



CAN YOU  
TRUST THE  
NEWS MEDIA?



## Can You Trust the News Media?

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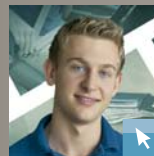
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Vol. 94, No. 12 / Monthly / ENGLISH  
Printing Each Issue: 43,524,000 in 99 Languages

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. Simonis, 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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## UNITED STATES

In one study almost one third of pedestrians were found to be distracted as they crossed busy streets —by listening to music, talking on the phone, and so on. The **most dangerous distraction** was texting. Texters took 18 percent longer to cross than the undistracted and were 3.9 times more likely either to disobey the light, cross at an inappropriate location, or cross without looking both ways.



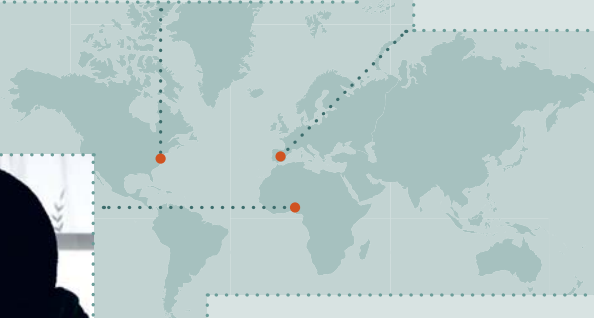
## SPAIN

Between 5 and 10 percent of the long-term unemployed remove university degrees and professional experience from their résumés because these make job **applicants seem overqualified**.



## NIGERIA

Women taken from Nigeria to Europe by human traffickers are made to take ritual oaths of secrecy at juju witchcraft shrines. To dominate the women and ensure their obedience as **sex slaves**, traffickers exploit deep-seated fear of punishment from the spirit world.



## WORLD

Smoke produced by **rudimentary fire stoves** is considered to be a major cause of death in developing countries, where four million people per year die from smoke-related respiratory illnesses. Researchers say that the noxious chemicals released by wood or coal-burning stoves are as lethal as the poisons found in cigarette smoke.



Stove: © Ami Vitale





## Can You Trust the News Media?

MANY people doubt what they read and hear in the news. In the United States, for example, a 2012 Gallup poll asked people “how much trust and confidence” they had in the accuracy, fairness, and completeness of the news reports of newspapers, TV, and radio. The answer from 6 out of 10 people was either “not very much” or “none at all.” Is such distrust justified?

Many journalists and the organizations they work for have expressed a commitment to producing accurate and informative reports. Yet, there is reason for concern. Consider the following factors:



### MEDIA MOGULS

A small but very powerful number of corporations own primary media outlets. Those outlets exert a strong influence on which stories get covered, how they are covered, and how prominently they are covered. Because most corporations are designed for profit, decisions made by media outlets can be motivated by economic interests. Stories that may hamper the profits of the owners of a news organization may go unreported.



### GOVERNMENTS

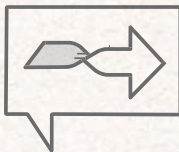
Much of what we learn in the media has to do with the people and the affairs of government. Governments want to convince the public to support their policies and their officials. And because the media draw on content from the government, journalists and government sources at times cooperate with one another.





## ADVERTISING

In most lands, media outlets must make money in order to stay in business, and most of it comes from advertising. In the United States, magazines get between 50 and 60 percent of their revenue from advertising, newspapers 80 percent, and commercial television and radio 100 percent. Understandably, advertisers do not want to sponsor programs that cast an unfavorable light on their products or style of management. If they do not like what a news outlet is producing, they can advertise elsewhere. Knowing this, editors may suppress news stories that cast a negative light on sponsors.



## SPIN

Even if facts are as solid as bricks, how they are presented depends on the judgment of the journalist. What facts should be included in a story, and which should be left out? A soccer team, for example, may have lost a match by two goals. That is a fact. But why the team lost is a tale that a journalist can tell in many ways.



## DISHONESTY

Not all reporters are honest. Some journalists fabricate stories. A few years ago, for example, a reporter in Japan wanted to document how divers were defacing coral in Okinawa. After not finding any vandalized coral, he defaced some himself and then took photos of it. Photos can also be manipulated to deceive the public. Photograph-altering technology has become more effective, and some manipulations are practically impossible to detect.



## OMISSION

In arranging facts to create a compelling story, journalists often exclude details that would introduce complications or unresolved issues. This causes some facts to be exaggerated and others to be diminished. Because television anchors and reporters may sometimes need to tell a complex story in a minute or so, important details can be skipped.





## COMPETITION

In recent decades, as the number of television stations multiplied, the amount of time viewers spent watching just one station fell drastically. To keep viewers interested, news stations were compelled to offer something unique or entertaining. Commenting on this development, the book *Media Bias* states: “The [television] news became a running picture show, with images selected to shock or titillate, and stories shortened to match an [ever-shorter] attention span on the part of viewers.”



## FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

Accurate reporting is not as easy as some might think. What seems to be a fact today may be proved wrong tomorrow. The earth, for example, was once believed to be the center of our solar system. Now we know that the earth circles the sun.



## MISTAKES

Because they are human, journalists make honest mistakes. A misspelled word, a misplaced comma, an error in grammar—these can all distort the meaning of a sentence. Facts may not be carefully checked. Numbers too can easily trip up a journalist who, in the scramble to meet a deadline, might easily type 10,000 instead of 100,000.



## About This Magazine

*Awake!* magazine is carefully researched. We attempt to document every fact, figure, and quotation. This journal is not influenced by activists, big business, or any human government. This magazine is supported by voluntary contributions. Its publishers believe that the Bible is the Word of God and that what the Bible says can be trusted.

## A Need for Balance

While it is wise not to believe everything we read in the news, it does not follow that there is nothing we can trust. The key may be to have a healthy skepticism, while keeping an open mind.

The Bible says: “Does not the ear itself test out words as the palate tastes food?” (Job 12:11) Here, then, are some tips that will help us to test out the words we hear and read:

**PROVIDER:** Does the report come from a credible, authoritative person or organization? Does the program or publication have a reputation for seriousness or for sensationalism? Who provide the funds for the news source?

**SOURCES:** Is there evidence of thorough research? Is the story based on just one source? Are the sources reliable, fair, and objective? Are they balanced, or have they been selected to convey only one point of view?

**PURPOSE:** Ask yourself: ‘Is the news item primarily to inform or entertain? Is it trying to sell or support something?’

**TONE:** When the tone of a news item is angry, spiteful, or highly critical, it suggests that an attack is under way and not a reasoned argument.

**CONSISTENCY:** Are the facts consistent with those in other articles or reports? If stories contradict one another, be careful!

**TIMELINESS:** Is the information recent enough to be acceptable? Something thought to be correct 20 years ago may be discounted today. On the other hand, if the news item is a breaking story, it may lack complete and comprehensive information.



So, can you trust the news media? Sound advice is found in the wisdom of Solomon, who wrote: “Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps.”—Proverbs 14:15. ■





## A Visit to **Brazil**



**B**RAZIL was originally inhabited by hunter-gatherers and farmers. Portuguese explorers brought with them the Roman Catholic religion, and subsequently, many churches and chapels were built—some adorned with elaborate wood carvings covered with gold leaf.

From the mid-16th to the mid-19th century, slave ships carried some four million Africans to Brazil to work in the fields. These brought along their rites, which developed into such Afro-Brazilian religions as macumba and the candomblé sect. The African influence is also evident in Brazil's music, dance, and food.

Traditional feijoada, an adaptation of a Portuguese dish, is a stew made of a mixture of meats and black beans, served with rice and collard greens. In the 19th and 20th centuries, millions of emigrants from Europe (mainly Germany, Italy, Poland, and Spain), Japan, and other areas joined the population.





A toucan

The delicious dish feijoada is traditional Brazilian fare



The Amazon River Basin is home to the world's most extensive rain forest



Today, there are some 750,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses in more than 11,000 congregations all over Brazil. They conduct more than 800,000 Bible studies. In order to provide meeting places, 31 mobile construction teams work with the local Witnesses to build and repair about 250 to 300 Kingdom Halls each year. Since March 2000, 3,647 of these projects have been completed. ■

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Amazon River discharges more water than any other river and extends for more than 3,900 miles (6,275 km)

## FAST FACTS

**Population:** 201,000,000

**Capital:** Brasília

**Languages spoken:** Portuguese and over 180 indigenous languages

**Name:** Brazil was named after brazilwood (*Caesalpinia echinata*), valued for the fire-colored textile dye that can be made from it

**Climate:** Warm and humid in the north, temperate in the south, with occasional snowfall in the mountains in winter

**Land:** Brazil covers nearly half of South America. Its river system is one of the largest in the world



# JESUS

## Is Jesus God?

*“No man has seen God at any time.”—John 1:18.*

**WHAT PEOPLE SAY** Many people believe that Jesus is not God. Still, others point to Bible verses that supposedly indicate that Jesus is equal to God.

**WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS** The Bible does not portray Jesus as being Almighty God or equal to God. On the contrary, it clearly teaches that Jesus is inferior to God. For example, the Bible records Jesus' own words: “The Father is greater than I am.” (John 14:28) The Bible also says: “No man has seen God at any time.” (John 1:18) Jesus cannot be God because many people *did* in fact see Jesus.

Jesus' early followers did not claim that he was God. For example, the Gospel writer John said concerning the things he recorded: “These have been written down that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the *Son of God*.”—John 20:31.\*

\* The Bible does not teach that God has a literal wife with whom he has fathered children. Rather, it calls Jesus “the Son of God” because Jesus was created directly by God, having qualities similar to those of his Father.





## When was Jesus born?

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**WHAT PEOPLE SAY** Some people observe Christmas on December 25—thought by some to be the date of Jesus’ birth. Others observe the birthday of Jesus in early January.

**WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS** The Bible does not state the date on which Jesus was born. However, it does say that at the time of Jesus’ birth, “there were . . . shepherds living out of doors and keeping watches in the night over their flocks.” (Luke 2:8) It is very unlikely that those shepherds would have kept their flocks outside at night during December and January. Why?

The area where Jesus was born experiences some of its coldest weather during December and January. Regarding that time of year, the Bible reports that people were “shivering . . . on account of the showers of rain.” (Ezra 10:9, 13; Jeremiah 36:22) That would have been no time of year for shepherds to be “living out of doors” with their flocks.

*“There were . . . shepherds living out of doors and keeping watches in the night over their flocks.”*

—Luke 2:8.

## Did Jesus really come back to life after he died?

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**WHAT PEOPLE SAY** Some people believe that it is impossible for anyone, including Jesus, to have come back to life after death.

**WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS** Jesus taught his followers that he would “suffer many things . . . and be killed, and on the third day be raised up.” (Matthew 16:21) The Bible reports that after he was killed and resurrected, Jesus appeared to upwards of 500 people. (1 Corinthians 15:6) Those eyewitnesses were convinced beyond doubt that he had been raised from the dead. They were even willing to die for that belief!—Acts 7:51-60; 12:1, 2.

*“God raised him [Jesus] up from the dead.”—Acts 3:15.*

**WHY IT MATTERS** The Bible teaches that Jesus’ death and resurrection opened the way for all humans to benefit from the Bible’s promised Paradise on earth. (Psalm 37:11, 29; Revelation 21:3, 4) We have the prospect of enjoying a happy, unending life in that earthly Paradise thanks to the love shown by Jesus and his Father, the Almighty God, Jehovah.—John 3:16; Romans 6:23. ■



# How to Be a Good Listener



## THE CHALLENGE

“You’re not listening to me!” your spouse says. ‘But I was,’ you tell yourself. Evidently, though, what you heard is different from what your spouse said. As a result, another argument erupts.

You *can* avoid these conflicts. First, though, you need to understand why you might miss important details in what your spouse is saying—even though you think that you are listening.



## WHY IT HAPPENS

**You are distracted, tired, or both.** The kids are yelling, the television is blaring, and you are thinking about a problem you had at work. Now your spouse starts talking to you—something about expecting visitors tonight. You nod “OK,” but did you really hear what was said? Likely not.

**You make assumptions.** This has been called a damaging form of “mind reading.” You *assume* that there is a hidden message behind your spouse’s words, when in fact you may be reading too much into the situation. For example, suppose your spouse says: “You’ve spent a lot of extra time at work this week.” Interpreting this as criticism, you say: “It’s not my fault! I have to work extra hours because you are running up our bills.” “I wasn’t blaming you!” shouts your mate—whose original intention was merely to suggest a relaxing weekend together.

**You look for solutions prematurely.** “Sometimes I just want to express how I feel,” says Marcie,\* “but Mike wants to tell me how to fix it. I don’t want to fix it. I just want him to know how I’m feeling.” The problem? Mike’s mind is racing to find a solution. As a result, he will probably miss some or all of what Marcie is saying.

Whatever the cause of the problem, how can you become a better listener?

\* Names in this article have been changed.





## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Give your complete attention.** Your spouse has something important to say, but are you *ready* to listen? Perhaps not. Your mind may be on other things just now. If so, do not *pretend* to listen. If possible, put aside what you are doing and give your mate your full attention, or perhaps you could ask your mate to wait until you are able to do so.—*Bible principle: James 1:19.*

**Agree to speak one at a time.** When it is your turn to listen, resist the urge to interrupt or disagree. You will get your turn to speak. For now, just listen.—*Bible principle: Proverbs 18:13.*

**Ask questions.** This will make you better able to understand what your mate is saying. Marcie, quoted earlier, says: “I love it when Mike asks questions. It shows me that he’s interested in what I’m saying.”

**Listen for the message, not just the words.** Note what is conveyed by body language, eye movement, and tone of voice. “That’s fine” might really mean “That’s *not* fine”—depending on how it is said. “You never offer to help me” might really mean “I feel I’m not important to you.” Try to get the real message, even if it is not spoken. Otherwise, you may end up debating over what was *said* instead of focusing on what was *meant*.

**Keep listening.** Do not tune out or walk away, even if what you are hearing displeases you. For example, what if your mate is criticizing you? “Keep listening,” advises Gregory, who has been married for over 60 years. “Give genuine consideration to what your mate is saying. This takes a measure of maturity, but it pays off.”—*Bible principle: Proverbs 18:15.*

**Be sincerely interested in your mate.** Active listening is, not a mere technique, but an act of love. When you have genuine interest in what your mate is saying, listening becomes less forced and more natural. In this way you will be following the Bible’s admonition: “Look out for one another’s interests, not just for your own.”—*Philippians 2:4, Good News Translation.* ■

## KEY SCRIPTURES

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

“When anyone is replying to a matter before he hears it, that is foolishness on his part and a humiliation.”—Proverbs 18:13.

“The ear of wise ones seeks to find knowledge.”—Proverbs 18:15.

## IF YOU ARE SPEAKING

If you try to talk while your mate is in another room or is concentrating on something else, will he or she hear what you say? It might be better to get your mate’s full attention first or wait for a better opportunity.—1 Peter 3:8.

Consider a Bible example: When Jesus had an important point to make about humility, he did not simply blurt it out. He waited until circumstances were conducive to listening. Then he called his apostles to him and made his point.—Mark 9:33-35; 12:41-44.

# The Painted Lady

## A MYSTERY REVEALED



EUROPEAN observers have long admired colorful painted lady butterflies (*Vanessa cardui*) and have wondered what happened to them at the end of each summer. Do they simply perish with the onset of cold weather? Fresh research reveals an extraordinary story. The butterflies make an annual journey between northern Europe and Africa.

Researchers combined results from sophisticated radar with thousands of sight-

ings reported by volunteers across Europe. The results revealed that as the summer ends, millions of painted lady butterflies migrate south, mostly flying at an altitude of more than 1,600 feet (500 m)—therefore hardly ever seen by humans. The butterflies wait for favorable winds, which they ride at an average speed of 28 miles per hour (45 km/h) on the long trip to Africa. Their annual migration is up to 9,300 miles (15,000 km) long, beginning from as far north as the fringes of the Arctic and terminating as far south as tropical West Africa. The trip is almost double that of the North American monarch butterfly. It takes six successive generations of painted ladies to complete the round-trip.

Professor Jane Hill of the University of York, in England, explains: “The Painted Lady just keeps going, breeding and moving.” Annually, those steps take the whole population from northern Europe to Africa and back again.

“This tiny creature weighing less than a gram [0.04 oz] with a brain the size of a pin head and no opportunity to learn from older, experienced individuals, undertakes an epic intercontinental migration,” states Richard Fox, surveys manager at Butterfly Conservation. This insect was “once thought to be blindly led, at the mercy of the wind, into an evolutionary dead end in the lethal British winter,” Fox adds. Yet this study “has shown Painted Ladies to be sophisticated travellers.” ■



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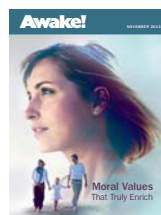
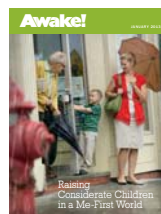
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## The Storage Capacity of DNA

**C**OMPUTER users generate enormous amounts of digital data that has to be stored for access as needed. Scientists are hoping to revolutionize current methods for digital storage by imitating a far superior data-storage system found in nature—DNA.

**Consider:** DNA, found in living cells, holds billions of pieces of biological information. “We can extract it from bones of woolly mammoths . . . and make sense of it,” says Nick Goldman of the European Bioinformatics Institute. “It’s also incredibly small, dense and does not need any power for storage, so shipping and keeping it is easy.” Could DNA store man-made data? Researchers say yes.

Scientists have synthesized DNA with encoded text, images, and audio files, much as digital media stores data. The researchers were later able to decode the stored information with 100 percent accuracy. Scientists believe that in time, using this method, 0.04 ounce (1 g) of artificial DNA could store the data of some 3,000,000 CDs and that all this information could be preserved for hundreds if not thousands of years. Potentially, this system could store the whole world’s digital archive. DNA has thus been dubbed “the ultimate hard drive.”

**What do you think?** Could the storage capacity of DNA have come about by evolution? Or was it designed? ■

