

## Raising Considerate Children in a Me-First World



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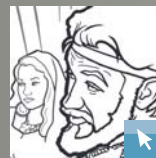
### TEENAGERS



#### YOUNG PEOPLE ASK . . . **HOW CAN I DEAL WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT?**

"In middle school," says Coretta, "boys would pull on the back of my bra and make derogatory comments—like how much better I would feel once I had sex with them." What would you do in such a situation? Sexual harassment is more likely to stop if you know how to react to it!

### CHILDREN



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Vol. 94, No. 1 / Monthly / ENGLISH  
Printing Each Issue: 43,524,000 in 98 Languages

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as 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*.

*Awake!* (ISSN 0005-237X) is published monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simons, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Awake!* 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299.

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### GULF OF MEXICO

After an April 2010 accident on an oil platform, **huge amounts of oil and gas gushed into the sea** for nearly three months. A study by one team of researchers found that two and a half months after that, some of the pollutants had disappeared—devoured, they concluded, by bacteria with a taste for methane. Some experts are skeptical, however. They believe that much of the oil has sunk to the ocean floor.

### RUSSIA

According to one survey, 59 percent of Russians aged 18 to 35 believe that “to attain **success in life**, you sometimes have to go against your moral principles and standards,” reports the newspaper *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*.

### ITALY

Lucio Soravito De Franceschi, the Catholic bishop of Adria-Rovigo, believes that a **religious message ought to favor having “direct contact with individuals”** where they live. “Our pastoral care should go from ringing church bells to ringing doorbells,” he says.



### PERU

Some of the **oldest corncobs ever found** (such as the one shown above) suggest that the inhabitants of northern Peru were making popcorn and corn flour at least 3,000 years ago.



### SOUTH AFRICA

The street value of **rhinoceros horn for medical use** has risen to as high as \$65,000 (U.S.) per kilogram (2.2 lb). In 2011, in South Africa alone, a record 448 rhinos were slaughtered by poachers. Museums and auction rooms in Europe have been broken into by gangs seeking the horns. Even rhinos in European zoos are thought to be at risk.







## How to Communicate With Your Teenager



### THE CHALLENGE

As a child, he talked to you about everything. As a teenager, he tells you nothing. When you try to converse, he either gives clipped responses or ignites an argument that turns your home ground into a battleground.

You can learn to talk with your teenager. First, though, consider two factors that may contribute to the challenge.

Although in this article we refer to the teenager as a male, the principles discussed apply to both genders.



### WHY IT HAPPENS

**The quest for independence.** To become a responsible adult, your teenager must, in a figurative sense, gradually move from the passenger seat to the driver's seat and learn to navigate life's treacherous roadways. Of course, some teenagers want more freedom than they should have; on the other hand, some parents grant less freedom than they could. The tug-of-war that may result can create considerable turmoil for parents *and* teens. "My parents try to micromanage every aspect of my life," complains 16-year-old Brad.\* "If they don't give me more freedom by the time I turn 18, I'm moving out!"

**Abstract thinking.** Young children tend to think in concrete, black-and-white terms, but many teenagers can perceive the gray areas of a matter. This is an important aspect of abstract thinking, and it helps a young person develop sound judgment. Consider an example: To a child the concept of fairness seems simple: 'Mom broke a cookie in two and gave half to me and half to my brother.' In this case, fairness is reduced to a mathematical formula. Teenagers, however, realize that the concept is not that simple. After all, fair treatment is not always equal, and equal treatment is not always fair. Abstract thinking allows your teenager to grapple with such complex issues. The downside? It can also cause him to grapple with *you*.

\* Names in this article have been changed.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**When possible, have casual chats.** Take advantage of informal moments. For example, some parents have found that teenagers are more apt to open up while doing chores or while riding in the car, when they are side-by-side with a parent rather than face-to-face.—*Bible principle: Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.*

**Keep it brief.** You do not have to argue every issue to the bitter end. Instead, make your point . . . and then stop. Most of your message will be “heard” by your teenager later, when he’s alone and can ponder over what you’ve said. Give him a chance to do so.—*Bible principle: Proverbs 1:1-4.*

**Listen—and be flexible.** Listen carefully—without interrupting—so that you can get the full scope of the problem. When replying, be reasonable. If you rigidly adhere to rules, your teen will be tempted to look for loopholes. “This is when kids live two lives,” warns the book *Staying Connected to Your Teenager*. “The one in which they tell their parents what they want to hear and the one in which they do as they please once they are out of their parents’ sight.”—*Bible principle: Philippians 4:5.*

**Stay calm.** “When we disagree, my mom takes offense at everything I say,” says a teen named Kari. “That just makes me upset, and the conversation snowballs into an argument.” Rather than overreact, say something that “mirrors” your teen’s feelings. For example, instead of saying, “That’s nothing to worry about!” say, “I can see how much this bothers you.”—*Bible principle: Proverbs 10:19.*

**To the extent possible, guide, don’t dictate.** Your teen’s abstract thinking skills are like muscles that need to be developed. So when he faces a dilemma, do not do his “exercising” for him. As you discuss the matter, give him a chance to come up with some solutions of his own. Then, after you have brainstormed a few options, you could say: “Those are a few possibilities. Think them over for a day or two, and then we can get together again to talk about which solution you prefer and why.”—*Bible principle: Hebrews 5:14.* ■

## KEY SCRIPTURES

“Be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath.”—James 1:19.

“An answer, when mild, turns away rage.”—Proverbs 15:1.

“Do not irritate your children, but bring them up tenderly with true Christian training and advice.”—Ephesians 6:4, *The New Testament in Modern Speech*, by R. F. Weymouth.

## FOR TEENAGERS

Do you want your parents to extend you more freedom? Do you wish that they really understood you? You can make it easier for them to do both! How? Be willing to tell them what’s going on in your life. Talk openly. When you hold back, they cannot fully trust you—and trust is the key to your getting more freedom.

The point is, do not leave all the communication up to your parents. Do *your* part. Tell your parents about your day. Ask *them* about *theirs*. If you have a complaint, learn how to express it respectfully. Communication is a skill that you will need in adulthood. Why not acquire it now?



## A Biochemist Explains Her Faith

For more than 20 years, Dr. Paola Chiozzi has worked as a molecular biologist at the University of Ferrara in Italy. *Awake!* asked her about her science and her faith.

### Tell us about your background.

My father was a cobbler, and my mother was a farmworker. But I wanted to be a scientist. The beautiful flowers, birds, and insects around my home fascinated me. I felt that they were products of superhuman wisdom.

### So you always believed in a Creator?

No. In fact, my doubts about God began when I was a child. My father suddenly died

of a heart attack, and I wondered, 'Why would the Creator of so much beauty allow suffering and death?'

### Did your study of science help you to find an answer?

Not at first. When I became a molecular biologist, I began to study death—the normal, programmed death of the cells that make up our body. This is very different from the uncontrolled cell death that causes inflammation and gangrene. Until a few years ago,

scientists paid little attention to this process, even though it is vital to our health.

### In what way is programmed cell death vital?

Well, our body is made up of trillions of microscopic cells. Practically all of them must die and be replaced. Each type of cell has a different life span; some are replaced every few weeks, and others every few years. Our body's system of programmed cell death has to be highly controlled to maintain the delicate balance between cell death and cell formation.

## Since nearly all our cells are regularly replaced, living forever is certainly feasible

### What can go wrong?

Some studies indicate that when cells fail to die as they should, rheumatoid arthritis or cancer may result. On the other hand, when cells die *before* they should, it could cause Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease. My research is linked to finding ways to treat these diseases.

### How did your study of cell death affect you?

Frankly, it puzzled me. This marvelous process was clearly designed by someone who wants us to be healthy. So I was still left with the question, *Why do people suffer and die?* I couldn't find an answer.

### But you were convinced that the system of programmed cell death was designed.

Yes. The complexity of the whole process is mind-boggling, yet its elegance displays exceptional wisdom. I believe it's the wisdom of God. I use powerful microscopes to study the many complex mechanisms that regulate the process. Some mechanisms can trigger the destruction process within seconds if need be. The cells participate in their own self-destruction. The process is so well-designed that it's absolutely awe-inspiring.

### You had questions about God and suffering. How did you find answers?

A couple of Jehovah's Witnesses called at my home in 1991, and I asked them why we die. They showed me the Bible's answer: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin." (Romans 5:12) If the first man had not disobeyed God, he would have lived forever. I immediately realized that this harmonized with what I had learned from my research. In fact, it's clear to me that God didn't intend for people to die. Since nearly all our cells are regularly replaced, living forever is certainly feasible.

### What convinced you that the Bible is God's Word?

I learned what the Bible says about God at Psalm 139:16: "Your eyes saw even the embryo of me, and in your book all its parts were *down in writing*." As a biochemist, I study the genetic information that is written in our cells. How did the psalmist know about such writing? The more I learned from the Bible, the more I was convinced that it is inspired of God.

### How were you helped to understand what the Bible teaches?

One of Jehovah's Witnesses offered to study the Bible with me. Finally, I learned why God has allowed suffering. I also learned that, as the Bible states, God purposes to "swallow up death forever." (Isaiah 25:8) It will be easy for our Creator to make the marvelous systems of our body operate perfectly so that we can enjoy life without end.

### How have you used your knowledge of the Bible to help others?

Well, I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1995, and since then I have freely shared with others the things I've learned from the Bible. For example, a colleague of mine was devastated when her brother committed suicide. Her church teaches that God never forgives suicide. But I showed her how the Bible gives a hope of a resurrection. (John 5:28, 29) She was deeply comforted to learn that the Creator cares for us. At such moments, I feel that sharing Bible truths with others brings me more satisfaction than science itself! ■





## Raising Considerate Children in a Me-First World

EACH day presents people with numerous opportunities to do kind things for others. It may appear, though, that many think only of themselves. You see evidence of that nearly everywhere—from the shameless way people defraud others to the aggressive way they drive, from their crude language to their explosive tempers.

A me-first mentality also exists in many homes. For example, some spouses divorce simply because one partner feels that he or she “deserves better.” Even some parents may unwittingly sow the seeds of a me-first spirit. How? By indulging their child’s every whim, while hesitating to administer any kind of discipline.

By contrast, many other parents are training their children to put others before self, and with great benefits. Children who are considerate are more likely to make friends and to enjoy stable relationships. They are also more likely to be content. Why? Because, as the Bible says, “there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.”—Acts 20:35.

If you are a parent, how can you help your children to reap the benefits of being kind and to avoid being contaminated by the self-absorbed culture that surrounds them? Consider three traps that could foster a me-first spirit in your children, and see how you can avoid those traps.



## 1 Overpraising

**The problem.** Researchers have noted a disturbing trend: Many young adults are entering the workforce with a marked sense of entitlement—an attitude in which they expect success, even if they have done little or nothing to earn it. Some just assume that they will be promoted quickly, even without mastering their trade. Others are convinced that they are special and deserve to be treated that way—and then they become dejected when they realize that the world does not share their view.

**What is behind it.** Sometimes a sense of entitlement can be traced back to how a person was raised. For example, some parents have been unduly influenced by the self-esteem movement that has become popular in recent decades. Its tenets seemed plausible: If a little praise is good for kids, a lot of praise is better. On the other hand, the thinking was that showing any type of disapproval will only discourage a child. And in a world on a mission to build self-esteem, *that* was considered the epitome of irresponsible parenting. Children must never be made to feel bad about themselves—or so parents were told.

Many fathers and mothers thus began lavishing a constant flow of praise upon their children, even when those children did nothing particularly praiseworthy. Each accomplishment, no matter how small, was celebrated; each indiscretion, no matter how large, was overlooked. Those parents believed that the secret to building self-esteem was to ignore the bad and praise everything else. Making children feel good about themselves became more important than teaching them to accomplish things that they could actually feel good *about*.



**What the Bible says.** The Bible acknowledges that praise is appropriate *when it is deserved*. (Matthew 25:19-21) But praising children simply to make them feel good may cause them to develop a distorted view of themselves. The Bible aptly states: “If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deceiving his own mind.” (Galatians 6:3) For good reason, the Bible tells parents: “Don’t fail to correct your children. You won’t kill them by being firm.”\*—Proverbs 23:13, *Contemporary English Version*.

**What you can do.** Make it your goal to give correction when it is needed and commendation when it is genuinely deserved. Do not dole out praise just to make your children feel good about themselves. Likely, it will not work. “True self-confidence comes from honing your talents and learning things,” says the book *Generation Me*, “not from being told you’re great just because you exist.”

\* The Bible does not advocate physical or emotional abuse of children. (Ephesians 4:29, 31; 6:4) The goal of correction is to teach, not to provide an outlet for a parent’s anger.

“Do not think of yourself more highly than you should. Instead, be modest.”

—Romans 12:3, *Good News Translation*



## 2 Overprotecting

**The problem.** Many young adults entering the workforce seem ill-prepared to cope with adversity. Some are devastated by the slightest criticism. Others are finicky and will accept only work that meets their highest expectations. For example, in the book *Escaping the Endless Adolescence*, Dr. Joseph Allen tells of a young man who said to him during a job interview: “I get the sense that sometimes parts of the work can be a little boring, and I don’t want to be bored.” Dr. Allen writes: “He didn’t seem to understand that *all* jobs have some boring elements. How did one make it to age twenty-three without knowing that?”

**What is behind it.** In recent decades, many parents have felt compelled to protect their children from any type of adversity. Your daughter failed a test? Intervene and demand that the teacher raise the grade. Your son received a traffic ticket? Pay the fine for him. A failed romance? Lay all the blame on the other person.

While it is natural to want to protect your children, overprotecting them can send the wrong message—that they do not need to take responsibility for their actions. “Instead of learning that they can survive pain and disappointment, and even learn from it,” says the book *Positive Discipline for Teenagers*, “[such] children grow up extremely self-centered, convinced that the world and their parents owe them something.”

**What the Bible says.** Adversity is a part of life. In fact, the Bible says: “Bad things happen to everyone!” (Ecclesiastes 9:11, *Easy-to-Read Version*) That includes good people. The Christian apostle Paul, for example, endured all manner of hardship during the course of his ministry. Yet, facing up to adversity benefited him! He wrote: “I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be self-sufficient. . . . I have learned the secret of both how to be full and how to hunger, both how to have an abundance and how to suffer want.”—Philippians 4:11, 12.

**What you can do.** Taking into account the maturity level of your children, strive to follow the Bible principle: “We each must carry our own load.” (Galatians 6:5, CEV) If your son receives a traffic ticket, it might be best to let him pay the fine out of his allowance or salary. If your daughter fails a test, perhaps that should be a wake-up call to her so that next time she will be better prepared. If your son experiences the breakup of a romance, comfort him—but at the appropriate time help him to reflect on questions such as, ‘In hindsight, has this experience revealed any ways in which I need to grow?’ Children who work through their problems build resilience and self-confidence—assets they might lack if someone was constantly rescuing them.

“Let each one prove what his own work is, and then he will have cause for exultation.”

—Galatians 6:4



### 3 Overproviding

**The problem.** In a survey of young adults, 81 percent said that the most important goal of their generation is ‘to become rich’—rating it far above helping others. But striving for wealth does not bring contentment. In fact, research indicates that people who focus on material things are less happy and more depressed. They also have a higher rate of physical and mental problems.

**What is behind it.** In some cases, children are being raised in materialistic families. “Parents want to make their children happy, and children want stuff,” says the book *The Narcissism Epidemic*. “Thus parents buy them stuff. And children are happy, but only for a short period of time. Then they want even more stuff.”

Of course, the advertising industry has been all too eager to exploit this hungry consumer market. It promotes such ideas as ‘You deserve the best’ and ‘Because you’re worth it.’ Many young adults have devoured the message and are now in debt, unable to pay for the things they “deserve.”

**What the Bible says.** The Bible acknowledges the need for money. (Ecclesiastes 7:12) At the same time, it warns that “the love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things.” It adds: “By reaching out for this love some . . . have stabbed themselves all over with many pains.” (1 Timothy 6:10) The Bible encourages us, not to pursue material riches, but to be content with the basic necessities of life.—1 Timothy 6:7, 8.

**What you can do.** As a parent, examine your own attitude toward money and the things it can buy. Keep your priorities straight, and help your children to do the same. *The Narcissism Epidemic*, quot-

“Those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires.”—1 Timothy 6:9

ed earlier, suggests: “Parents and children can start discussions on such topics as ‘When is buying things on sale a good idea? When is it a bad idea?’ ‘What’s an interest rate?’ ‘When have you bought something because someone else thought you should?’ ”

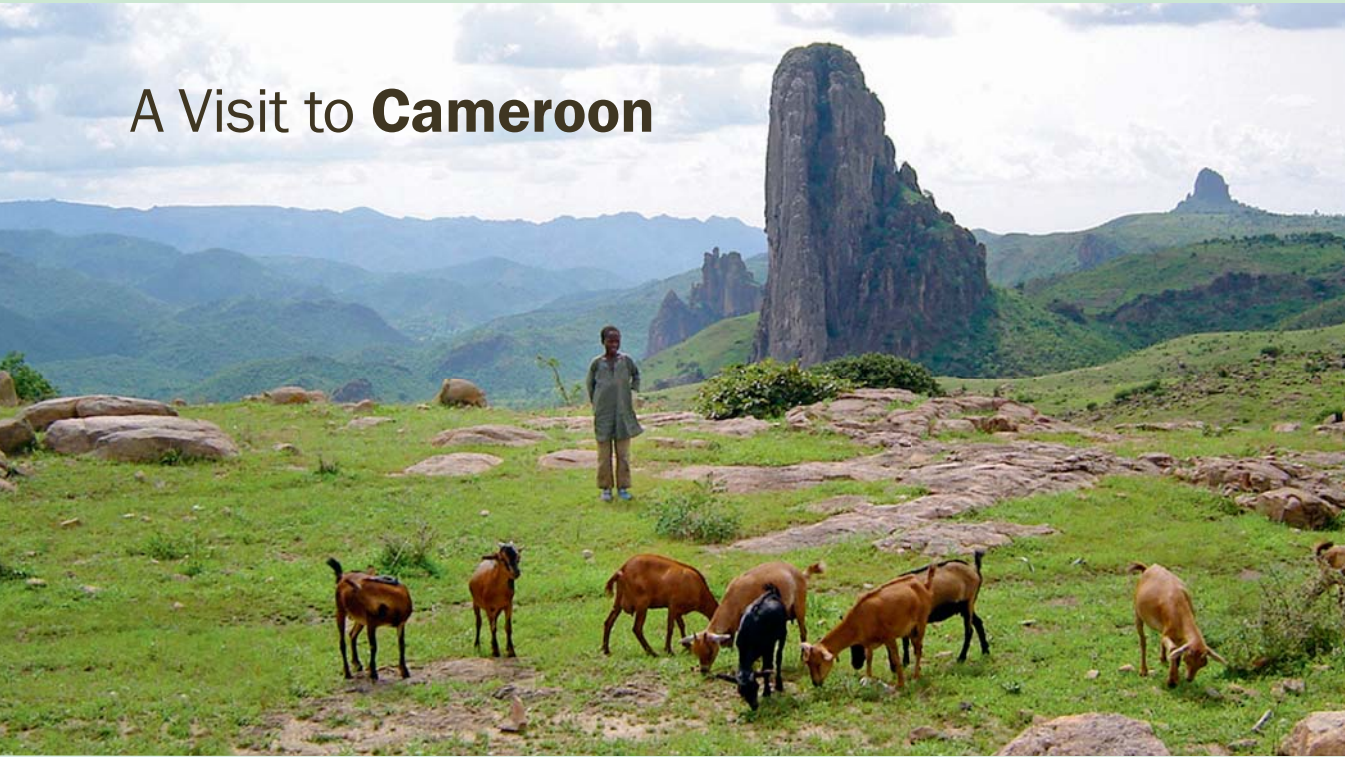
Be careful not to use “stuff” as a drug to cover over family issues that need to be addressed. “Throwing material goods at problems is a notoriously unsuccessful solution,” says the book *The Price of Privilege*. “Problems need to be addressed with thought, insight, and empathy, not shoes and purses.” ■







## A Visit to **Cameroon**



**T**HE Baka—also known as Pygmies—were likely the first inhabitants of Cameroon. Then, in the 1500's, the Portuguese arrived. Several hundred years after that, the Fulani—an Islamic people—conquered northern Cameroon. Today, 40 percent of Cameroon's inhabitants claim to be Christian, 20 percent are Muslim, and the remaining 40 percent practice traditional African religions.

The people who live in the rural areas of Cameroon are particularly hospitable. Visitors are greeted and welcomed inside the home, where they are served water and food. To refuse the householder's hospitality is considered an insult, while accepting the offer is a compliment.

Conversation begins with greeting the family members and asking about their welfare. It is even customary to ask how the animals are faring! "When a guest leaves a household, it isn't enough



Jehovah's Witnesses, the publishers of this magazine, are organized into more than 300 congregations in Cameroon and conduct approximately 65,000 Bible studies in that country



The height of most adult Pygmies is between four feet (1.2 m) and four feet eight inches (1.42 m)

Dugout canoes are a common sight on the Sanaga River. Sails are made from whatever materials are available



to say, 'Good-bye,'” says Joseph, a native of Cameroon. “Often, the host will accompany the guest part-way down the road and continue conversing with him. Then, at some point, he will bid the visitor farewell and return home. A guest who does not receive this treatment may feel unappreciated.”

When sharing a meal, sometimes a group of friends will eat from the same plate—at times, with their hands. In Cameroon, this custom is a powerful symbol of unity. In fact, on occasion it has been used to bring together people whose friendship has faded for some reason. In a sense, a communal meal is a way of saying, “We are now at peace.” ■

## FAST FACTS

### Population:

Approximately 20 million

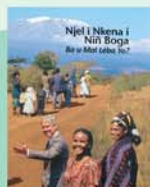
### Capital: Yaoundé

**Climate:** Hot and dry in the north, humid in the coastal region

**Exports:** Oil, cocoa, coffee, cotton, wood, aluminum

### Languages spoken:

English and French, along with some 270 other African languages and dialects



Jehovah's Witnesses have published Bible-based literature in Bassa, a language spoken in Cameroon





# PARADISE

## What is Paradise?

*“Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, . . . and there he put the man whom he had formed.”*

—Genesis 2:8.

**WHAT PEOPLE SAY** Some think that Paradise is nothing more than a myth. Others believe that it is a gardenlike utopia where good people live forever and share in joyful and productive activities.

**WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS** The word “paradise” has been used to designate mankind’s first home, the garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:7-15) The Bible presents that garden as a real place where the first human couple lived free of disease and death. (Genesis 1:27, 28) Because they disobeyed God, the first couple lost their paradisaic home. However, many Bible prophecies describe a future in which humans will enjoy Paradise restored.

**WHY SHOULD IT MATTER TO YOU?** If God is loving, then it would make sense that he would reward his faithful worshippers with a good life in such a place as Paradise. It would also make sense that he would inform people about what they need to do in order to gain God’s approval. The Bible says that you can gain God’s approval by taking in knowledge of him and obeying his commands.—John 17:3; 1 John 5:3.





## Where is Paradise?

**WHAT PEOPLE SAY** Some believe that Paradise is in heaven, while others claim that it will be established in the future on earth.

**WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS** The original Paradise for mankind was on earth. God has clearly designated the earth as the permanent home for humans. The Bible says that God made our planet to last forever. (Psalm 104:5) It also states: “To Jehovah the heavens belong, but the earth he has given to the sons of men.” —Psalm 115:16.

It is not surprising, then, that the Bible holds out the promise of Paradise on earth. In it, God will bless mankind with everlasting life. Harmony and peace will prevail. Pain and suffering will be gone. And people will be able to enjoy to the full the natural wonders of planet earth.—Isaiah 65:21-23.

*“The tent of God is with mankind, . . . and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.”*

—Revelation 21:3, 4.

## Who will live in Paradise?

**WHAT PEOPLE SAY** Many religions teach that only good people will live in Paradise. But there is much confusion as to what “good” means. Some think that it is enough simply to participate in religious ceremonies and ritualistic prayers.

**WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS** The Bible teaches that “the righteous” will live in Paradise. But who is righteous in God’s eyes? Not the person who engages in the rituals of his religion while ignoring God’s will. The Bible says: “Does Jehovah have as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Look! To obey is better than a sacrifice.” (1 Samuel 15:22) Simply put, “the righteous” who will live forever in Paradise are the ones who obey God’s commands as outlined in the Bible.

*“The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it.”*

—Psalm 37:29.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO** Obedience to God’s commandments involves more than participation in religious ceremonies. By your everyday conduct, you may either please or displease God. You can learn to please God by carefully examining the Bible. And he is not hard to please. The Bible says that “his commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3) God is eager to reward your obedience by granting you entrance into Paradise. ■



# The Bar-Tailed Godwit's Navigational System



Photo: Courtesy Grandpa@50

**T**HE bar-tailed godwit makes one of the most amazing migrations known to man. The bird's 7,000-mile (11,000 km) journey can take more than eight days.

**Consider:** Researchers speculate that some types of birds use the earth's magnetic field for navigation, as if they had a compass built into their brain. It is possible that the godwit additionally navigates by means of the sun by day and the stars by night. It seems that the godwit can also sense upcoming storm systems that could allow it to benefit from tailwinds. Still, the details of just how these birds make their incredible journey baffle experts. "I've been studying them 20 years," says biologist Bob Gill, "and it's still jaw-dropping to me."

**What Do You Think?** Did the navigational system of the bar-tailed godwit come about by evolution? Or was it designed? ■

