Adam and Eve, he would have known that they would disobey him. But when God told Adam that he must not eat from "the tree of the knowledge of good and bad" or he would die, did God already know that Adam would eat from it? (Genesis 2:16, 17) When God told the first couple: "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and every living creature that is moving upon the earth," did he know that their wonderful prospect of life in a paradise was doomed to failure? Of course not.—Genesis 1:28.

Taken to its logical conclusion, the idea that God foreknows all decisions would mean that he is *responsible* for all that happens—including wars, injustices, and suffering. Is that possible? A clear answer is provided by what God says about himself.

#### **"You Must Choose"**

The Scriptures state that "God is love" and that he is "a lover of justice." He has always urged his people: "Hate what is bad, and love what is good." (1 John 4:8; Psalm 37:28; Amos 5:15) On numerous occasions he encouraged

his loyal ones to *choose* a virtuous course. For example, when Jehovah concluded a covenant with the ancient nation of Israel, he said to them, through Moses: "I do take the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you today, that I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring." (Deuteronomy 30:19) Did God establish ahead of time the choice that those individuals would make? Evidently not.

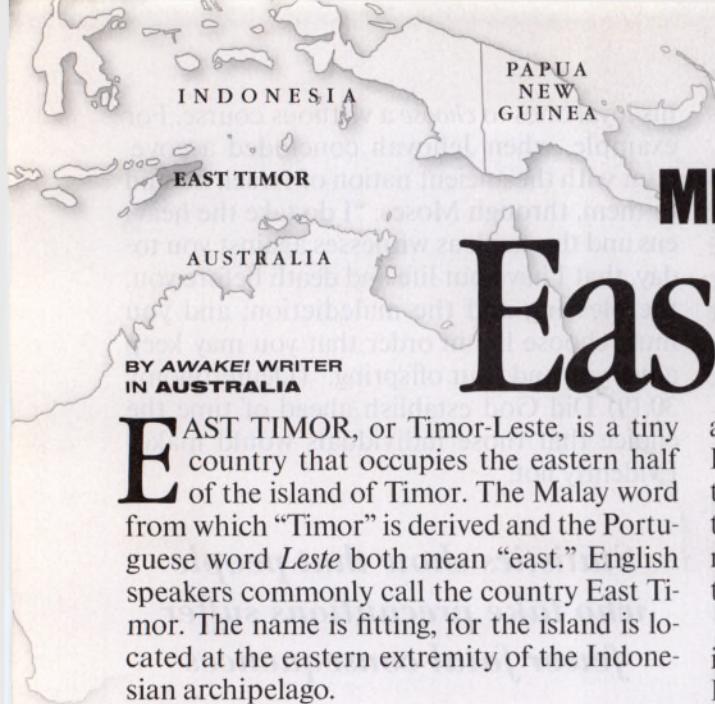
#### ***Statistics show that people who take precautions suffer fewer fatal consequences***

Joshua, a leader of God's people in ancient times, exhorted his countrymen: "Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve . . . As for me and my household, we shall serve Jehovah." (Joshua 24:15) Similarly, God's prophet Jeremiah said: "Obey, please, the voice of Jehovah in what I am speaking to you, and it will go well with you, and your soul will continue to live." (Jeremiah 38:20) Would a just and loving God encourage people to do right in the hope of receiving a reward if he knew that they were destined to fail? No. Such encouragement would be hypocritical.

So when good or bad things happen in your life, it is not because these events are inevitable. Very often, 'unforeseen occurrences' are simply the consequences of other people's decisions—whether wise or unwise. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) No, your future is not planned out before you, and your own decisions determine what your everlasting future will be.

#### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

- Did God decide ahead of time that Adam and Eve would sin?—Genesis 1:28; 2:16, 17.
- What qualities of God rule out predestination?—Psalm 37:28; 1 John 4:8.
- What responsibility do you have?—Joshua 24:15.



# MEET THE PEOPLE OF EastTimor

**E**AST TIMOR, or Timor-Leste, is a tiny country that occupies the eastern half of the island of Timor. The Malay word from which "Timor" is derived and the Portuguese word *Leste* both mean "east." English speakers commonly call the country East Timor. The name is fitting, for the island is located at the eastern extremity of the Indonesian archipelago.

East Timor is some 5,700 square miles in area, making it a little larger than the state of Connecticut, U.S.A., or less than half the size of the Netherlands. Although small, the island straddles an ecological border between Asia and Australia. Tropical jungles flourish alongside dry eucalyptus scrub and arid grasslands. The wildlife is also a mixture of Australian and Asian species. For example, Australian marsupials and birds coexist with Asian monkeys and tropical saltwater crocodiles. What, though, about the people of East Timor? Would you like to meet them?

## Memories of a Colonial Past

Portuguese navigators may have first arrived in East Timor about 1514. At the time, vast sandalwood forests covered the hillsides. Sandalwood was worth a fortune, and these trees alone were enough reason for the Portuguese to establish a trading outpost. The Catholic Church also took an interest in the area and wanted to send missionaries to convert the indigenous people. Driven by this dual imperative, the Portuguese began to colonize the island in 1556.

East Timor remained, however, a lonely

and neglected colonial outpost. When the Dutch seized control of the western half of the island in 1656, the Portuguese withdrew to the eastern side of the island. Finally, after more than 400 years of colonial rule, the Portuguese pulled out completely in 1975.

That same year, civil war broke out. During the next 24 years, an estimated 200,000 East Timorese—about one third of the population—were killed in the fighting. A wave of violence swept the country in 1999, destroying up to 85 percent of the homes and much of the infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of people fled to the mountains. Finally the United Nations intervened to halt the destruction and to stabilize the country.

Since then, the Timorese have been working to rebuild their shattered lives. In May 2002, East Timor, or the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was officially recognized as a new state.

## A Cultural Crossroads

Centuries of trade, Asian and Australasian migration, and European colonization have created a colorful mix of cultures and languages throughout East Timor. While Portuguese remains the language of business and government, 80 percent of the population speak an official lingua franca called Tetum, itself rich in Portuguese words. A patchwork of ethnic groups throughout the country speak at least 22 other languages.

In rural areas traditional kings continue to play an important role in village life. They direct ceremonies, land allocation, and other



traditional matters, while an elected headman oversees civil administration.

Religion is a blend of traditional animism and imported Catholicism. Ancestor worship, witchcraft, and spiritism permeate every aspect of life. Regular churchgoers commonly consult the local *matan do'ok*, or witch doctor, to divine the future, treat illness, or ward off evil spirits.

#### **Curious and Hospitable People**

The people of East Timor are cheerful, curious, and hospitable by nature. "We have a passion to learn, talk, mingle and interact, even with strangers," says President Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão.

Visitors invited to dine with a Timorese family will likely eat with the male head of the family. His wife and children will serve the meal and then eat later in the evening. It is polite to take a small amount of food at first. The visitor can then honor the cook by asking for a second helping.

Most Timorese meals include rice, corn, or cassava, along with leafy greens and vegetables. One Timorese specialty, *saboko*, is a tasty mix of sardines, tamarind sauce, and spices, all wrapped in a palm leaf. Meat, though, remains an expensive luxury.

#### **Noisy With Children**

East Timor is a nation of young people. Nearly half the population are children, and many families have between 10 and 12 children living at home.

On their way to school, children often walk hand in hand—boys with boys and girls with girls—laughing and singing as they go. Their school education includes not only academic knowledge but also training for right living and behavior.

A Timorese child never plays alone or quietly—the whole neighborhood joins in the fun! A favorite game is *dudu karreta*, or push car. The rim of a bicycle wheel is the imaginary car. Running and laughing, the children roll the rim down the street, guiding and propelling it with a stick as they chase it.

However, life is not all play for Timorese children. For instance, they may be assigned to grind corn, using a heavy steel bar. Still, they smile happily as they work, seemingly oblivious to the fact that they have been born into one of the ten poorest countries in the world.

#### **Birth Pangs of Nationhood**

Extreme poverty results in a tenuous existence for the Timorese. Forty percent of the population live on less than \$1.50 per day



**"Dudu karreta"—a favorite children's game**

—the minimum required to cover essential food and household needs. The infrastructure is poor. One governmental report states: “Nationwide, three in four persons live without electricity, three in five persons without safe sanitation and every other person without safe drinking water.”

Under these circumstances health problems abound. Malnutrition, malaria, tuberculosis, and other diseases limit average life expectancy to 50 years. About 1 child in 10 dies before five years of age. During 2004, fewer than 50 doctors served a population of approximately 800,000 people.

Many foreign governments are now working along with the United Nations to help the Timorese rebuild their damaged country. Rich oil and gas deposits in the Timor Sea also offer hope of improving the poor economic situation. However, East Timor’s greatest asset is its resilient and humble people. One Timorese woman told *Awake!*: “We may be poor, but we’re not miserable!”

#### **“Good News of Something Better”**

In recent years Jehovah’s Witnesses have been bringing the inhabitants of East Timor “good news of something better.” (Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:14, 15) In 2005 the one congregation of Witnesses



**Jacob and his family**





in the country spent nearly 30,000 hours telling others about the Bible's wonderful promise of a coming earthly paradise.—Psalm 37:10, 11; 2 Peter 3:13.

Learning Bible truths has freed some inhabitants from the oppressive yoke of spiritism. For example, Jacob, a family man with five children, was deeply involved in traditional spiritistic practices. He regularly offered up animal sacrifices to the spirits of the dead. This practice placed a heavy financial burden on his family. A chicken sacrifice cost nearly a day's wages, while a special goat or pig sacrifice cost many weeks' wages.

In time, Jacob's wife, Fransiska, began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. She then showed Jacob Scripture texts proving that the dead are conscious of nothing and cannot harm the living. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Ezekiel 18:4) Accepting what the Bible said, they both decided to stop sacrificing to the spirits. In turn, their relatives angrily disowned them and said that vengeful spirits would soon kill them. However, Jacob and Fransiska stood firm, saying: "Jehovah will protect us."

## "Bringing a Thread and Bobbin"

"Bringing a thread and bobbin" is an expression the Timorese once used to announce the birth of a baby girl. It describes the traditional role of Timorese women as weavers of *tais*, lengths of decorative cloth. *Tais* are used to create elaborate ceremonial clothing, blankets, and family heirlooms. Grandmothers teach younger women to grow, pick, spin, dye, and weave cotton into beautiful, multicolored patterns. Depending on the complexity of the weave, a single *tais* could take a year or longer to complete. Since each region has its own traditional designs, an expert can instantly tell where a *tais* was made.



Meanwhile, Jacob began to study the Bible and attend Christian meetings along with his family. This resulted in his making other fine changes in his life. Although he had smoked a pack of cigarettes a day for many years, he quit smoking. He also learned to read and write. During this time Fransiska stopped chewing betel nut. Finally, in 2005, Jacob and Fransiska were baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses. Today, they wisely use their money to educate their children and cover needed medical expenses.

Indeed, as Jesus foretold, the good news of God's Kingdom is being preached to "the most distant part of the earth," even to the inquisitive, hospitable, bighearted inhabitants of tiny East Timor.—Acts 1:8; Matthew 24:14.

## Is this person right for me?

Take a moment to complete the following quiz:

**What qualities would you currently view as essential in a potential marriage mate? In the list below, put a ✓ next to the four traits you feel are most important.**

- |                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| ..... good-looking | ..... spiritually minded |
| ..... friendly     | ..... trustworthy        |
| ..... popular      | ..... morally upright    |
| ..... funny        | ..... goal-oriented      |

**When you were younger, did you ever develop a crush on anyone? In the list above, put an X next to the one trait you found most appealing about the person at that time.**

**T**HERE is nothing wrong with *any* of the above traits. Each of them has its own appeal. Wouldn't you agree, though, that when you're in the grip of a youthful crush, you tend to dwell on the more superficial qualities, such as those in the left-hand column?

As you mature, however, you begin using your perceptive powers to examine deeper issues, such as those in the right-hand col-

umn. For instance, you start to realize that the cutest girl in the neighborhood may not be trustworthy or that the most popular boy in class may not be morally upright. If you're "past the bloom of youth"—the time of life when sexual desires first become strong—you most likely look beyond the superficial traits to answer the question, Is this person right for me?—1 Corinthians 7:36.

### Will Just Anyone Do?

Over the course of time, more than a few members of the opposite sex may catch your eye. But not just anyone will do. After all, you want a lifelong mate, someone who will bring out the best in you and for whom you will do the same. (Matthew 19:4-6) Who might that person be? Before you can answer that question, you need to 'look in the mirror' and honestly evaluate yourself.—James 1:23-25.

To learn more about yourself, answer the following questions:

*What are my strengths?*

*What are my weaknesses or vulnerabilities?*

*What emotional and spiritual needs do I have?*

Getting to know yourself is no small task, but questions like those can get you started.\* The more you understand yourself, the better equipped you will be to find someone who will amplify your strengths rather than your weaknesses. What, though, if you think you have found someone who is right for you?

#### **Will This Relationship Work?**

To answer that question, look at your friend objectively. Be careful, though! You might be inclined to see only what you *want* to see. So take your time. Try to perceive your friend's true nature.

Many who date don't look beyond the surface. Instead, they quickly point to the things they have in common: 'We like the same music.' 'We enjoy the same activities.' 'We agree on *everything!*' As mentioned earlier, though, if you're truly past the bloom of youth, you will look beyond superficial traits. You need to discern "the secret person of the heart."—1 Peter 3:4; Ephesians 3:16.

For example, rather than focus on how much you agree on things, it might be more revealing to note what happens when you *disagree*. In other words, how does this person handle conflict—by insisting on his or her way, perhaps giving in to "fits of anger" or "abusive speech"?

\* For more questions to ask yourself, see page 30 of the January 2007 issue of *Awake!*

# Would he make a good husband?

## **BASICS**

- How does he handle any authority he may have?**  
—Matthew 20:25, 26.
- What are his goals?**—1 Timothy 4:15.
- Is he now working toward those goals?**  
—1 Corinthians 9:26, 27.
- Who are his friends?**—Proverbs 13:20.
- What is his attitude toward money?**  
—Hebrews 13:5, 6.
- What type of entertainment does he enjoy?**—Psalm 97:10.
- What does his manner of dress indicate?**—2 Corinthians 6:3.
- How does he demonstrate his love for Jehovah?**—1 John 5:3.

## **ASSETS**

- Is he industrious?**—Proverbs 6:9-11.
- Is he financially responsible?**  
—Luke 14:28.
- Is he well reported on?**—Acts 16:1, 2.
- Does he honor his parents?**  
—Exodus 20:12.
- Is he considerate of others?**  
—Philippians 2:4.

## **DANGER SIGNS**

- Is he disposed to anger?**  
—Proverbs 22:24.
- Does he try to involve you in sexual misconduct?**—Galatians 5:19.
- Is he physically or verbally abusive?**  
—Ephesians 4:31.
- Does he need to use alcohol to have a good time?**—Proverbs 20:1.
- Is he jealous and self-centered?**  
—1 Corinthians 13:4, 5.

# Would she make a good wife?

## BASICS

- How does she show submissiveness in the family and congregation?**—Ephesians 5:21, 22.
- What does her manner of dress indicate?**—1 Peter 3:3, 4.
- Who are her friends?**  
—Proverbs 13:20.
- What is her attitude toward money?**—1 John 2:15-17.
- What are her goals?**  
—1 Timothy 4:15.
- Is she now working toward those goals?**—1 Corinthians 9:26, 27.
- What type of entertainment does she enjoy?**—Psalm 97:10.
- How does she demonstrate her love for Jehovah?**—1 John 5:3.

## ASSETS

- Is she industrious?**  
—Proverbs 31:17, 19, 21, 22, 27.
- Is she financially responsible?**  
—Proverbs 31:16, 18.
- Is she well reported on?**—Ruth 4:11.
- Does she honor her parents?**  
—Exodus 20:12.
- Is she considerate of others?**  
—Proverbs 31:20.

## DANGER SIGNS

- Is she contentious?**—Proverbs 21:19.
- Does she try to involve you in sexual misconduct?**—Galatians 5:19.
- Is she verbally or physically abusive?**—Ephesians 4:31.
- Does she need to use alcohol to have a good time?**—Proverbs 20:1.
- Is she jealous and self-centered?**  
—1 Corinthians 13:4, 5.

(Galatians 5:19, 20; Colossians 3:8) Or does this person show reasonableness—a willingness to yield for the sake of peace when no issue of right or wrong is at stake?—James 3:17.

Another factor to consider: Is the person manipulative, controlling, or jealous? Does he or she demand to know your every move? “Possessiveness and jealousy are danger signs,” says a young woman named Nicole. “I hear of dating couples who fight because one person can’t stand that the other hasn’t constantly ‘checked in’—I think that’s a bad sign.”

How is your boyfriend or girlfriend viewed by others? You may want to talk to those who have known this person for some time, such as mature ones in his or her congregation. They will let you know if this person is “well reported on.”—Acts 16:1, 2.\*

## Should You Break Up?

What if you realize that the person you’re dating wouldn’t make a suitable marriage partner? In that case, it may well be wise to end the relationship. The Bible says: “Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself.”—Proverbs 22:3.†

In time, you may enter into a new relationship. If so, no doubt you will have an even more balanced outlook—one that has been acquired through experience. Perhaps at that time your answer to the question “Is this person right for me?” will be yes!

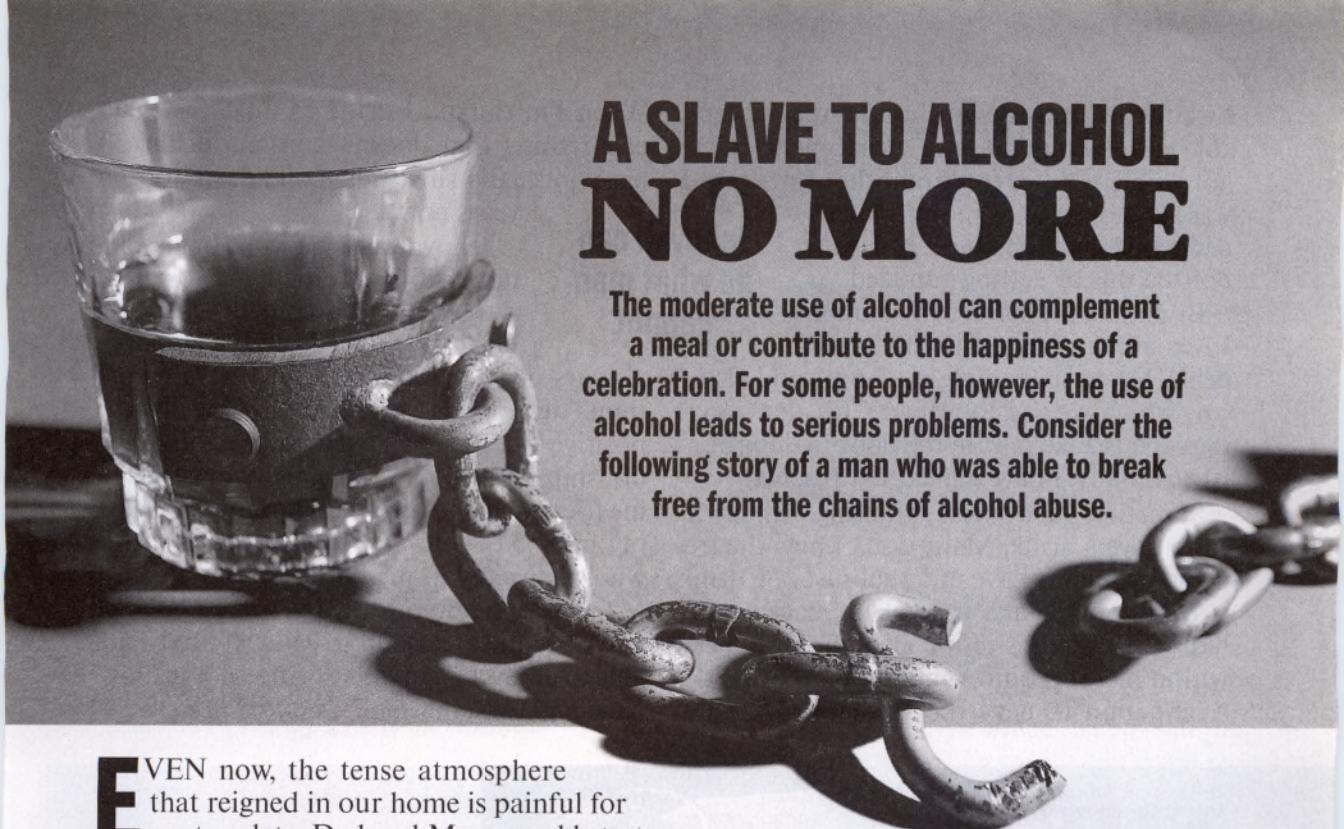
\* See also the questions in the boxes on pages 19-20.

† For more information on breaking up, see pages 12-14 of the March 22, 2001, *Awake!*

## TO THINK ABOUT

- What positive qualities would you bring into a marriage?
- What are some qualities you would look for in a marriage partner?
- In what ways could you learn more about the character, conduct, and reputation of someone you are dating?

More articles from the “Young People Ask . . .” series can be found at the Web site [www.watchtower.org/ype](http://www.watchtower.org/ype)



# A SLAVE TO ALCOHOL NO MORE

The moderate use of alcohol can complement a meal or contribute to the happiness of a celebration. For some people, however, the use of alcohol leads to serious problems. Consider the following story of a man who was able to break free from the chains of alcohol abuse.

**E**VEN now, the tense atmosphere that reigned in our home is painful for me to relate. Dad and Mom would start drinking. Then Dad would beat Mom. Often, I became the target of his flying fists. When they decided to separate, I was only four years old. I remember being taken to Grandma's house to live.

I felt so unwanted. When I was seven, I would quietly sneak down to the cellar to drink homemade wine, which seemed to relieve my sadness. At age 12, my mother and grandmother got into a heated argument over me. Mom became so furious that she threw a pitchfork at me. I managed to jump out of harm's way! This was not the only time my life was in danger. The scars on my body, however, were not as deep as the emotional scars buried deep within me.

By the age of 14, I was drinking constantly. Finally, at 17, I ran away from home. Drinking gave me a feeling of independence, and I became very aggressive, causing problems in the local cafés. Drinking was my only plea-

sure in life. In just one day, I would drink up to five quarts of wine, a few beers, and hard liquor as well.

When I married, my drinking caused big problems for my wife. Resentment and bitterness grew, and I beat her and the children, re-creating the destructive atmosphere I had grown up in. Almost all the money I earned was spent on alcohol. We had no furniture, so my wife and I slept on the floor. I had no reason to live and made no effort to improve our situation.

One day I spoke with one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I questioned why there was so much suffering, and the Witness showed me from the Bible God's promise of a world free from problems. That convinced me to start studying the Bible with the Witnesses. As I applied Bible teachings and cut down on my drinking, our family life improved a great deal. Still, I realized that if

**By the age of 14,  
I was drinking  
constantly**

I wanted to serve Jehovah God in an acceptable way, I would have to overcome my alcohol problem. After three months of struggle, I was alcohol-free. Six months later I dedicated my life to God and symbolized this by getting baptized.

By ending my slavery to alcohol, I was able to pay off my financial debts. I eventually bought a house and also a car, which we use to attend Christian meetings and to take part in the door-to-door ministry. Finally, I have gained self-respect.

Sometimes at a social gathering, I am invited to have a drink. Many don't know the tremendous fight I have and that just one drink is all it would take to lead me back to my old ways. The desire for alcohol still lingers within me. It requires intense prayer and determination to have the strength to say no.

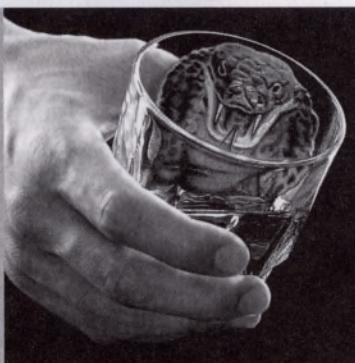
When I'm thirsty, I drink as much as I can of anything that doesn't contain alcohol. I have not had a single alcoholic drink for ten years now.

Jehovah can do what man cannot. He has helped me to enjoy a freedom I never believed possible!

I still suffer from the emotional scars of my childhood, and I have a continual fight against negative thinking. On the positive side, I am blessed with a good relationship with God, a congregation of genuine friends, and a wonderful family who share my faith. My wife and children support me wholeheartedly in my battle against alcohol. My wife says: "Before, my life was an inferno. Today, I am so grateful to Jehovah that I am able to enjoy a happy family life with my husband and two children."—Contributed.

## THE BIBLE AND ALCOHOL

■ The Bible does not condemn the use of alcohol. It describes "wine that makes the heart of mortal man rejoice" as a gift from God to mankind. (Psalm 104:14, 15) The Bible also refers to the vine as a symbol of prosperity and security. (Micah 4:4) In fact, the first miracle performed by Jesus Christ was turning water into wine at a wedding feast. (John 2:7-9) And when the apostle Paul heard of Timothy's "frequent cases of sickness," he recommended that he drink "a little wine."—1 Timothy 5:23.



■ What the Bible does condemn is the immoderate use of alcohol:

*"Drunkards . . . will never inherit the kingdom of God."*  
—1 Corinthians 6:9-11, "The Jerusalem Bible."

*"Do not be getting drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery."*  
—Ephesians 5:18.

*"Who has woe? Who has uneasiness? Who has*

*contentions? Who has concern? Who has wounds for no reason? Who has dullness of eyes?* Those staying a long time with the wine, those coming in to search out mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it exhibits a red color, when it gives off its sparkle in the cup, when it goes with a slickness. At its end it bites just like a serpent, and it secretes poison just like a viper. Your own eyes will see strange things, and your own heart will speak perverse things."—Proverbs 23:29-33.

As shown in the accompanying article, some who have had problems with alcohol have wisely chosen to abstain from it altogether.  
—Matthew 5:29.

# A“Black Swan” ON THE CANALS OF VENICE



SURROUNDED by damp walls, arched stone bridges, arabesque windows, and balconies full of flowers, it glides along a canal. It is black, elegant, and silent. From a distance it resembles a black swan. Even though its body is made of wood and its neck, far from being soft and feathered, is metal, it moves among the canals of Venice, Italy, with the same grace as that noble bird. It is a gondola, which according to some is the most famous boat in the world. What is its origin? Why is it so popular? What makes it different from other boats?

## Its Origins

It is not easy to pinpoint exactly when the first gondola appeared, though some believe that it was in the 11th century C.E. The first time it was depicted in paintings was toward the end of the 15th century. Yet, it was during the 17th and 18th centuries that it took on the characteristic appearance that makes it so famous and different from all other boats. The gondola already had a flat base, but during this period the boat started to develop its distinctive elongated shape and iron prow.

It is equally difficult to get to the origin of

the gondola's name. Some say that the word "gondola" is derived from the Latin *cymbula*, which was the name of a small boat, or from *conchula*, diminutive of *concha*, which means "shell."

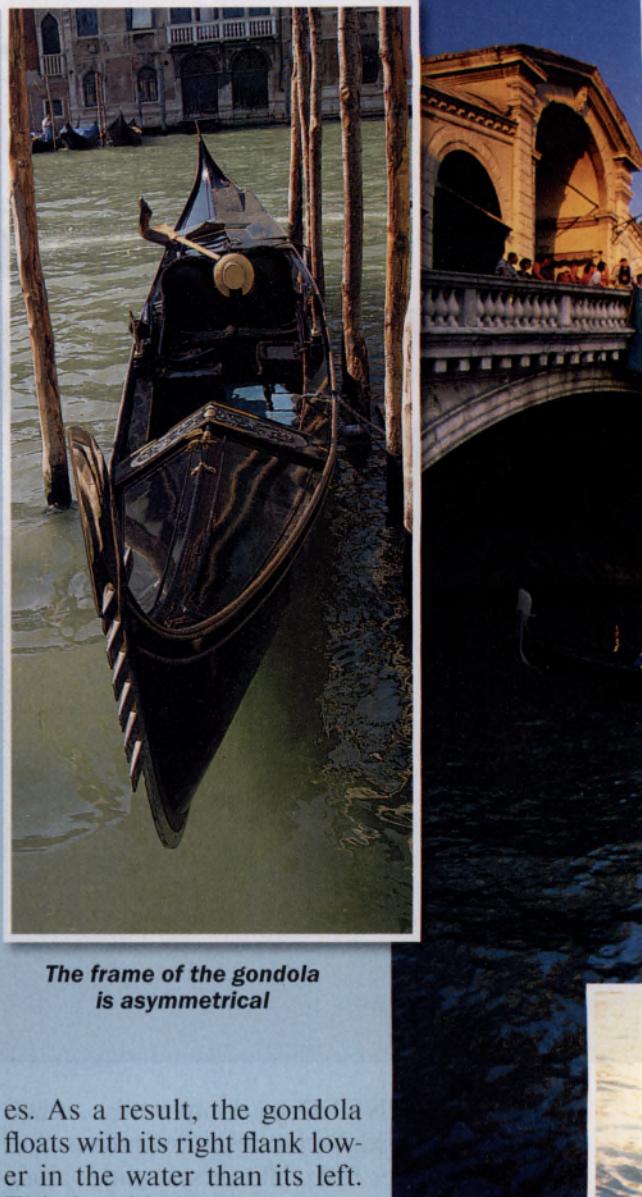
### Typical of Venice

What we can be sure of is the strong link between this boat and Venice. In fact, the gondola is perhaps the city's most important symbol. Think of all the pictures of Venice that feature the gondola.

Something else closely links this boat to its city. To travel through the canals in a gondola "is a completely different way of discovering Venice," says Roberto, a gondolier who accompanies tourists on the canals there. "You don't just see the normal sights, you discover the very heart of Venice." The famous German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said that aboard this boat he felt like "the Master of the Adriatic Sea, as does any Venetian as soon as he lays back in his gondola." Roberto says: "The very slow pace of the gondola harmonizes perfectly with the spirit of Venice. Gently cradled on soft cushions, you have the sensation of finally having all the time in the world."

### Peculiarities of the Gondola

As you observe a gondola, you might be surprised that it moves in a straight line, given that there is only one oar fixed to the right of the boat on an oar post. Logic might suggest that without continual adjustments the boat would veer to one side and sail around in circles—but it doesn't. Why not? Gilberto Penzo, an expert on historic boats, writes: "If we use the metaphor that compares the structure of the boat to a torso in which the keel represents the backbone and the frame represents the ribs, then we could say that the gondola suffers from a serious form of scoliosis." In other words, the hull is asymmetrical—the right side is narrower than the left by 9 inch-



*The frame of the gondola  
is asymmetrical*

es. As a result, the gondola floats with its right flank lower in the water than its left. This lopsidedness compensates for the thrust made by the single oar and also for the weight of the gondolier standing off-center as he rows, enabling the gondola to keep a straight course.

A characteristic element of this "swan" is its neck, or prow. Apart from the iron stern, this is the only metal part of the boat. The prow is "so striking and distinctive," writes author Gianfranco Munerotto, "that



The distinctive prow



it sticks in the mind of whoever sees it for the first time." Originally, the iron prow served to counterbalance the weight of the gondolier rowing at the stern, but now it has only a decorative function. Tradition has it



Roberto, a gondolier  
on the canals of Venice

that the elements of the prow represent the six *sestieri*, or neighborhoods, into which the city of Venice is divided, while the small tooth at the back of the neck represents the Venetian island called Giudecca. The S-like double curve of the prow is said to represent the shape of the Grand Canal of Venice.

Another peculiarity is the gondolas' black "plumage." All sorts of explanations have been offered as to why these boats are black. According to one, during the 16th and 17th centuries, the ostentation, colors, and luxury of gondolas were so exaggerated that in an effort to encourage sobriety, the Venetian Senate was forced to fine the owners of gondolas that were too flashy. But many preferred to pay the fines rather than give up their decorations. As a result, a magistrate decreed that all gondolas should be painted black. Another explanation is that black served as a sign of mourning for the thousands who died from the Black Death. Still others say that the blackness of the gondolas highlighted to best advantage the ultra-white complexion of Venetian noblewomen. The truth is much less complicated. At least initially, the black color came from the pitch that was used to make gondolas waterproof.

After gently gliding over still waters on the back of a black swan, you return to the steps of the canalside quay where your journey began. As your eyes follow the gondola into the distance, you may wonder, perhaps for a moment, if the swan will turn back its long neck and smooth down some ruffled feathers.



# An Emperor for Lunch

SOME people prefer not to eat worms. But many others enjoy munching on such boneless delicacies. A favorite food in parts of Africa is the caterpillar of the emperor moth, *Imbrasia belina*. There this creature is widely known as the mopane worm, named after the tree that serves as its favored host, the mopane tree. Many rural communities eagerly anticipate harvesting this wriggling, nutritious tidbit. "They are an incredibly important source of protein," says Keith Leggett, of the Kalahari Conservation Society. The worms also play a valuable role in the ecology of the often dry and relatively infertile savanna woodlands.

**The mopane worm's high protein content makes it a valuable commodity**





**In its short six-week existence,  
the mopane worm's body mass  
increases by 4,000 times**

As summer rains spread across southern Africa during early November, the land comes alive. Millions of self-sufficient subterranean pupas are now elegant moths. In a matter of weeks, their offspring will grow from tiny eggs to larvae and then to colorful plump "sausages."

In areas where starchy staples such as cassava and maize predominate, the caterpillars are a welcome supplement to the diet. Though not first on the menu for many of us, their more than 60 percent protein content makes them a valuable commodity, especially where quality protein is expensive or in short supply. A portion of edible caterpillars competes effectively with a portion of meat or fish, supplying approximately three quarters of an adult's daily requirement of protein, vitamins, and minerals. Yes, these little creatures are nutritious!

Caterpillar consumers are surely puzzled at the expensive chemical warfare waged against such nutrient-rich insects by commercial farmers elsewhere. As millions of these creatures munch away, they convert often unpalatable, and sometimes toxic, leaves into a valuable food. All that without the use of expensive agricultural equipment and veterinarian fees! Harvested by hand, caterpillars are a highly efficient crop available for a minimum of effort.

#### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- **The Love of Money  
—Is It Really Harmful?**
- **What's Wrong With Dating Secretly?**
- **They Survived the Terror in Mumbai**

Mopane worms make no small contribution to the fertility and ecological balance of bush land. While the size and considerable appetite of the African elephant are impressive, its digestive performance is dwarfed by the humble mopane worm. In their short, six-week existence, hordes of caterpillars devour about ten times as much vegetation and produce almost four times as much manure as elephants occupying the same grazing area. No wonder the caterpillar's body mass increases by a staggering 4,000 times! Not surprisingly, therefore, uncontrolled harvesting has an impact on soil fertility and the ecological balance of the land.

How are these caterpillars harvested? Every rainy season women in rural areas gather for the first of two annual harvests of mopane worms. For several weeks they collect the worms, which are then gutted, boiled, and laid out to dry. However, harvesting and preparing certain other edible caterpillars demands special care. Protective hairs or spines gracing the bodies of some varieties have to be removed. Caution is also required in preparation because some caterpillars feed on plants that are toxic to humans. After processing, dried caterpillars can be eaten as a crunchy snack, though they are more often rehydrated and boiled in a stew or fried with tomato and onion.

The thought of eating caterpillars may make you feel anything from adventurous to uncomfortable. You may choose to wriggle out of the opportunity to try these exotic morsels. But remember, they represent an important high-protein food source and provide a supplementary income for many families in Africa.

# Why visit a Dentist?

**B**EFORE the advent of modern dentistry, people commonly suffered toothache and tooth loss from their youth on. Many were disfigured by dark, crooked, or missing teeth. Toothless senior citizens suffered malnutrition and early death because they were unable to chew. Today, most dental patients can be free of toothache, keep their teeth throughout their life, and have a pleasing smile. How did modern dentistry achieve these three remarkable feats?

Preventive dentistry, emphasizing education and regular checkups, has been a key factor in avoiding toothache and tooth loss. Jesus said: "Those who are healthy do not need a physician." (Luke 5:31) Thus, some have benefited so much from education in oral hygiene that they rarely need dental treatment.\* Nevertheless, many people avoid the dentist. Some neglect dental treatment out of indifference. Others are deterred by the expense. Still others are afraid. Whatever your circumstance, it is worth asking: What can the dentist do for me? Is a visit worthwhile? To appreciate the importance of preventive dentistry, we need to understand what dentists are trying to prevent.

## How the Damage Is Done

Dentists can help to prevent the torment of toothache and tooth loss. With your co-operation, dentists try to fight the effects of plaque, a soft film of bacteria that sticks to your teeth. The bacteria thrive on food parti-



cles. They convert sugar into acids that attack the tooth enamel, making it porous. Eventually, caries, or tooth decay, results when the porous area collapses to form a cavity. You feel no discomfort at this stage, but when the decay reaches the central pulp of your tooth, you may suffer acute pain.

The bacteria that form plaque have another way of tormenting you. If plaque is not carefully brushed away, it hardens to form a calcified deposit called calculus, or tartar, which may inflame the gums and make them pull away from the tooth. This results in a gap between tooth and gum where trapped food provides a feast for bacteria that may infect your gums. Your dentist can help control this condition, but if this is not cared for, the tissue surrounding your teeth may become so damaged that your teeth actually fall out. More teeth are lost this way than through tooth decay.

\* This article focuses on what the dentist can do to help his patient. For information on what *you* can do to protect your teeth, please see the article "How You Can Protect Your Smile," in the November 8, 2005, issue of *Awake!*

1. Gaza.—Judegs 16:21-30. ♦ Samson allowed himself to get into a position that led to the termination of his Nazarethship. ♦ Jehovah gave him the power.—Judegs 16:28. 2. Nehemiah, after 443 B.C.E. 3. Moderate 475 B.C.E. 4. Paul, 60-61 C.E. 5. Washington—Ezra 1:9.

Your saliva provides a measure of protection from this double attack of bacteria. Whether you have eaten a full meal or just a cookie, your saliva needs between 15 and 45 minutes to clear away food particles and neutralize the acid in the plaque on your teeth. The time depends on how much sticky sugar or food debris clings to your teeth. Apparently, it is during these minutes that your teeth are damaged. Thus, the amount of damage done to your teeth may depend, not on the quantity of sugar you eat, but on the frequency of your meals and sugary snacks. Since saliva flow is low while you sleep, one of the most destructive things you can do to your teeth is eat or drink sugar and then retire for the night without brushing your teeth. On the other hand, chewing sugar-free gum after meals is said to increase saliva flow and help protect your teeth.

### Preventive Dentistry

Dentists recommend having regular checkups once or twice a year, depending on the condition of your teeth. During the checkup your dentist will likely take X-rays and examine your teeth carefully for caries. Using a local anesthetic and a high-speed drill, he can usually fill any cavities he finds without causing you pain. For those who are especially fearful, a few dentists now use lasers or decay-dissolving gel, which can reduce or even eliminate the need to use a drill or a local anesthetic. With children, dentists pay special

attention to the newly erupted molars to see if they have any fissures or grooves on the biting surface that will be difficult to clean with a toothbrush. The dentist may recommend covering such grooves with a sealant to make the tooth surface smooth and easy to clean, thus protecting it from decay.

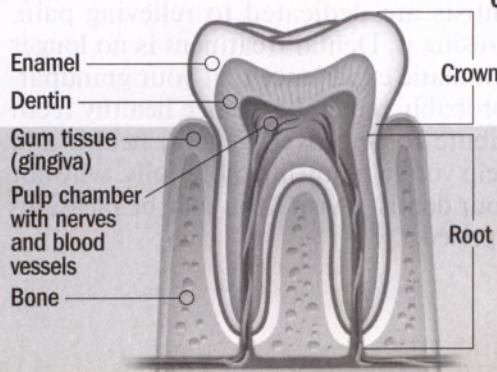
With adult patients, dentists are especially concerned about preventing gum disease. So if the dentist finds any deposits of hardened calculus, he will scrape them away. Most people tend to miss certain areas of their teeth each time they brush them, so your dentist may point out how you can improve your brushing skills. Some dentists refer their patients to a specially trained dental hygienist for this important service.

### Restoring Damaged Teeth

If you have damaged, missing, or crooked teeth, you will be pleased to hear that dentists have many new techniques for restoring them. However, restorative treatment is expensive, so you should beware of spending beyond your means. Nevertheless, many people feel that restorative treatment is worth the expense. Perhaps the dentist can restore your ability to chew. Or he may be able to make your smile more attractive—a matter of no small importance, since disfigured teeth can affect the quality of your life.

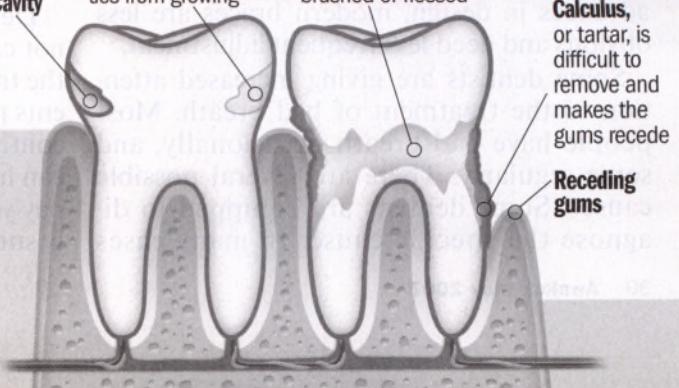
For broken or stained front teeth, a dentist may recommend a veneer, perhaps made of translucent porcelain that appears very

## Healthy Tooth Anatomy



## Tooth Decay

A filling stops cavities from growing

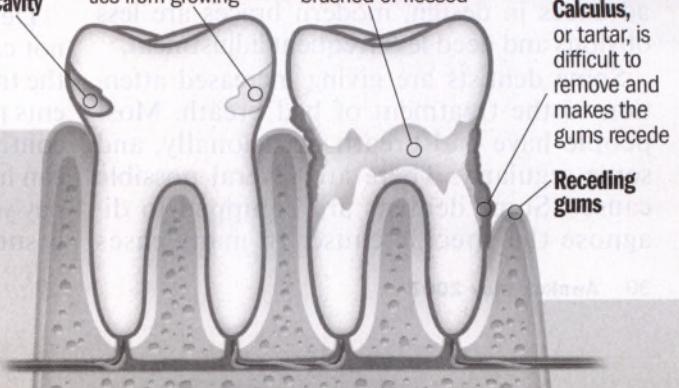


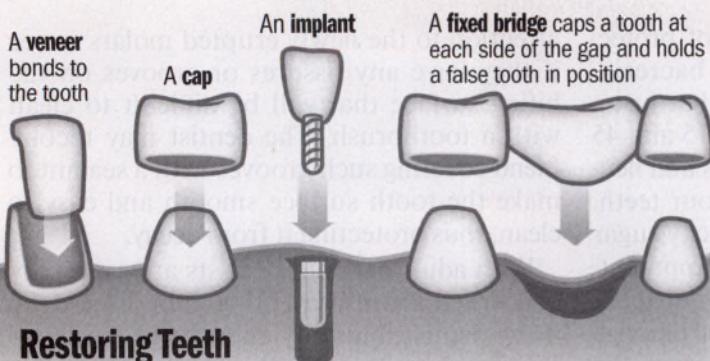
## Gum Disease

Plaque should be brushed or flossed

Calculus, or tartar, is difficult to remove and makes the gums recede

Receding gums





## Restoring Teeth

similar to natural tooth enamel. Veneers are bonded to the surface of the damaged tooth, giving it a new shape and appearance. For more severely damaged teeth, a dentist may recommend a cap, often called a crown. This entirely covers what remains of the tooth and provides it with a complete new surface, either of gold or of a material with a natural appearance.

What can your dentist do about lost teeth? He can fit a removable partial denture, or he can provide a fixed bridge that caps a tooth at each side of the gap and holds one or more false teeth in position. Another option that is becoming popular is an implant. The dentist inserts a titanium anchor into the jawbone where the tooth used to be, and when the bone and gum have grown back into place, he attaches an artificial tooth to the anchor. It is almost like having a real tooth.

Crooked teeth can be embarrassing and hard to clean, making them prone to disease. If teeth do not come together properly, they may be painful and make chewing difficult. Happily, dentists can usually correct such problems with braces. As a result of recent advances in design, modern braces are less obvious and need less-frequent adjustment.

Some dentists are giving increased attention to the treatment of bad breath. Most people have bad breath occasionally, and some regularly. There are several possible causes. Some dentists are equipped to diagnose the specific cause. In many cases

it originates with bacteria, often at the far back region of the tongue. Brushing or scraping the tongue can help, as can increasing your saliva flow by chewing sugar-free gum. Cleaning your mouth is particularly important after consuming milk products, meat, or fish.

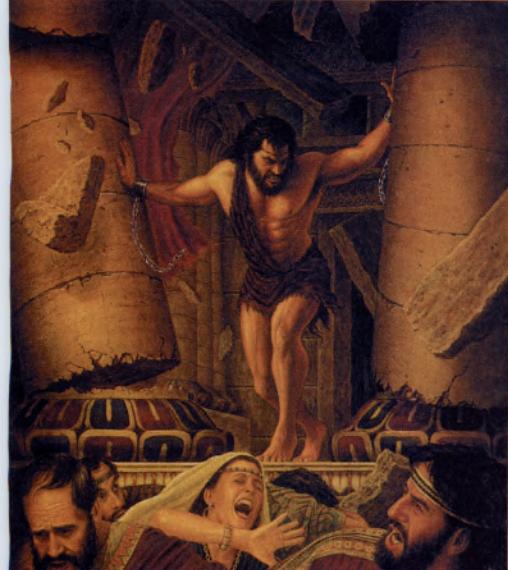
### Coping With Fear

If visiting a dentist makes you especially anxious, your dentist will want to help you to cope with your fear. So tell him how you feel. Talk with him about a hand signal you can use to indicate that you feel pain or are afraid. Many patients have found that this gives them more confidence.

Perhaps you fear being scolded. You may worry that the dentist will belittle you for not taking better care of your teeth. However, since such comments are bad for business, your fear of being chided is probably unfounded. Most dentists have an interest in speaking kindly to their clients.

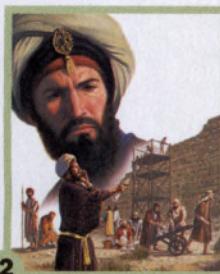
Many people avoid the dentist because they fear the expense. But if it is possible for you to have a checkup now, you may avoid problems and expensive treatment later. In many places there are different levels of dental services to suit every pocket. Even the most basically equipped dental office will probably have X-ray equipment and a high-speed drill. Dentists can perform most procedures with very little discomfort to the patient. The cost of local anesthetic is low enough for most people to afford, even those with limited resources.

Dentists are dedicated to relieving pain, not causing it. Dental treatment is no longer the traumatic experience that your grandparents probably remember. Since healthy teeth contribute to improved general health and can help you to enjoy life more fully, why not pay your dentist a visit? You may be pleasantly surprised.



### WHEN IN HISTORY?

Name the writer(s) of each of the Bible books below, and draw a line connecting the book to the approximate date it was completed.



**2**

Nehemiah



**3**

Esther



**4**

Ephesians

475 B.C.E.

443 B.C.E.

455 B.C.E.

60-61 C.E.

||

65-66 C.E.

(Answers on page 28)

### WHERE DID IT HAPPEN?

**1.** In which city did this event take place? Circle your answer on the map.

♦ How did Samson come to be in the Philistine temple?

♦ Why was Samson so strong?

#### ■ For Discussion:

What do you learn about Jehovah from this account?



### WHO AM I?

**5.** I refused to leave my party, although I was summoned by the king.

### WHO AM I?

**6.** Paul asked Onesimus and me to carry letters to Ephesus and Colossae.

### FROM THIS ISSUE

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

**Page 7** What is one gift from God? (Ecclesiastes 3:\_\_\_\_)

**Page 10** What promise does God make to the poor? (Psalm 9:\_\_\_\_)

**Page 13** What is one reason why good or bad things happen? (Ecclesiastes 9:\_\_\_\_)

**Page 19** What do you need to discern about a potential marriage mate? (1 Peter 3:\_\_\_\_)

### Children's Picture Search

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



# *Who Are the Real Followers of Christ?*

.....

To find the answer to this thought-provoking question,  
you are cordially invited to attend the

**“FOLLOW THE CHRIST!”**

District Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses

Several hundred of these conventions will be held throughout the world beginning in May in the United States. To find the location nearest you, contact Jehovah's Witnesses in your area or write to the publishers of this magazine. The March 1, 2007, issue of our companion magazine, *The Watchtower*, lists convention locations in the United States and Canada.

[www.watchtower.org](http://www.watchtower.org)

g-E 5/07

