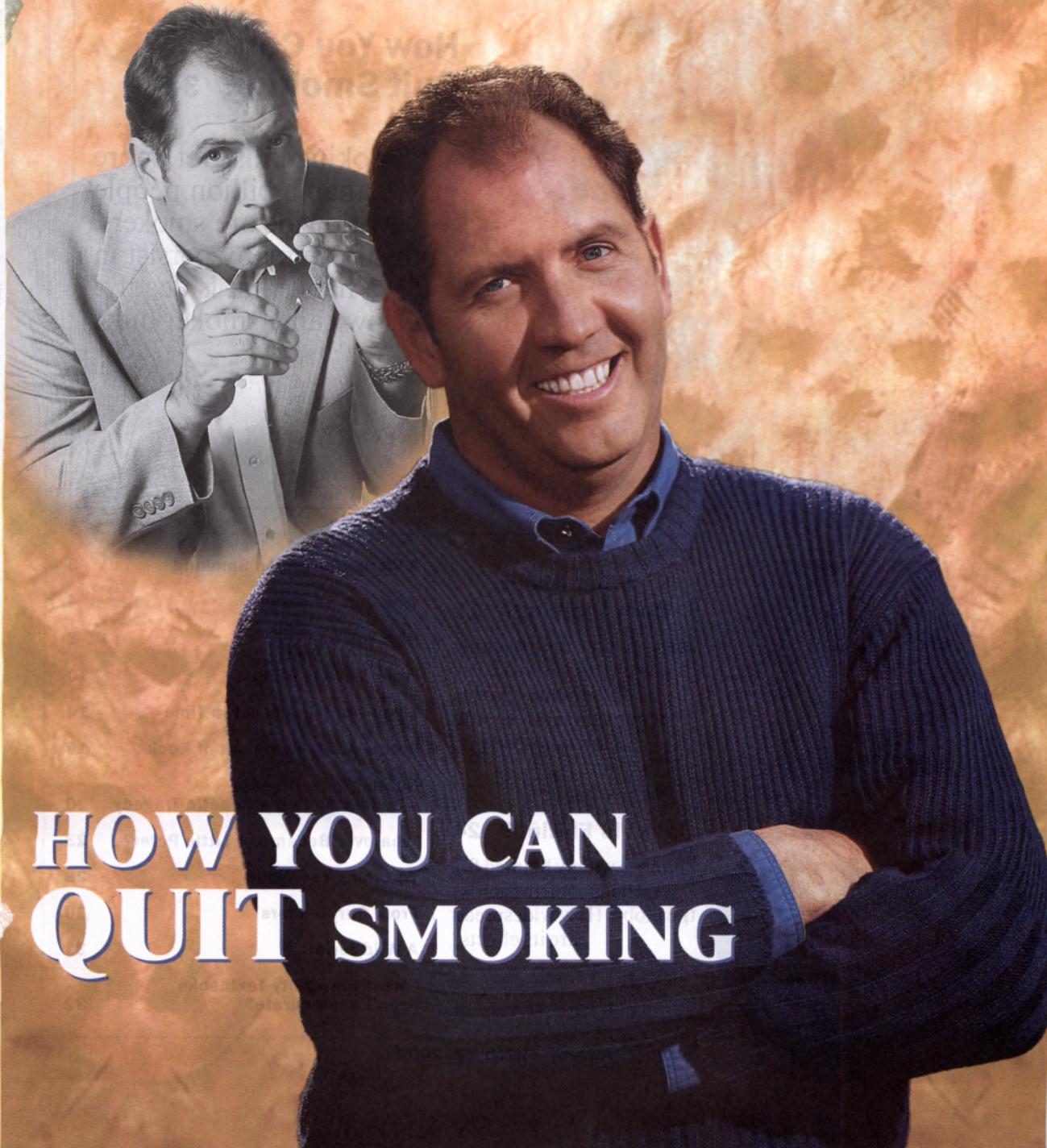


# Awake!

March 22, 2000



HOW YOU CAN  
QUIT SMOKING



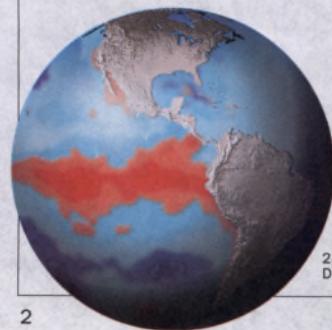
## How You Can Quit Smoking 3-9

Smoking kills. Yet, more than a billion people worldwide are smokers. Why do so many persist in a habit that is deadly? How can a smoker quit?



## What About Body Piercing? 11

Many people are attaching jewelry to various parts of their body. Is this practice safe? How should Christians view it?



## What Is El Niño? 24

El Niño is widely blamed for weather problems across the globe. How widespread are its effects?

Globes and maps on pages 2, 3, 4, 8, and 24-6: Mountain High Maps® Copyright © 1997 Digital Wisdom, Inc.

<b>A World Hooked on Smoking</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Why Quit Smoking?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>How You Can Quit</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>When Love Is Blind</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Lamu—An Island Lost in Time</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Petra—A City Hewn out of Rock</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Huntington's Disease —Understanding a Genetic Tragedy</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Whatever Became of Little Peter?</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Watching the World</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>From Our Readers</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>A Wild Jewel</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>"Most University Textbooks Aren't as Accurate"</b>	<b>32</b>



# A WORLD HOOKED ON SMOKING

**B**ILL was a kind man, an intelligent man, a strong man. He loved his family. At an early age, though, he began to smoke cigarettes. Later in life he hated the habit. Even as he puffed on a cigarette, he earnestly warned his sons against smoking, saying how stupid it was. There were times when he would crush a pack of cigarettes in his powerful hands and fling it across the room, vowing that he had smoked his last. Soon, though, he would be drawn back to smoking—first secretly, then openly.

Bill died of cancer 15 years ago, after months of dreadful pain. If he had not been a smoker, he would possibly be alive today. His wife would still have a husband; his sons would still have a father.

Bill's death, tragic though it was for his family, is not unique. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco-related diseases kill about four million people each year, or one person every eight seconds. Tobacco use is the major preventable cause of disease worldwide. If present trends continue, in 20 years smoking will be the world's number one cause of death and disability, kill-

ing more people than AIDS, tuberculosis, maternal mortality, motor vehicle accidents, suicide, and homicide combined.

Cigarettes kill. Yet those who smoke them are everywhere. Worldwide, at least 1.1 billion people are smokers, states WHO. That means roughly one third of the world's adults.

Analysts estimate that while tobacco companies now pay hundreds of millions of dollars because of lawsuits brought against them, this amount is small compared with their multibillion-dollar profits. In the United States alone, an estimated 1.5 billion cigarettes roll off production lines in tobacco factories *each day*. Worldwide, tobacco companies and government monopolies sell over five trillion cigarettes every year!

Why do so many people persist in a habit that is deadly? If you are a smoker, how can you quit? These questions will be answered in the following articles.



## WHY QUIT SMOKING?

**S**MOKING is not for those who want to live a long and happy life. The probability that a long-term smoker will eventually be killed by tobacco is 1 in 2. The director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) stated: "A cigarette is . . . a cleverly crafted product that delivers just the right amount of nicotine to keep its user addicted for life before killing the person."

One reason, then, to quit smoking is that smoking tobacco endangers health and life. Smoking has been linked to more than 25 life-threatening diseases. It is, for example, a major contributor to heart attack, stroke, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and various cancers, especially lung cancer.

Of course, a person may smoke for years before being stricken with one of these diseases. Meanwhile, smoking does not make a person more appealing to others. Adver-

tising portrays smokers as glamorous and healthy. The reality is different. Smoking makes the breath stink and stains teeth and fingers a yellowish-brown. In men it contributes to impotence. It causes smoker's cough and shortness of breath. Smokers are also more likely to experience premature facial wrinkling and other skin problems.

### How Smoking Affects Others

The Bible says: "You must love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39) Love for your neighbors—and your family members are your closest neighbors—is a powerful reason to quit.

Smoking hurts others. Until recent times a smoker could light up just about anywhere and expect no objection. But attitudes are changing because more people understand the dangers of breathing in smoke that drifts from the cigarettes of others. For example, a nonsmoker who is married to a smoker has

**Awake!**

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

*Awake!* (ISSN 0005-237X) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; Milton G. Henschel, President; Lyman A. Swingle, 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**.

Vol. 81, No. 6 Printed in U.S.A.

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Semimonthly ENGLISH

## Hooked Early

A study in the United States showed that 1 in 4 young people who tried cigarettes eventually became addicted. This was similar to the addiction rate of those who experimented with cocaine and heroin. Though about 70 percent of adolescent smokers regret having started, few are able to quit.

a 30-percent greater risk of developing lung cancer than if he or she were married to a nonsmoker. Children who live with parents who smoke are more likely to develop pneumonia or bronchitis in the first two years of life than are children who live in homes where no one smokes.

Pregnant women who smoke endanger their unborn babies. Nicotine, carbon monoxide, and other dangerous chemicals contained in cigarette smoke enter the mother's bloodstream and pass directly to the child in the womb. The consequences include a greater likelihood of spontaneous abortion, stillbirth, and death among newborns. Moreover, the risk of sudden infant death syndrome is three times higher for babies whose mothers smoked during pregnancy.

### The Cost Is High

Another reason to quit is that smoking is expensive. A study by the World Bank estimated that the health-care costs caused directly by smoking amount to about \$200 bil-

lion each year. That figure, of course, does nothing to convey the cost in suffering and pain to those who contract diseases caused by tobacco.

The direct cost of cigarettes to the individual smoker is easy to calculate. If you smoke, multiply the amount of money you spend on cigarettes in one day by 365. That will show you how much money you spend in a year. Multiply that figure by ten, and you will see how much cigarettes will cost you if you smoke for another ten years. The result may surprise you. Think about what else you could do with that much money.

### Is It Safer to Switch?

The tobacco industry advertises low tar and nicotine cigarettes—promoted as light or mild cigarettes—as a way to reduce the health risks of smoking. However, those who switch to low tar and nicotine

## What Is in Cigarette Smoke?

Cigarette smoke contains tar, consisting of over 4,000 chemicals. Of these chemicals, 43 are known to cause cancer. Among them are cyanide, benzene, wood alcohol, and acetylene (a fuel used in torches). Cigarette smoke also contains nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide, both poisonous gases. Its main active ingredient is nicotine, a highly addictive drug.

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## Helping a Loved One Quit

If you are a nonsmoker who knows the dangers of smoking, you likely feel frustrated when your friends and loved ones continue to smoke. What can you do to help them quit? Nagging, begging, coercion, and ridicule seldom meet with success. Neither do condescending lectures. Instead of quitting, the smoker may reach for a cigarette to ease the emotional pain these tactics may cause. So try to understand how difficult it is to quit and that for some it is much harder than it is for others.

You can't make a person quit smoking. The inner strength and conviction to quit must come from the person who smokes. You need to find loving ways to encourage and support a desire to quit.

How can you do that? At the right time, you might express your love for the person and say that you are concerned about his or her smoking habit. Explain that you will be there to support any decision to quit. Of course, if this approach is used too often, it will lose its effectiveness and meaning.

What might you do if your loved one does decide to quit? Keep in mind that he or she may have withdrawal symptoms, including irritability and depression. Headaches and difficulty in sleeping might be problems too. Remind your loved one that these symptoms are only temporary and are signs that the body is adjusting to a new and healthy equilibrium. Be cheerful and positive. Express how happy you are that he or she is quitting. Throughout the withdrawal period, help your loved one avoid stressful situations that could lead to a relapse.

What if there is a relapse? Try not to overreact. Be compassionate. View the situation as a learning experience for both of you, making it more likely that the next attempt will be a success.

cigarettes crave the same nicotine dose as before. Consequently, smokers who switch usually compensate by smoking more cigarettes, taking deeper and more frequent puffs, or smoking more of each cigarette. Even for those who do not make changes to compensate, the health benefits are small compared with the advantages of quitting completely.

What about pipes and cigars? Though the tobacco industry has long promoted pipes and cigars as status symbols, the smoke they deliver is just as deadly as that from cigarettes. Even if smokers don't inhale cigar or pipe smoke, they have an increased risk of developing lip, mouth, and tongue cancers.

Is smokeless tobacco safe? This comes in two different forms: snuff and chewing tobacco. Snuff is a powdered tobacco, usually sold in cans or pouches. Often, users place it inside the lower lip or cheek. Chewing tobacco is sold in long strands, usually in a pouch. As the name suggests, it is chewed, not sucked. Snuff and chewing tobacco both cause bad breath, stained teeth, cancer of the mouth and pharynx, addiction to nicotine, white sores in the mouth that can lead to cancer, peeling back of the gums, and bone loss around the teeth. Clearly, sucking or chewing tobacco is not a wise alternative to smoking it.

## Benefits of Quitting

Suppose you are a long-term smoker. What happens when you quit? Within 20 minutes of your last cigarette, your blood pressure will drop to normal. After a week your body will be free of nicotine. After one month your coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, and shortness of breath will begin to decrease. After five years your risk of dying from lung cancer will have dropped by 50 percent. After 15 years your risk of coronary heart disease will fall to that of a person who has never smoked at all.



**The tobacco industry  
spends almost  
six billion dollars each  
year on advertising**

Your food will taste better. Your breath, body, and clothing will smell better. You will no longer have the trouble or the expense of buying tobacco. You will have a feeling of accomplishment. If you have children, your example will reduce the likelihood that they will be smokers. You will likely live longer. Further, you will be acting in harmony with God's will, since the Bible says: "Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of [the] flesh." (2 Corinthians 7:1) Don't feel that it is too late for you to quit; the sooner you quit, the better.

#### **Why Quitting Is So Hard**

It is difficult to quit smoking—even for those who are highly motivated. Mainly, this is because the nicotine in tobacco is a highly addictive drug. "In a ranking of the addictiveness of psycho-active drugs, nicotine was determined to be *more* addictive than heroin [and] cocaine," states WHO. Unlike heroin and cocaine, nicotine does not produce dramatic evidence of intoxication, so it is easy to underestimate its power. Yet the mild sense of euphoria it produces keeps most people smoking so as to experience the feeling repeatedly. Nicotine really does alter your mood; it does soothe anxiety. However, the tension the cigarette re-

duces is caused in part by the craving for nicotine itself.

It is also difficult to quit smoking because smoking is a behavioral habit. Apart from being addicted to nicotine, smokers develop frequently repeated routines of lighting up and puffing. 'It's something to do with your hands.' 'It fills time,' some may say.

A third factor that makes it difficult to quit is that tobacco is woven into everyday life. The tobacco industry spends almost six billion dollars each year on advertising campaigns that depict smokers as glamorous, active, healthy, and intelligent people. Often they are shown riding a horse, swimming, playing tennis, or engaging in another appealing activity. Movies and television programs show people smoking—and not always the villains. Tobacco is legally sold and is readily available virtually everywhere. Most of us are never far from someone who smokes. You can't escape these influences.

Sadly, there is no pill that you can take to eliminate the desire to smoke as an aspirin might eliminate a headache. To succeed in the difficult task of quitting, a person must be motivated. Like losing weight, it requires strong commitment for a long time. The responsibility for success lies with the person who smokes.



# HOW YOU CAN QUIT

LIKE learning to ride a bicycle, giving up tobacco is rarely accomplished the first time you try. So if you are determined to quit, you should be prepared to make repeated attempts until you are successful. Do not view a relapse as a defeat. Think of it as a learning experience, a small setback in what can be a successful program. Here are some suggestions that have worked for others. They may work well for you too.

## Prepare Your Mind to Quit

■ First, you must convince yourself that quitting is worth the effort. List your reasons for wanting to quit, including all the benefits. After you have quit, reviewing this list will strengthen your resolve. A desire to please God is the greatest motive for quitting. The Bible says that we should love God with our whole mind, heart, soul, and strength. That is something we cannot do if we are addicted to tobacco.—Mark 12:30.

■ Analyze your smoking habits to figure out when and why you smoke. You may find it helpful to record on paper when and where you smoke each cigarette during a typical day. This will help you to



foresee situations that may tempt you to smoke after you do quit.

## Plan a Quit Date

- Choose a quit date, and mark it on your calendar. It is best to choose a day when you will not be under undue outside stress. When that day arrives, quit completely—abruptly and totally.
- Before the quit date arrives, get rid of ashtrays, matches, and lighters. Clean all your clothes that smell of tobacco smoke.
- Enlist the support of coworkers, friends, and family to encourage you in your efforts to quit. Do not be afraid to ask others not to smoke in your presence.
- Plan activities for your quit day. You might go somewhere where smoking is not permitted, such as to a museum or a theater. You could also exercise—swim



or take a bicycle ride or a long walk.

### Dealing With Withdrawal

If you are a heavy smoker, you will likely experience withdrawal symptoms, which begin within hours of smoking the last cigarette. These may include irritability, impatience, hostility, anxiety, depression, insomnia, restlessness, increased appetite, and a craving for cigarettes. Perhaps your doctor can prescribe medication that will help ease these symptoms. In addition, there are things you can do to help you win the battle.

■ During the first few difficult weeks, eat low-calorie foods, and drink plenty of water. Some have found it helpful to snack on raw vegetables, such as carrots or celery. If you exercise, you will help offset weight gain and soothe jittery nerves.

■ Avoid places and situations where you will be tempted to smoke.

■ Fight against bad reasoning that may tempt you to smoke. Here are some common thoughts during withdrawal: 'I'll smoke *just today* to get me through this tough time.' 'Smoking is my *only vice*!' 'Tobacco can't be all that bad; some heavy smokers live to be over 90.' 'I've got to die of *something*.' 'Life is no fun without tobacco.'

■ If you are about to give in, *delay*. By waiting just ten minutes, the acute craving may pass. Sometimes the thought of never smoking again might seem overwhelming. If you feel that way, concentrate on quitting just for today.

■ If you want to serve God, pray for help. Our loving Creator can provide



"help at the right time" for those who are striving to bring their lives into harmony with his will. (Hebrews 4:16) But don't expect a miracle. You must act in harmony with your prayers.

### Remain an Ex-smoker

■ The first three months are the most difficult, but even after that you should, when possible, avoid smokers and situations that may tempt you to smoke.

■ Don't fool yourself into thinking that you can be an occasional smoker, even if you have stopped smoking for a year or more.

■ Resist the temptation to have "just one cigarette." Just one may easily lead to others, and soon you will have undone all the hard work you put into quitting. However, if you do weaken and have a cigarette, there is no reason to smoke another. If you relapse, quit again.

Millions of smokers have successfully quit. With determination and persistence, you can too!

# *When Love Is Blind*

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN SPAIN

**IMAGINE** searching for a bride if you were very nearsighted and if suitable maidens ventured out only after dark. Such is the plight of the male emperor moth. But this elegant insect has certain attributes that make this formidable challenge less daunting.

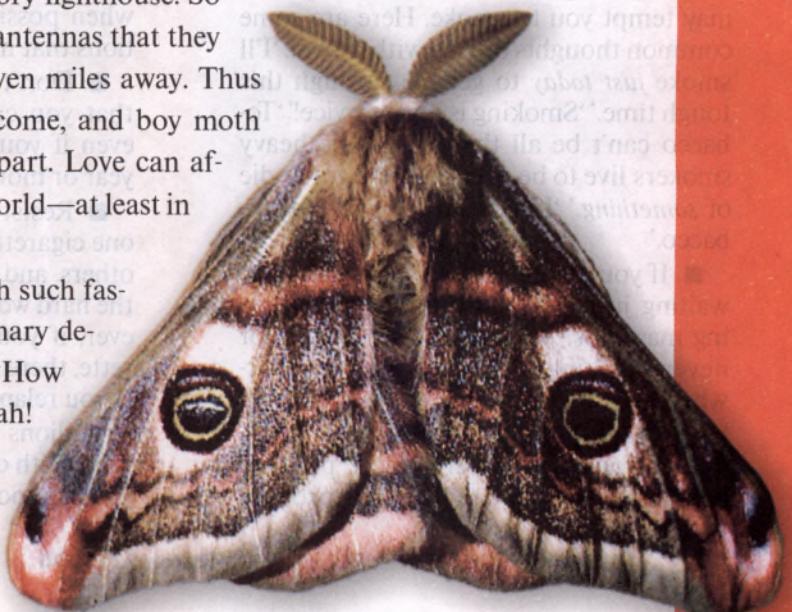
During the summer months, our prospective suitor spends his days as a fat caterpillar gorging on all the food he can find. Thus, the following spring, when he emerges from his chrysalis, the resplendent moth has enough food stored to last him his brief lifetime.

With food problems resolved, the emperor moth can concentrate on the task of finding a mate. Nevertheless, if it weren't for a useful appliance he carries with him, finding a female by the light of the moon would be as difficult as finding a needle in a haystack.

Sprouting like delicate ferns from the moth's diminutive head are two antennas. These tiny fronds may well be the most sophisticated odor-detecting devices on earth. Furthermore, they are fine-tuned to pick up minute traces of a pheromone, or "perfume," that the female moth obligingly emits.

Although females may be few and far between, their potent pheromone acts like an olfactory lighthouse. So sensitive are the male moth's antennas that they can detect a female nearly seven miles away. Thus all obstacles are finally overcome, and boy moth finally meets his girl counterpart. Love can afford to be blind in the insect world—at least in this case.

God's creation abounds with such fascinating details and extraordinary design! The psalmist wrote: "How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made."—Psalm 104:24.



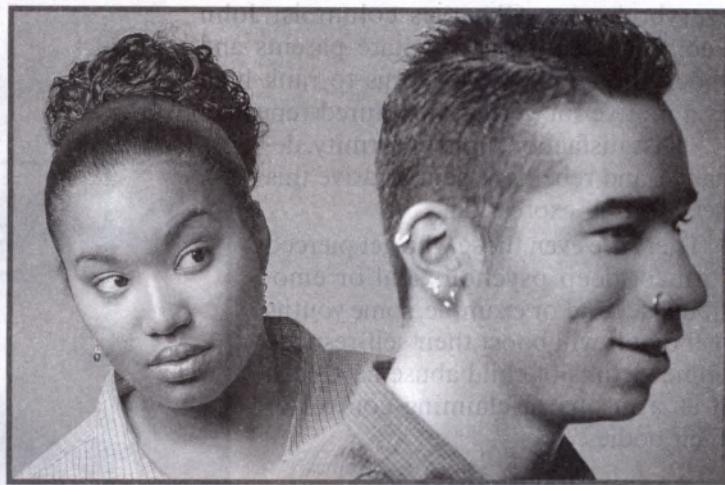
# YOUNG PEOPLE ASK . . .

**'When I first saw people with lips and other parts of their body pierced, I thought "Wow! That's special."'—Lisa.**

**L**ISA is not alone. Increasing numbers of young people are wearing rings and studs through various body parts, even their eyebrows, tongue, lips, and navel. It's a practice called body piercing.\*

A 16-year-old named Heather is eager to jump on the bandwagon. She is convinced that a ring in her navel will look "absolutely awesome." Nineteen-year-old Joe, however, already sports a gold barbell through his tongue. And another young girl chose to have her eyebrow pierced because she wanted something "highly visible" that would "freak people out."

The idea of attaching jewelry to the body is hardly new. Back in Bible times, a godly woman named Rebekah wore a nose ring. (Genesis 24:22, 47) When coming out of Egypt, the Israelites wore earrings. (Exodus 32:2) It is not known, though, whether such jewelry was attached by means of ear and nose piercing. Faithful slaves did have their ears pierced, however, as a symbol of their loyalty to their masters. (Exodus 21:6) Piercing has been prominent in other ancient cultures too. Aztecs and Maya pierced their



## What About Body Piercing?

tongues for spiritual reasons. Lip perforation is still widespread in Africa and among South American Indians. Insertion of decorative objects through the nose is common among Melanesians and inhabitants of India and Pakistan.

Until just a few years ago, piercing in the Western world was generally limited to women's earlobes. But now teenagers and young adults of both sexes are wearing jewelry on just about every part of the body to which it can be attached.

### Why They Get Pierced

Many get pierced because they feel that it is fashionable—the in thing to do. Others feel that it will enhance their appearance. Certainly, the fad has been fueled by the use of body jewelry by top models, sports stars, and popular musicians. And for some youths, piercing also seems to serve as an expression

\* By this, we are not referring to the modest piercing that is common and culturally acceptable in many lands. Rather, we refer to the extreme practices that are popular today.  
—See *The Watchtower* of May 15, 1974, pages 318-19.

of independence, a quest for individuality, a way for them to say that they are not like everybody else. Observes columnist John Leo: "The yearning to irritate parents and shock the middle class seems to rank high as a motive for getting punctured repeatedly." Dissatisfaction, nonconformity, defiance, and rebellion seem to drive this need for self-expression.

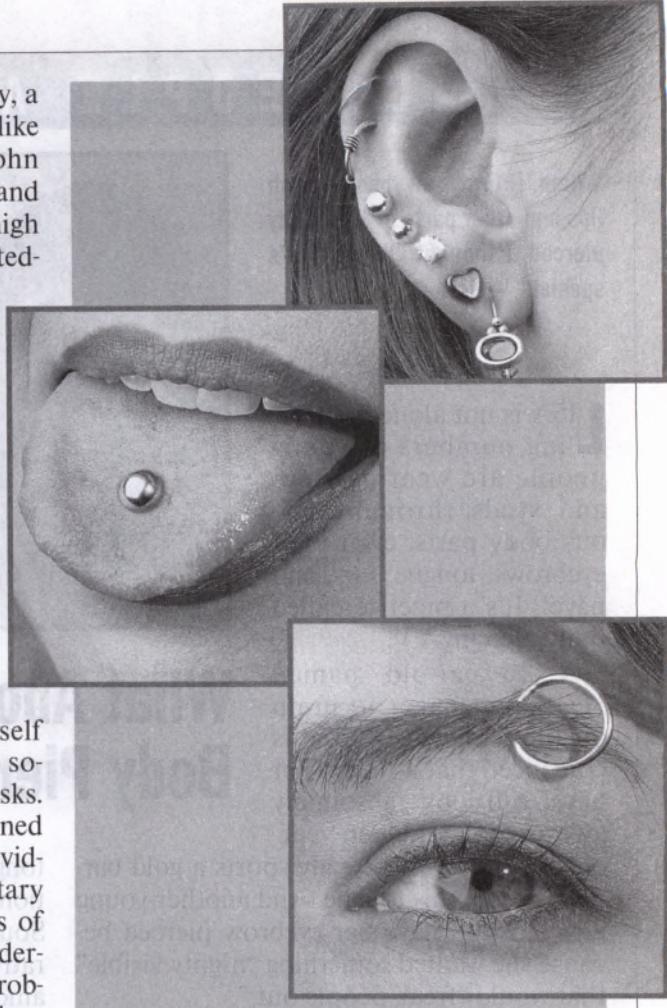
There are even those who get pierced to meet deep psychological or emotional needs. For example, some youths feel that it will boost their self-respect. Some victims of child abuse have seen it as a means of claiming control of their bodies.

#### **Health Risks**

But is all such body piercing safe? Many medical practitioners say that some of it is not. Certainly, do-it-yourself piercing is hazardous. And going to a so-called professional piercer may have its risks. Many lack extensive training, having learned their craft from friends, magazines, or videos. As a result, they may not use sanitary techniques or even understand the risks of piercing. Also, many piercers lack an understanding of anatomy. This is no small problem, since making a hole in the wrong place can cause excessive bleeding. Hitting a nerve can cause permanent damage.

Another serious risk is infection. Unsterile equipment can transmit such lethal diseases as hepatitis, AIDS, tuberculosis, and tetanus. Even when sterile techniques are used, care after the procedure is still essential. A navel piercing, for example, is subject to irritation because it is constantly rubbed by clothing. It can thus take up to nine months to heal.

Doctors say that piercing the cartilage of one's nose or ears is more dangerous than piercing an earlobe. A newsletter from the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery explains: "Multiple



***Body piercing is enormously popular among youths***

earring holes placed around the top of the ear are a particular cause for concern—serious infections can cause the loss of the entire top curve of the ear. Nose studs also are risky—an infection in this area may involve nearby blood vessels and spread to the brain." Concludes the newsletter: "Ideally, [piercing] should be limited to the earlobe area."

Other hazards are ugly scarring and allergic reactions to piercing jewelry. If rings in

very sensitive areas, such as the breast, get caught or pulled by clothing, the piercings can easily tear. Scar tissue formed in the breast of a young girl can block milk ducts, and if she does not seek treatment, she may find it difficult or impossible to nurse a baby in the future.

The American Dental Association recently dubbed oral piercing a public health hazard. Additional risks of piercing the mouth area include choking after swallowing jewelry, numbness and loss of taste in the tongue, prolonged bleeding, chipped or fractured teeth, increased salivary flow, uncontrolled drooling, gum injury, speech impediment, and difficulties in breathing, chewing, and swallowing. When a young woman named Kendra had her tongue pierced, it "swelled up like a balloon." To make matters worse, the piercer used a stud designed for the chin, and it cut into Kendra's tongue and ripped through tissue underneath. She almost lost the ability to speak.

God taught his people the Israelites to respect their bodies and to avoid self-mutilation. (Leviticus 19:28; 21:5; Deuteronomy 14:1) And while Christians today are not under the Mosaic Law, they are still encouraged to treat their bodies with respect. (Romans 12:1) Does it not make good sense, then, to avoid unnecessary health risks? Nevertheless, there are other factors you should consider besides health.

#### **What Message Does It Transmit?**

The Bible gives no specific command about body piercing. But it does encourage us to adorn ourselves with "modesty and soundness of mind." (1 Timothy 2:9) While something might be considered modest in one part of the world, the real issue is how it is viewed where you live. For example, pierced earlobes on women in one part of the world may be considered acceptable. But in

another country or culture, some may take offense at them.

Despite their popularity among celebrities, body piercings and earrings for men have thus far failed to gain general acceptance in the West. One reason may be that these have long been the hallmark of prison inmates, motorcycle gangs, punk rockers, and members of the homosexual sadomasochistic subculture. For many, body piercing has the connotation of deviance and rebellion. A number view it as shocking, repugnant. Says a Christian girl named Ashley: "This boy in my class just got his nose pierced. He thinks it's cool. I think it's disgusting!"

Little wonder, then, that one well-known American store has a rule that employees having direct contact with customers are restricted to one earring per ear and that all other visible piercings are banned. "You can't predict how people might react," explains a company spokeswoman. Career counselors similarly advise male college students applying for a job to wear "no earrings or other body piercing jewelry; women should wear . . . no nose rings."

Young Christians in particular should be concerned that they give the right impression to others, including when they engage in the evangelizing work. They do not want to be 'giving any cause for stumbling, that their ministry might not be found fault with.' (2 Corinthians 6:3, 4) Whatever personal opinion you might have about piercing, your appearance inescapably makes a statement about your attitudes and life-style. What statement do you want to make?

Ultimately, you—and, of course, your parents—must decide what you will do in this regard. "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould," is the Bible's sound advice. (Romans 12:2, Phillips) After all, you are the one who will have to live with the results.



# LAMU

## An Island Lost in Time

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN KENYA

**T**HE salty breeze whipped the canvas sail taut, sending the small wooden ship forward. High above the deck, clinging to the mast, a lookout scanned the horizon for land, straining his eyes against the glare of the Indian Ocean. It was the 15th century C.E., and these sailors were searching for the island of Lamu.

Gold, ivory, spices, and slaves—Africa provided them all. Lured by Africa's treasures and the urge to explore, hardy men sailed to the East African coast from faraway countries. Sailors braved turbulent seas and gusty winds in search of treasures. Crowding into cramped wooden sailing vessels, they set out on journeys of great length.

Midway up the East African coast, a small group of islands, the Lamu archipelago, provided these seafaring travelers and their frail ships a deep, safe harbor protected by coral reefs. Here sailors were able to resupply their vessels with fresh water and food.

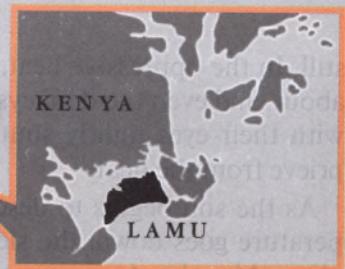
By the 15th century, the island of Lamu was established as a prosperous trading and supply center. Portuguese sailors arriving there in the 16th century found wealthy merchants wearing silk turbans and flowing caftans. Gold bangles adorned the arms and ankles of perfumed women as they moved through the narrow streets. All along the dock, sailing ships with their lateen sails furled sat heavy in the water, loaded to capacity with goods destined for foreign lands. Slaves tied together

and huddled in groups waited to be herded onto dhows.

The early European explorers were surprised to find a high level of sanitation and architectural design in Lamu. Seafront homes were built with coral blocks chiseled by hand from local quarries, and heavy wooden doors, exquisitely carved, guarded their entryways. Houses were situated in well-arranged rows designed to allow cool sea winds to blow through the narrow streets and provide relief from the sweltering heat.

Homes of the more affluent inhabitants were large and spacious. Bathrooms were supplied with fresh water piped through rudimentary plumbing systems. Waste removal was equally impressive and more advanced than that of many European countries at the time. Large ducts, carved out of stone, sloped toward the sea and carried wastewater to deep soak pits that were placed far away from sources of fresh water. The stone cisterns that supplied the homes with fresh water contained small fish that would feed on mosquito larvae, thus keeping the biting insects at bay.

By the 19th century, Lamu was supplying oceangoing dhows with ivory, oil, seeds, animal hides, tortoiseshell, hippo teeth, and slaves in large quantities. In time, however, Lamu's prosperity began to wane. Plague, raids from hostile tribes, and restrictions placed on the slave trade diminished Lamu's economic importance.



### Stepping Into the Past

Sailing into the port of Lamu today is like stepping back in history. The wind blows steadily from the great blue expanse of the Indian Ocean. Gentle turquoise waves pulse against sandy white beaches. Wooden dhows of ancient design glide along the coast, their triangular white sails resembling butterflies on the wing. Laden with fish, fruit, coconuts, cows, chickens, and passengers, they head for the port of Lamu.

At the dock, palm trees rustling in the hot breeze provide scant shade for the men unloading the wooden vessels. The market bustles with people noisily bartering for commodities. These traders are seeking, not gold, ivory, or slaves, but bananas, coconuts, fish, and baskets.

In the shade of a huge mango tree, men plait

long ropes from sisal fiber and mend the cloth sails that propel their wooden dhows. Streets are narrow and filled with people moving in all directions. Merchants clad in their long, flowing white robes call from their cluttered shops, beckoning customers to come in and examine their wares. A donkey, straining to pull a wooden cart loaded with heavy sacks of grain, threads its way through the flow of people. Lamu's inhabitants move from one part of the island to another on foot, for there are no motor vehicles on the island for transportation. Access to the island is only by boat.

When the sun reaches its zenith at midday, time appears to stand



© Alice Garrard

still. In the oppressive heat, few people move about, and even the donkeys stand motionless with their eyes tightly shut waiting for a reprieve from the heat.

As the sun begins to descend and the temperature goes down, the sleepy island comes alive. Merchants swing open their heavy carved doors to resume business, and they will continue burning their lamps until late at night. Women bathe their small children and rub them with coconut oil until their skin glistens. Sitting on mats woven from coconut

fronds, women also begin food preparation. Here they still cook on open fires, preparing delicious meals of fish seasoned with aromatic spices and rice cooked in coconut milk. People are friendly, hospitable, and easygoing.

Although Lamu has lost its former splendor, traditional pre-20th-century African culture still flourishes here. Under the warm tropical sun, life continues just as it has for many centuries. Here one can visit the past and the present together. Indeed, Lamu is a unique survivor of a bygone age, an island lost in time.



© Alice Garrard

## Our Visit to L A M U

Not too long ago, a group of us made a visit to Lamu, but it was not for the purpose of buying or selling goods. We went to visit our Christian brothers and sisters, fellow Witnesses of Jehovah. Our light aircraft flew north over the rugged Kenyan coastline. Far below, gentle waves rolled onto a shoreline of rich, green tropical forests fringed with a ribbon of white sand. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, we saw the islands of the Lamu archipelago glistening like jewels in the turquoise sea. Like a huge African eagle, we circled the islands and then dropped from the sky, landing on a small airstrip on the mainland. We disembarked, walked to the



water's edge, and boarded a wooden dhow for the trip to Lamu.

It was a beautiful sunny day, and the sea wind was warm and fresh. As we approached the island, we noticed that the jetty was bustling

with people. Strong backs lifted heavy loads from the boats, and women carried their wares balanced delicately on their heads. Carrying our baggage, we pushed our way through the crowd and stood under the shade of a palm tree. Within minutes, our Christian brothers spotted us, and we were warmly welcomed to their island home.

In the morning we awoke well before sunrise to meet the brothers and sisters at the seaside. The journey to attend the congregation meetings was long and would take several hours. We had prepared ourselves with drinking water, wide-brimmed hats, and good walking shoes. With the dawn light to our backs, we set sail for the mainland, where the meetings were held.

The brothers used the opportunity to witness to those on board, and



by the time we docked, we had enjoyed some Bible discussions and had placed several magazines. The deserted road that greeted us was hot and dusty. Walking through uninhabited bush country, we were advised to keep our eyes open for wild animals, including the occasional elephant crossing the road. The brothers were cheerful and happy as we walked slowly to our destination.

Before long, we arrived at a small village where we met others in the congregation who had walked from distant areas. Because of the long distances involved, four congregation meetings would be held on this one day.

Meetings were conducted in a small school constructed of rough stone, with no finished windows or doors. Inside a classroom, 15 of us sat on narrow wooden bench-

es and enjoyed a fine Bible-based program, which was encouraging and instructive. No one seemed to mind the oppressive heat radiating from the tin roof over our heads. All were just happy to be together. After four hours of meetings, we said our good-byes and everyone departed in different directions. By the time we returned to Lamu, the golden sun was setting on the horizon.

That evening, in the coolness of the night, we enjoyed a simple meal with the Witness families that live on Lamu. On subsequent days we walked through the winding narrow streets with them in the preaching work, searching for people hungering for Bible truth. The zeal and boldness of these few brothers and sisters encouraged us.

Finally the day arrived when we

had to leave. The brothers took us to the dockside, and we sadly said good-bye. They told us that our visit had encouraged them. We wondered if they realized how much they had encouraged us! Back on the mainland, we soon boarded our small plane. As we climbed higher in the sky, we looked down on the beautiful island of Lamu. We reflected on the strong faith of the brothers who live there, the long distances they travel to attend meetings, and the zeal and love they have for the truth. Long ago the prophecy was recorded at Psalm 97:1: "Jehovah himself has become king! Let the earth be joyful. Let the many islands rejoice." Indeed, even on the remote island of Lamu, people are being given the chance to rejoice in the marvelous hope of a future paradise under God's Kingdom.—Contributed.

# PETRA

## A City Hewn out of Rock

MANY cities of the ancient world straddled important rivers, whose abundant water nourished and protected them. But there was one city on the northwest border of the Arabian Desert that rose to prominence because of the lack of water. Its name was Petra.

In the desert lands bordering the Mediterranean, caravan routes linked distant cities somewhat the way our modern highways cross

continents. But just as cars need gas stations, so camels—despite their legendary endurance—require stops for water. Two thousand years ago, Petra was one of the most famous water stops in the Middle East.

Petra stood at the crossroads of two important trade routes. One linked the Red Sea with Damascus, and the other, the Persian Gulf with Gaza, on the shores of the Mediterranean. Caravans from the Gulf, loaded with their precious cargo of spices, had to brave the rigors of the Arabian Desert for weeks before finally arriving at the cool, narrow canyon—the *Siq*—that was the welcoming entrance to Petra. Petra meant food and lodging and, above all, cool, refreshing water.

Of course, the citizens of Petra did not provide these amenities free of charge. Roman historian Pliny reports

Inset: Garo Nalbandian

that gifts had to be given to the guards, the gatekeepers, the priests, and the king's servants—apart from the payments for fodder and lodging. But the exorbitant prices that spices and perfumes could fetch in the prosperous cities of Europe kept the caravans coming and filled the coffers of Petra.

### **Conserving Water and Conquering Stone**

Only some six inches of rain falls on Petra each year, and streams are practically nonexistent. How did the people of Petra obtain the precious water to sustain the city? They carved out channels, reservoirs, and cisterns from the solid rock. In time, practically every drop of rain that fell around Petra was collected and conserved. Their mastery of water management enabled the people of Petra to cultivate crops, rear camels, and build a commercial center whose tradesmen grew rich on the frankincense and myrrh that passed through their hands. Even today, a sinuous stone channel transports water the whole length of the *Siq*.

If the citizens of Petra knew how to work with water, they were also masters at masonry. The very name Petra, which means "Mass of Rock," summons up visions of stone. And Petra was indeed a city of stone—unlike any other in the Roman world. The Nabataeans, the city's builders, patiently carved their houses, tombs, and temples out of the solid rock. The red sandstone mountains in which Petra was nestled were well suited to this, and by the first century C.E., a monumental city had arisen in the middle of the desert.

### **From Trade to Tourism**

Two millennia ago, trade made Petra rich. But when the Romans found sea-lanes to the

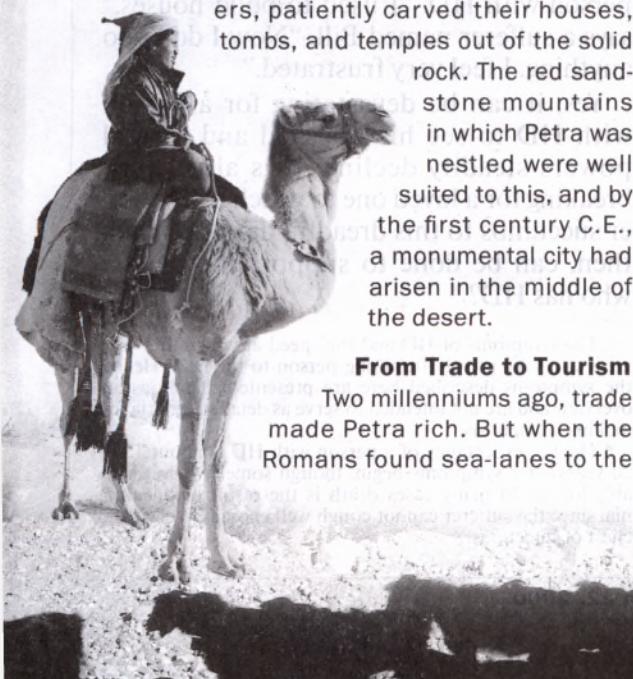
East, the overland spice trade collapsed and Petra was gradually abandoned to the desert. But the work of the desert masons did not disappear. Nowadays, about half a million tourists visit Jordan each year to behold the rose-red city of Petra, whose buildings still testify to a glorious past.

After the visitor walks through the cool, half-mile-long *Siq*, a twist in the canyon walls suddenly reveals the Treasury, an imposing structure whose facade was carved out of a massive cliff. Few will forget their first glimpse of it, one of the best-preserved buildings of the first century. The edifice was named after the huge stone urn that crowns the building and that supposedly stored gold and precious stones.

As the canyon widens, the tourist enters a vast natural amphitheater of sandstone walls riddled with caves. But the tombs are what capture his attention—tombs carved out of the cliff face, tombs so tall that they dwarf the visitors who venture into their dark interiors. A colonnade and theater testify to the Roman presence in the city during the first and second centuries.

Modern-day Bedouin, descendants of the Nabataeans, offer camel rides to the less energetic tourists, sell souvenirs, or water their herds of goats at the fountains of Petra, which quench the thirst of man and beast. The old paved highways of Petra are still reserved exclusively for camels, horses, and donkeys. Thus, today the city echoes with the same sounds heard in bygone days, when the camel was king and Petra ruled the desert.

As the sun goes down over the city, heightening the reddish color of the massive facades, the thoughtful visitor may ponder the lessons Petra teaches us. The city undoubtedly attests to man's ingenuity in conserving limited resources, even in such an inhospitable environment. But it also serves as a telling reminder that material wealth can all too quickly 'fly away toward the heavens.'—Proverbs 23:4, 5.



# HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE

## Understanding a Genetic Tragedy

*"When Johnny and I got married, I really thought we would live happily ever after. But gradually this sweet, caring man underwent a radical change of personality. He even started to have uncontrolled, violent outbursts. In time, Johnny had to be committed to a psychiatric hospital, where he eventually died. Years later we learned that his mysterious affliction had a name—Huntington's disease."—Janice.*

**T**HOUSANDS of people worldwide suffer from Huntington's disease (HD), a genetic disorder of the central nervous system. Since HD is inherited, it often afflicts more than one member of the family. "Since Johnny's death," says Janice, "I have lost three sons and one daughter to Huntington's disease, and three of my grandchildren have it. It seems I haven't had time to grieve over the loss of one family member before it's time to grieve over the next."

With good reason, HD has been described as "a living nightmare," not only for the sufferer but also for those who must take care of him.\* Just what is HD? How can those who have it—and their caregivers—be helped?

\* HD affects women as well as men. For the sake of simplicity, however, we will refer to the sufferer as a male.

### The Symptoms

Named after Dr. George Huntington, who in 1872 first described the symptoms, Huntington's disease is marked by subtle changes in personality and behavior that become more pronounced as the disease advances. These range from mood swings and irritability to depression and violent tantrums. Sufferers may also experience involuntary bodily twitches and unsteadiness of the hands and feet. Coordination skills wane, and the sufferer becomes increasingly clumsy. Speech becomes slurred. Swallowing is difficult, and powers of memory and concentration fade. Learning, organizing, and problem solving—once routine functions—are now burdensome, if not impossible.\*

HD symptoms persist and intensify for the rest of the sufferer's life.\* Inevitably, he will have to quit his job and will no longer be able to care for himself. Often this is a tremendous blow to the person with HD. "I used to build houses," says a sufferer named Bill. "Now I don't do anything. I feel very frustrated."

Yes, it can be devastating for a person with HD to see his physical and mental powers steadily decline. It is also heartbreaking for a loved one to watch as a sufferer succumbs to this dreadful disease. What, then, can be done to support the person who has HD?

\* The symptoms of HD and the speed at which they progress can vary greatly from one person to the next. Hence, the symptoms described here are presented merely as an overview and are not intended to serve as detailed criteria for making a diagnosis.

\* The life expectancy of a person with HD is about 15 to 20 years after symptoms begin, though some live considerably longer. In many cases death is the result of pneumonia, since the sufferer cannot cough well enough to clear the chest of infections.

## **Support for the Sufferer**

While there is no cure for HD, adequate medical care has helped many to cope with their symptoms. "This doesn't affect the long-term degenerative nature of the disease," says Dr. Kathleen Shannon, "but it vastly improves the quality of life for the patients."

For example, some with HD have benefited from medications that control spastic movements and reduce depression. The assistance of a dietitian may also be helpful. Why? Because weight loss is often a problem for HD sufferers, and they usually require a high-calorie diet to maintain their body weight.

With a little ingenuity, some families have been able to help the sufferer adapt to new limitations. For example, Monica states: "As my father's speech worsened, we looked for ways to figure out what he was asking us for." Monica and her family made a con-

## **Inheriting HD —A Genetic Coin Toss**

Each child who has a parent with HD has a 50-percent chance of inheriting the disease. Why?

You have 23 pairs of chromosomes packed into every cell of your body. One member of each pair came from your father; the other came from your mother. Suppose, then, that your father has HD. Since he will pass on just one of his two chromosomes and since only one of the two is damaged, the odds that you will inherit HD amount to a genetic coin toss.

Since the symptoms of HD usually do not become manifest until one is between 30 and 50 years old, sometimes the HD sufferer already has children by the time he himself is diagnosed with the disease.

cise loose-leaf notebook made up of cardboard pages, each of which contained a single word or picture. "We included my father in this project," says Monica. "He helped pick the pictures and the words." With this new tool, Monica's father could communicate by pointing out what he could not form the words to say.

Even when the sufferer is confined to his home or to a care facility, contact with family and friends is important. "It may be difficult to visit those in the later stages of HD," Janice acknowledges, "but my children greatly appreciated it when friends would stop by to encourage them." Sadly, at times this aspect of support is neglected. "Sometimes we feel isolated," says Beatrice, whose husband has HD. "If friends would just stop by to say hello to my husband, it would mean so much to him!"

All told, what do those with HD need most? "Understanding," says Bobby, a sufferer who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses. "The Christian brothers and sisters in the congregation

**Janice, who lost four children to Huntington's disease**



### To Tell or Not to Tell

When a diagnosis of HD is made, how much should the patient be told? Some family members fear that the ailing one will not be able to cope with the knowledge that he has an incurable, degenerative disease. It is unwise, however, simply to assume that he would not want to be informed. "Our own fears and anguish may make us overprotective," cautions one booklet about HD, adding: "[The sufferer may] feel a deep sense of relief that there is at last an explanation for all that is going wrong." In addition, since the disease is hereditary, it is essential that those who have HD know the risk of passing on the disease to any children they may have in the future.

realize that it may take an extra minute or two for me to gather my thoughts to comment at a meeting," he adds. "They also do not take it personally if I become frustrated or agitated, since it is merely a symptom of the disease."

### Providing Support for Caregivers

Of course, caregivers need support too, for they face many anxious moments. "You constantly worry about the sufferer's safety," says Janice. "As his condition worsens, you feel helpless."

Clearly, caregivers need encouragement. Beatrice explains one way this can be offered. "I can't leave my husband alone," she says, "and every now and then when I'm invited to a gathering, I have to say, 'Thanks for asking, but I can't come.' How nice it would be if a friend would say, 'Maybe my teenage son or my husband could stay with your husband for a while!'" Surely, caregivers appreciate such empathetic consideration!—1 Peter 3:8.

As HD reaches its later stages, the caregiver may need to make what is perhaps the most heartrending decision of all. "Having to say, 'I can't take care of you anymore' is extremely difficult," says Janice.

The decision to move a sufferer into a care facility is one that a Christian would want to weigh carefully and prayerfully. The Bible commands Christians to 'provide for those who are their own,' and this includes providing for one's ailing parents or children. (1 Timothy 5:8) Never should one abdicate this Scriptural responsibility simply for the sake of convenience. On the other hand, there may be factors—including concern for the sufferer's safety—that make professional care the most loving and practical course. This is a personal family decision and should be respected by others.—Romans 14:4.

### A Sure Hope

The Bible is especially comforting for those who battle HD and other incurable illnesses. The Scriptures give a guaranteed hope of a righteous new world in which "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'" In addition, the Bible foretells that "the lame one will climb up just as a stag does, and the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness."—Isaiah 33:24; 35:6.

Bobby, quoted earlier, is comforted by this hope. "This is the cure I seek," he says. "It's the kind of future that will make all of this seem like a part of the distant past."

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

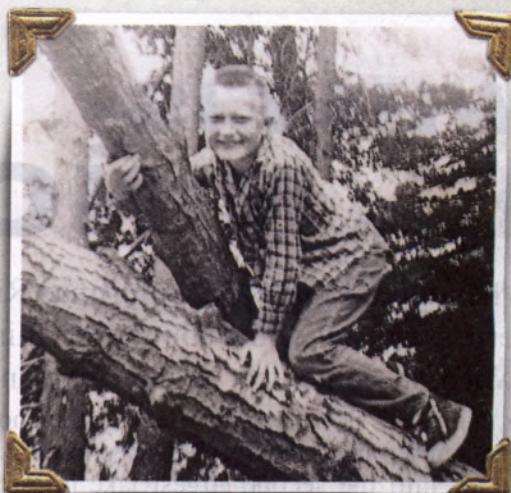
**What Has Happened to Morals?**

**Is It Proper to Worship Jesus?**

**Managing a Killer**

# Whatever Became of Little Peter?

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT  
IN ECUADOR



Peter at age seven, shortly after surgery

THE August 22, 1970, *Awake!* carried an article entitled "Heart Surgery Without Blood Transfusion." It recounted the story of a seven-year-old Canadian boy named Peter, who needed lifesaving surgery in 1963.

Peter's primary physician said that there was a procedure available that could fix his defective

heart valve. But when Peter's parents took their son to a specialist and asked if the operation could be done without blood, the doctor replied: "No. It is absolutely impossible. I know what I am talking about."

Not dismayed, Peter's parents continued their search and eventually found a surgeon who was willing to perform the operation without the use of blood. How did it turn out? Although Peter survived the operation, his parents were told that only time would tell how successful the procedure had been. So, whatever became of little Peter?

When Peter was 13, he and his family moved to Ecuador, South America, to serve where the need for preachers of the good news of God's Kingdom was greater. (Matthew 24:14) Peter was baptized at 15 and became a regular pioneer (full-time evangelizer) at age 18. At 26 he became a special pioneer, serving in a pueblo located 10,000 feet above sea level in the Andes. In 1988, at 31 years of age, Peter together with his wife, Isabel, began serving as a traveling representative of the Watch Tower Society. He continues in this capacity today, visiting a different congregation each week in order to encourage them.

Indeed, Peter leads a very active life, without the need of any additional surgery. How grateful he and thousands of other Witnesses are for the cooperation of skillful surgeons who have respected the rights of their patients!



Peter and Isabel Johnston today

# WHAT IS EL NIÑO?

When the normally dry Apurímac River near Lima, Peru, swept away just about everything that Carmen owned, she lamented: "There are many of us like this, so many. I'm not the only one." Farther north, the torrential rains temporarily transformed a section of the coastal Sechura Desert into the second-largest lake in Peru, covering about 1,800 square miles. Elsewhere across the globe, record flooding, intense cyclones, and severe droughts led to famine, pestilence, wildfires, and damage to crops, property, and the environment. What was the cause of all of this? Many point their finger at El Niño, which rose out of the tropical, or equatorial, Pacific Ocean toward the end of 1997 and ran its course for some eight months.

What exactly is El Niño? How does it develop? Why are its effects so widespread? Can its next occurrence be accurately predicted, perhaps reducing its toll on life and property?

## It Begins With a Warming of Waters

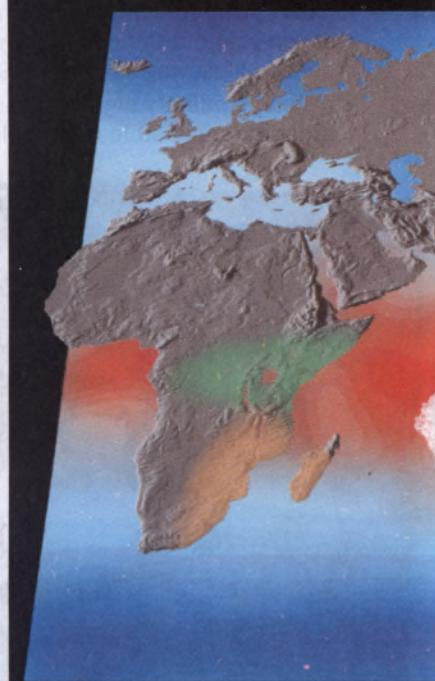
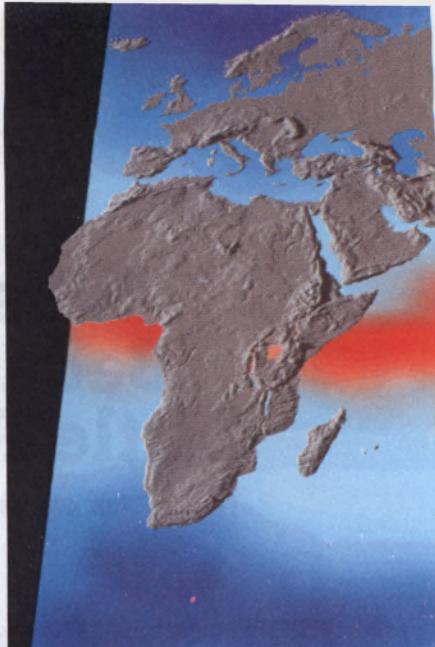
"El Niño is, strictly speaking, only the warm current of water that appears off Peru every two to seven years," says *Newsweek* magazine. For more than a hundred years, sailors along the coast of Peru have noticed such warming. Since these warm currents usually arrive around Christmas, they were named El Niño, the Spanish term for the infant Jesus.

The warming of waters near the coastline of Peru means increased rainfall for that land. The rains cause deserts to blossom and livestock to thrive. When heavy, the rains also bring floods to the region. Moreover, the warm upper layer of seawater prevents the nutrient-filled cooler waters below from welling up. Consequently, many marine creatures and even some birds migrate in search of food. The effects of El Niño are subsequently felt in other places far away from the Peruvian coast.\*

## Born of Wind and Water

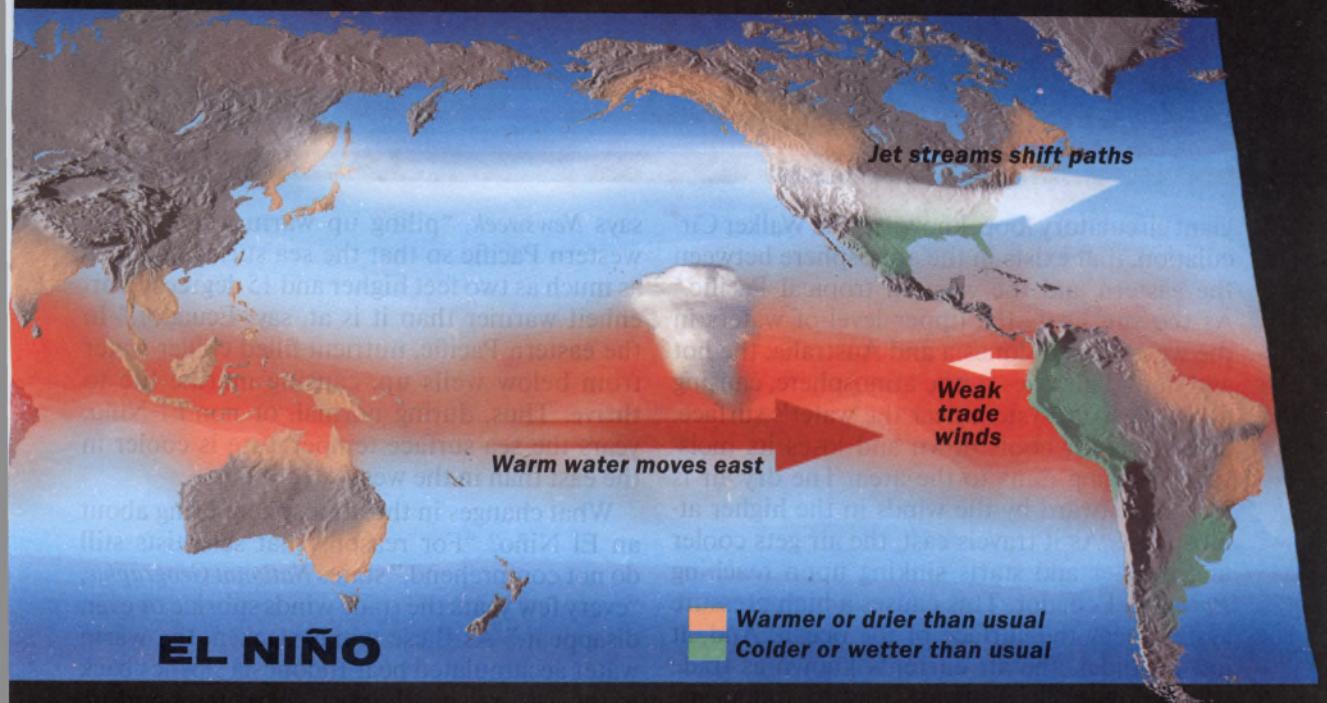
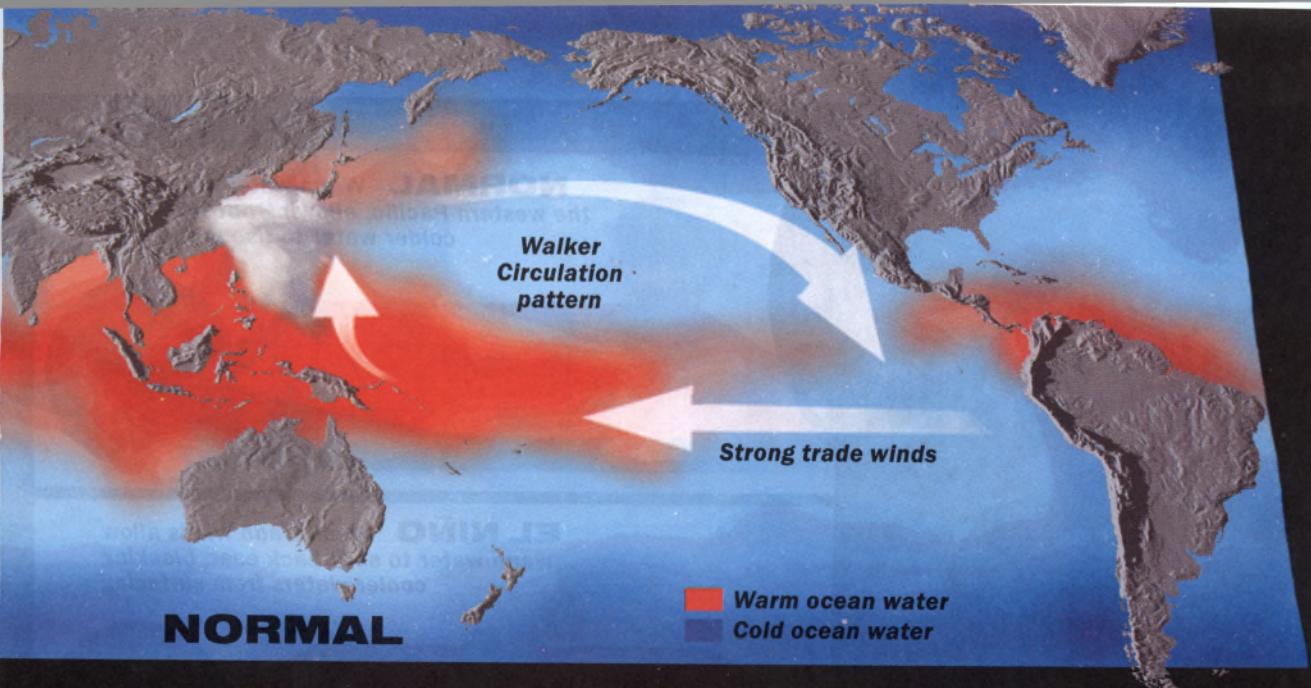
What causes the unusual rise of the ocean temperature near the coastline of Peru? To understand this, consider first the

\* In contrast, La Niña (Spanish for "the little girl") is a periodic cooling of water temperatures off the western coast of South America. La Niña too has far-reaching effects on the weather.

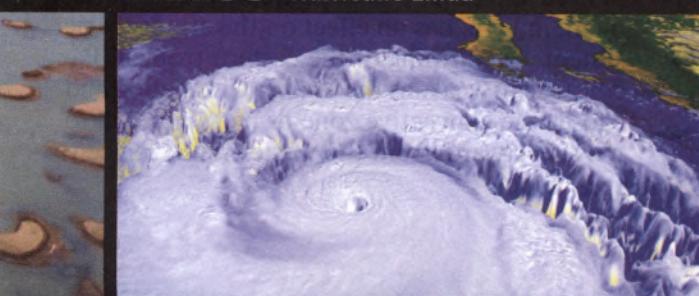


**PERU** Flooded Sechura Desert





**MEXICO** Hurricane Linda



**CALIFORNIA** Mud slides





Red colors on the globe above represent water temperatures much warmer than normal

**NORMAL** Warm water piles up in the western Pacific, allowing nutrient-filled colder water to rise in the east



**EL NIÑO** Weak trade winds allow warm water to shift back east, blocking cooler waters from surfacing



giant circulatory loop, known as the Walker Circulation, that exists in the atmosphere between the eastern and the western tropical Pacific.\* As the sun heats the upper level of waters in the west, near Indonesia and Australia, the hot and humid air rises in the atmosphere, causing a low-pressure system near the water's surface. The rising air cools down and loses its moisture, bringing rains to the area. The dry air is driven eastward by the winds in the higher atmosphere. As it travels east, the air gets cooler and heavier and starts sinking upon reaching Peru and Ecuador. This causes a high-pressure system near the surface of the ocean. And, at low altitudes, the air currents known as trade winds flow back westward toward Indonesia, thus completing the loop.

How do the trade winds affect the surface temperature of the tropical Pacific? "These winds normally act like breezes in a tiny pond,"

says *Newsweek*, "piling up warm water in the western Pacific so that the sea surface there is as much as two feet higher and 15 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than it is at, say, Ecuador." In the eastern Pacific, nutrient-filled colder water from below wells up, causing marine life to thrive. Thus, during normal, or non-El Niño, years the sea surface temperature is cooler in the east than in the west.

What changes in the atmosphere bring about an El Niño? "For reasons that scientists still do not comprehend," states *National Geographic*, "every few years the trade winds subside or even disappear." As these winds slacken, the warm water accumulated near Indonesia sloshes back to the east, raising the surface sea temperature in Peru and other places in the east. This movement, in turn, has an effect on the atmospheric system. "A warming of the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean weakens the Walker Circulation and causes the convective zone of heavy rainfall to move eastward, from the western into the cen-

\* The loop is named after Sir Gilbert Walker, the British scientist who studied the process in the 1920's.

tral and eastern tropical Pacific," states one reference work. Thus, weather patterns along the entire equatorial Pacific are affected.

### Like a Boulder in a Stream

El Niño can also alter climate patterns at great distances from the water currents of the tropical Pacific. How? By using the atmospheric circulatory system as an agent. The far-reaching effects of a local disturbance in atmospheric circulation can be likened to the way one boulder in the middle of a stream can cause ripples to form across the entire stream. The dense rain clouds rising above the water of the warm tropical ocean form a boulderlike obstruction in the atmosphere, which affects weather patterns thousands of miles away.

At higher latitudes, El Niño strengthens and displaces the fast-moving, eastward wind currents known as jet streams. The jet streams direct the flow of most storm systems at these latitudes. The strengthening and the shifting of jet streams can also intensify or subdue seasonal weather conditions. For example, El Niño winters are generally milder than normal over parts of the northern United States, whereas they are wetter and colder over some southern states.

### How Predictable?

The effects of individual storms can be predicted only as much as several days in advance. Is the same true of the attempts to predict an El Niño? No. Rather than involving short-term weather events, El Niño forecasts involve abnormal climate conditions across large regions for months at a time. And climate researchers have enjoyed a measure of success in El Niño forecasts.

For instance, the forecast for the 1997-98 El Niño was issued in May of 1997—some six months before its rise. Spread across the tropical Pacific now stand 70 anchored buoys that measure wind conditions at the surface and ocean temperatures down to a depth of 1,600 feet. When fed into computer models of climate, these data generate weather predictions.

## EL NIÑO'S TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION

- **1525:** Earliest historical record of an El Niño event in Peru.
- **1789-93:** El Niño was responsible for more than 600,000 deaths in India and caused a severe famine in southern Africa.
- **1982-83:** This event was the cause of more than 2,000 deaths and more than \$13 billion in property damage, mainly in tropical regions.
- **1990-95:** Three consecutive events combined to make one of the longest El Niño episodes on record.
- **1997-98:** In spite of the first largely successful regional forecasts of flooding and droughts for an El Niño, about 2,100 lives were lost, and damages amounting to \$33 billion were incurred worldwide.

Early warnings of El Niño can indeed help people prepare for the changes that are expected. Since 1983, for example, El Niño forecasts in Peru have encouraged many farmers to raise cattle and plant crops suited for wetter conditions, while fishermen have switched from catching fish to harvesting the shrimp that come with the warmer waters. Yes, accurate forecasting coupled with advance preparation can reduce the human and economic toll of El Niño.

Scientific research into the processes that govern our earth's climate testifies to the accuracy of the inspired words recorded by King Solomon of ancient Israel some 3,000 years ago. He wrote: "The wind is going to the south, and it is circling around to the north. Round and round it is continually circling, and right back to its circlings the wind is returning." (Ecclesiastes 1:6) Modern man has learned much about weather patterns from studying wind currents and ocean currents. May we benefit from that knowledge by giving heed to warnings concerning such events as El Niño.

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### Extinction for European Brown Bears?

Brown bears in Western Europe are endangered, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Their numbers have been reduced to just six small populations. "The most vulnerable of these brown bear populations are in France, Spain and Italy, where conservationists warn that they are likely to vanish unless augmented by bears from elsewhere," states *The Daily Telegraph* of London. "In Italy, there are just four bears in the southern Alps," adds the newspaper. In Greece, poaching by farmers and beekeepers, angry over destroyed cattle or hives, is a serious problem. By contrast, parts of Eastern Europe report thriving bear populations. Romania's strict protection measures and restocking programs have enabled bear populations to build up and increase. And in Russia, where the bear is protected, some 36,000 bears exist. "Urgent action is vital to save Western Europe's last bears," says Callum Rankine, of the WWF's Campaign for Europe's Carnivores. "Without prompt intervention, these bears will become extinct."

### Costly Charity

Millions of people have benefited from donated drugs in times of crisis. However, a recent survey by the World Health Organization (WHO) reveals that donated drugs are often inadequately identified or have a limited shelf life. While sent with the best of intentions,

many drugs "fail to meet the most urgent real health needs and, once in the country, they clog up already overloaded distribution systems and become difficult to dispose of," says WHO official Dr. Jonathan Quick. Over half the drugs donated to Bosnia were inappropriate. Special incinerators had to be sent to Armenia and to Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, to dispose of unsuitable drugs. The estimated cost of shipping 1,000 tons of inappropriate medicines from Croatia for proper disposal elsewhere is between two and four million dollars.

### Sound Bait



While most plants lure pollinators by color or smell, the tropical *Mucuna holtoni* accomplishes the same feat by sound reflection, reports the German magazine *Das Tier*. This climber plant is visited by bats, which form an image of their surroundings by sending out ultrasound signals. Scientists at the Erlangen University discovered that the plant's nectar functions as an "acoustic cat's eye," by reflecting the ultrasound signals directly back to the bats. "In this way the plant makes it easier for the bats to locate the flowers," says the magazine.

### Fungus Dangers

"In Eastern Europe and northern Italy, where picking mushrooms is a tradition, significant numbers of deaths and poisonings happen each year," reports *The Times* of London. Because cooking with wild fungi has become popular, experts warn of the dangers of eating any of the some 250 poisonous varieties growing in Britain's countryside. Death cap and the destroying angel are both likely to be fatal if ingested. To safeguard themselves, mushroom pickers are urged to join groups that are led by professional spotters. "There are no simple rules to tell whether a [fungus] is harmless or harmful, so it is folly to go picking on your own without an expert," warns a senior member of the British Mycological Society.

### The Economic Consequences of AIDS

Not merely a public health tragedy, AIDS is fast becoming an economic catastrophe in Africa, reports *Le Monde*. With some 23 million people HIV positive and 2 million dying each year from the virus, "the AIDS epidemic will soon have wiped out the benefits of development in Africa." African companies are struggling with increasing employee absenteeism or death as a result of the disease. One national rail company has lost over 10 percent of its personnel. In another large firm, 3,400 of its 11,500 workers are HIV positive. Agriculture is waning as farmers succumb to AIDS. In addition, education is decreasing, and illiteracy is on the rise, since families have

neither the money nor the time to send children to school and hundreds of teachers have died of AIDS.

#### Astronomers Plead for Quiet

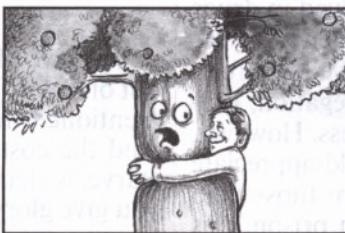
Radio astronomers, listening for signals that tell of the birth of the first galaxies and stars, are increasingly frustrated because of "the gadgetry of modern civilization," reports the *International Herald Tribune*. Television stations, radio transmitters, communications satellites, and mobile phones are drowning out the background noise from space that these scientists are trying to hear. To pursue their research, astronomers are seeking a quiet spot "where all forms of radio transmission would be banned." There they propose to build an array of radio dishes spread over hundreds of miles that would be "100 times more powerful than instruments in use today." Scientists hope that the information gleaned will help answer questions regarding the origins of time, space, and matter.

#### Bird Population Explodes in Mexico City

The bird population is growing out of control in Mexico City. As reported in the newspaper *Reforma*, about 1,335,000 doves now live in the metropolitan area. Monuments and statues are the favorite resting places of the birds. Bird-control experts have reported that "the birds that have adapted themselves to the capital divide their daily travels into three phases," says the paper. "They choose one place to spend the night, another to look for their food, and another for leisure time,

but in [each place] they leave their mark with their droppings." They also cause a variety of sicknesses that range from allergies to bacterial, mycotic, and viral infections. The International Association for the Ecological Protection and Peaceful Relocation of Urban Doves "has proposed creating a law to prohibit feeding the birds in public areas." However, it also proposes "punishing anyone who kills birds as a control measure."

#### "Hugged to Death"



"One of the world's oldest and largest trees is being hugged to death," reports *The Australian*. The kauri tree, located north of Auckland, New Zealand, is visited each year by thousands of tourists who ritually link arms around its huge girth, trampling its base. "The tree is more than 50 metres [160 feet] high but not one of the world's tallest," says the newspaper. "However, on volume of timber, it is among the largest." Known as "the old man of the forest," it is officially 2,000 years old but is believed to be twice that old. Having survived all those years of natural disasters, pests, and threats of lopping, it may now be hugged to death. Says a conservation officer: "It's probably dying but whether it is irreversible or not we don't know."

#### Breast-Feeding Controls Weight?

Researchers say that they have discovered another benefit of breast-feeding: It may help to prevent the baby's becoming overweight later in life. As reported in the German newsmagazine *Focus*, a Munich University research team determined the weight of 9,357 children five to six years of age and investigated the diet each had been fed as an infant. The results showed that the children who had been breast-fed for three to five months were 35 percent less likely to be overweight when they entered school than those who had never been nursed. In fact, the longer a baby was breast-fed, the lower the probability of overweight. One researcher attributes this beneficial effect to the ingredients of mother's milk, which aid the metabolism.

#### How Much Water Do Children Need?

Children between one and four years of age often drink too little. This was revealed in a study by the Research Institute for Child Nutrition, in Dortmund, Germany, and reported in the consumer magazine *Test*. One- to four-year-old children are especially sensitive to dehydration and should drink almost one quart of fluid a day besides what they get with meals. On the average, they drink a third less than this—and not always by choice. The researchers found that in 1 case out of 5, a child's request for something to drink was refused by the parent. The best beverage? Where it is safe, plain water is ideal, states *Test*.

## FROM OUR READERS

**Former Criminal** I must write to say how much I appreciated the experience of Enrique Torres, Jr., entitled "From a Roaring Lion to a Meek Lamb." (August 8, 1999) It highlighted the love and mercy of our God, Jehovah, and how patient he is with us. It also showed that as parents, we should never give up on our children, no matter how far away from God's standards they stray.

J. F., England

I was raised a Christian, but because of bad association, I became involved in drugs and violence. At age 18, I was given a 25-year prison sentence. Although I have been reinstated into the Christian congregation, I often have feelings of unworthiness. However, after reading this article, I could appreciate that Jehovah is not far off from those who seek him. Although I'm still in prison, this experience encouraged me to stand firm.

R. B., United States

**Hummingbirds** The article "The Bird That Kisses Flowers" (August 8, 1999) was terrific. I have observed hummingbirds before, but I did not realize that they could be so small. Through words and pictures, you aroused my interest in these fascinating creatures.

R. H., Germany

I was impressed by the information and the beautiful illustrations. During the summertime hummingbirds often visit my garden. It is really a joy to watch these marvelous birds. Many times, just seeing them is enough to perk up my spirits.

C.S.S., Brazil

**Ladder Safety** Thank you for the article "Using Ladders—Do You Make These Safety Checks?" (August 8, 1999) I recently

had a fall from a ladder and, as a result, had to undergo knee surgery. I appreciate the ten suggestions you gave and will remember them the next time I use a ladder.

D. N., Mexico

**Space Station** I am 16 years old, and space exploration has always fascinated me. So I want to express my gratitude for the article "The International Space Station—An Orbiting Laboratory." (August 22, 1999) Articles like this mean a lot to me!

K. E., United States

You give glory to this space station without one word of condemnation. God has not mentioned this as part of his plan for man. And the cost of one launch, while millions starve, is shameful. You discredit God when you give glory to such things.

P.N.M., England

*The Bible says that 'the earth has been given to the sons of men.' (Psalm 115:16) However, there is no Scriptural basis for saying that it is wrong for man to have an interest in space. In fact, the Bible encourages men of faith to observe the heavens as a means of observing God's wisdom and creative power. (Psalm 8:3, 4; 19:1) At any rate, it was not our intention to give glory to the proposed space station; we simply reported on the plans to build it. Whether or not the space station produces research that will justify its huge cost remains to be seen.—ED.*

**Surviving Persecution** I just finished reading the article "Serving God in the Face of Death." (August 22, 1999) Because of the endurance of the brothers in Angola for more than 17 years, a land that once seemed barren spiritually has now been blessed with abundant produce!

R. Y., Japan

# A Wild Jewel



## IN PARCHED DESERTS

of Africa, where rainfall is scarce, grows a jewel—the desert rose. Delicately shaped, with twisted limbs, this plant grows slowly and is said to live for hundreds of years. The tree's swollen trunk and its roots serve as a water reservoir, enabling it to flourish in a dry, inhospitable environment.

The milky sap, roots, and seeds of this succulent plant contain a deadly poison. Extract from the seeds is used to poison the tips of arrows, and local fishermen toss its branches into the water to stun fish for an easy catch. Additionally, herdsmen use parts of the plant to prepare a poison that kills ticks and lice on their camels and cattle. Surprisingly, despite the tree's lethal nature, wild animals feed on its leaves without being harmed.

But how can the poisonous desert rose be called a jewel? Clothed with clusters of delicate blossoms, the desert rose is spectacular, with vibrant colors that range from bright pink to deep crimson-red. When the land is dry and colorless, this beautiful wild jewel puts forth a profusion of flowers that glow when illuminated by the sun.

Such amazing beauty in the desert is but a reminder of the time when “the wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom.” (Isaiah 35:1) This delightful promise will indeed become a reality under the coming rulership of God’s Kingdom. At that time the entire earth will “exult,” becoming not only a paradise of beauty but also a place of peace for all mankind.  
—Psalm 37:11, 29; Isaiah 35:6, 7.

Mary Ann McDonald  
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# "MOST UNIVERSITY TEXTBOOKS AREN'T AS ACCURATE"

That was part of one man's assessment of the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* One of Jehovah's Witnesses in Sydney, Australia, placed this book with him. That evening the Witness found the following message on her answering machine:

*"I spoke to you this morning. I'm half-way through reading the book you left with me—"Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?" I called because I was stunned to see how up-to-date and accurate that book is about the beginning of the universe. It covers the same ground as the book I showed you . . .*

*"Your book is so accurate and up-to-date! Most university textbooks aren't as accurate. It mentions the four fundamental physical forces—gravity, electromagnetism, the strong nuclear force, and the weak nuclear force. These are very current findings and very up-to-the-minute. Talk to you next week. Good-bye."*

J. Hester and P. Scowen  
(AZ State Univ.), NASA

