

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

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Vol 14 • Issue 4

I'LL TAKE THE MOUNTAIN

Echoes and whispers from above

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The Way of Peace

Living with Loss

A mother's healing



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Of all the word pictures Jesus painted, I can't think of another that engenders the peace of spirit that comes from feeling secure in God's loving care more than this: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. If God so clothes the grass of the field, will He not much more clothe you?"¹ Can you see those lilies now? Tall and straight, perfectly formed and laced with dew, each a polite distance from the next, they sway as one to the sweet strains of songbirds and a gentle breeze as it sweeps through an open meadow awash with morning sun. At least that's how I would have had them grow, if God had asked me.

A very different scene hangs above my desk—a hopeless tangle of wildflowers and weeds, grasses, thistles, and who knows what, some flourishing, some beginning to fade, and some gone to seed. The photo was the reward of a long, hot trek through the Texas countryside in search of a scene that matched a mental picture that had come to me months earlier while praying about my part in a new project that involved quite a few people, each of whom added his or her particular needs, opinions, aspirations, quirks, and hang-ups to the mix.

The amazing thing about that scene when I glimpsed it in prayer was how it instantly set my heart and mind to rest. I had the distinct feeling that God not only had it all under control, but that He delighted in the complexity and diversity, in each and every element and its place in the hodgepodge. The Creator in love with His creation. Things weren't as I would have had them, but as He would have them. That realization made all the difference. I titled my photo *Divine Chaos*,² and I study and draw from it whenever I work myself into turmoil over some new problem. "Consider the flowers of the field, how they grow."

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

1. Matthew 6:28, 30
2. See top of page.

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HEAVEN'S REFLECTION

BY AKIO MATSUOKA

A FRIEND WAS SHOWING ME A PHOTO THAT HE TOOK AT SHINJUKU GYOEN NATIONAL GARDEN—a large park in the middle of bustling Tokyo. It showed a brilliant blue sky with green trees framing it. When I complimented him on a beautiful shot, my friend looked amused. “Actually, you’re looking at it upside down. This is the reflection of the sky on the lake.”

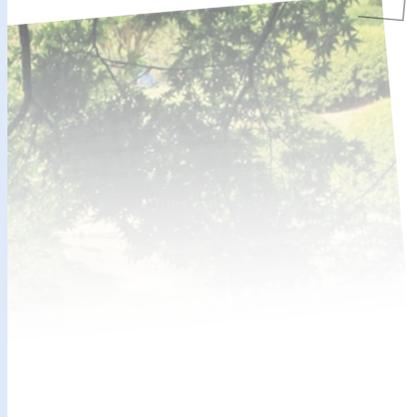
I looked closer and saw that he was right. What I had thought was scenery was actually its reflection on the lake’s surface, almost like an optical illusion. I was amazed at how clearly the sky and surroundings were reflected in the still water. It made me think how wonderful it would be if my life could so perfectly reflect heaven’s peace and stillness.

God wants me to rest in the knowledge that He is in control and looking out for us. He says, “Be still,

and know that I am God.”¹ But when things go wrong, the winds of adversity can create turmoil in my spirit and cause me to feel buffeted. When I get this way, others only see the choppy waves of my ruffled spirit, not the still reflection of heaven.

I can’t avoid the storms of life, but they don’t need to rob me of the peace of God. I can hold on to the promise that these trials will never be more than I can bear; God will always provide a way out.² He’s also ready, willing, and able to bring about something good from every situation, if my heart is right and I turn to Him for guidance and help.³ So when trouble hits, I have a choice. Will I project to others the vision of a storm-tossed sea? Or will they see the peace of heaven reflected in my attitude and actions?

AKIO MATSUOKA HAS BEEN A MISSIONARY AND VOLUNTEER WORKER FOR THE PAST 35 YEARS, BOTH IN HIS NATIVE JAPAN AND ABROAD. HE LIVES IN TOKYO. ■



[Jesus] arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.
—Mark 4:39

All of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.—2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT

1. Psalm 46:10
2. See 1 Corinthians 10:13.
3. See Romans 8:28; Psalm 46:1.



LIVING WITH LOSS

By IRIS RICHARD

STEVE WAS A CHEERFUL LITTLE BOY WITH BIG BROWN EYES, curly blond hair, and a dimple that appeared on his right cheek every time he smiled. He had dreamy eyes, and often sat by the window to gaze at the rain, the clouds, or the birds.

“He has been kissed by an angel,” the Japanese midwife had told me with a smile when she first placed the small warm bundle in my arms, pointing out a snow-white streak of hair at the back of his head. “He has a special calling in life.” Over the years, her words often came back to me and I wondered what they meant.

Fifteen years later, Steve, then a handsome teenager with an athletic

physique, suddenly became very ill. I was sure it was a bout of malaria, as we had traveled to the coast regularly during our missionary work in East Africa. The grave look on the doctor’s face said otherwise, even before he relayed the findings of the tests he had ordered. “Acute lymphoblastic leukemia.” My mind was suddenly flooded with questions. What did that mean? Could it be healed? How would this affect his future?

Because of the seriousness of Steve’s condition, we were in a race against time. Within a few hours, Steve was flown from Kenya to Europe, where better treatments were

available. He was hospitalized and put on chemotherapy.

The next two years were long and agonizing. Hopeful moments were followed by setbacks as one chemotherapy session was followed by the next.

Then came the day when it became clear that our dear Steve was not going to recover. His doctors pronounced the treatments unsuccessful and gave him six weeks to live. It was Steve’s wish to return to Mombasa, Kenya, where he had grown up. It was there, surrounded by his friends and family, that he got to fulfill some of his final wishes, like a day of sailing in the bay before watching the

hot tropical sun spread bright hues over the Indian Ocean at sunset.

When Steve's last breath passed his lips early one morning in a small hospital room overlooking the ocean, the world stood still for me. A large yellow butterfly fluttered through the open window, and I felt God reassuring me that He had taken Steve gently to His unseen realm. Still, the impact of losing my son left me in shambles long after everyone else's mourning had passed.

"Let go and move on" was the well-meaning advice I seemed to get from every side. But where was I to move on *to*? And how? Deep inside, I felt bitter and angry with God for

snatching my vibrant young son from me. I felt cheated and empty. My heart remained heavy as the months dragged by and I pondered my loss again and again.

Eventually I decided to meet God on my porch early each morning to tell Him of my woes. Days stretched to weeks as I poured on Him all my grief, remorse, and anger over what had happened. "If love is the essence of Your nature, as the Bible says, how could You deal so harshly with me and my son?" I asked over and over.

What a patient and long-suffering listener I found.

I cried and pleaded and reasoned, until finally one morning I felt I had

said all that I wanted and poured out all my emotions. It was then, when I was willing to make peace with God, that tranquility filled my soul. In a still, soothing voice, God began to speak to my heart. From that point on, my solitary morning porch meetings with God took another direction. I learned to listen to Him and to allow Him to comfort me and heal my pain.

IRIS RICHARD IS A COUNSELOR IN KENYA, WHERE SHE HAS BEEN A COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER FOR THE PAST 17 YEARS. SHE IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

I'M FREE

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free.
I'm following the path God has laid,
you see.

I took His hand when I heard Him
call;

I turned my back and left it all.

I could not stay another day

To laugh, to love, to work, to play.

Tasks left undone must stay that way;

I found that peace at the close of day.

If my parting has left a void,

Then fill it with remembered joy.

A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss,
Oh yes, these things I too will miss.
Be not burdened with times of sorrow,
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.
My life's been full; I savored much—
Good friends, good times, a loved
one's touch.

Perhaps my time seemed all too brief;
Don't lengthen it with undue grief.
Lift up your hearts, and peace to thee.
God wanted me; He set me free.

—*Author unknown* ■



FRUIT IN SEASON

BY DINA ELLENS

MY SON'S VOICE BROKE AS HE SPOKE, "Mom, I don't know what's happening. I just moved my family in order to take a new job, but now that job has fallen through!"

I did my best to encourage him, but as the minutes went by, I could tell I wasn't getting through the wall of anguish.

After hanging up, I couldn't get my son's situation out of my mind. Finally I stopped everything else to pray about what he was going through. My son and his wife are active Christians and responsible young parents. I knew that he would do the best he could to support his family, but I knew, too, that the worldwide economic slump meant it

was even more difficult than usual to get a good job.

As I prayed for him, I was reminded of the first words of the first Psalm, and I knew these verses were the key for my son: "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers."¹

"God is love,"² and His interactions with us are loving. He is always trying to draw us closer to Himself. Sometimes He allows difficulties and setbacks to befall us, but if our hearts are right with Him, then we are like those trees that are planted by the

rivers of water, and we will bring forth fruit when the time is right.

Consider the life cycle of a fruit tree. Sometimes it goes dormant; all the leaves may fall off, and it may appear dead. But there are other times when the tree bursts forth with fruit in abundance.

In the same way, we also go through cycles. There are times when we're at the top of our game and things couldn't be better. Then there are times when things take a dip and we have to fight to stay positive. At times like that, I like to meditate on one of my favorite promises from God's Word: "Do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise."³

I couldn't wait to get back on the phone and share these thoughts with my

1. Psalm 1:1–3 NIV

2. 1 John 4:8

3. Hebrews 10:35–36 NIV

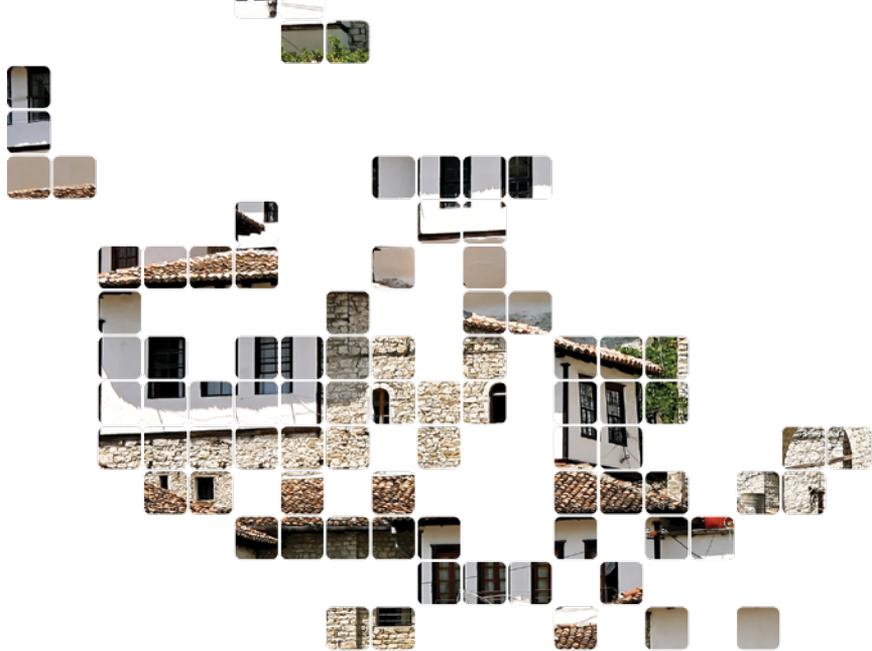


son. We prayed together for him to be freed from discouragement and worry.

My son and his wife began praying every day for a new job, and he also took on whatever temporary jobs he could find in the meantime. Within six months, he was able to get a good job in an electronics company, and after one year he was promoted to vice president of the same company.

He faced some major obstacles, but God came through for him. Although he's very busy and challenged with his career, he continues to make his time with the Lord and reading His Word a priority because he knows that this is the key to happiness and success.

DINA ELLENS IS A RETIRED SCHOOL-TEACHER NOW LIVING IN WEST JAVA, INDONESIA, AND ACTIVE IN VOLUNTEER WORK THERE. ■



GOD'S MOSAICS

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

HAVE YOU EVER COME ACROSS A CONSTRUCTION SITE WHERE THE WORKERS WERE LABORIOUSLY LAYING A TILE FLOOR—one of those mosaic floors with thousands of tiny tiles that create a picture when finished? While it's being put in place, the picture isn't clearly visible because the workers use grout to fill the spaces between the tiles, and the grout leaves a heavy gray film over their work that hides the beauty of what they've done. But then, once the grout between the tiles is dry, the film is washed off and the picture is revealed.

That's similar to how God works in our lives. In His infinite wisdom and all-encompassing love, He understands exactly what we need and goes to great lengths, with intricate detail, to provide those things.

Often He uses the troubles of life, such as economic difficulties, personal struggles, and mistakes, to work in ways we aren't expecting. We don't always realize how He's preparing us, or understand why He has allowed something "gray" to cloud our lives, like the grout on the mosaic as it is being fashioned. But that only makes His loving and attentive care all the more profound and beautiful when it's finally revealed.

MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■

THE FOREST GETAWAY

BY JESSE O'CONNOR

LAST WINTER I TOOK A FIVE-WEEK TRIP TO FUNDRAISE FOR A HUMANITARIAN AID PROJECT I'M INVOLVED WITH. My plan was ambitious—possibly overly so. Long, intense days for over a month straight took a toll on my spiritual life and general disposition.

One day, as I was taking my lunch break and walking around the large mall where I was manning a collection booth, the nonstop sights and sounds in this highly charged commercial setting were weighing on my spirit. I am a nature lover, and the below-zero temperatures and severe snowstorms that kept me indoors even when I got off work were another factor that made me feel trapped and miserable.

As I passed one glitzy display after another for what seemed like the tenth time, I was on the verge of tears and began to pray silently. I told God how I wanted to be far from all this noise and incessant activity, how I wished for the peace and quiet of a forest, surrounded by nature, where I would be able to more clearly feel His presence and hear His voice.

Then I saw it. I don't know how I had missed it before. Right in front of me was a large picture of an incredibly beautiful, almost magical, misty forest. As I got closer, I realized it was part of a temporary photo exhibit. I went in and was immediately immersed in a beautiful collection of scenes depicting the majesty of God's creation—mountains, rivers, lakes, deserts, caves, sunsets, and more. They were the most beautiful pictures of nature I had ever seen. The lighting was dim except for the photographs, and soft instrumental music was playing. I was totally alone, and overstuffed armchairs in the center of the gallery beckoned me to sit, relax, and take it all in. It was too good to be true. In the dead of winter, in the most hectic place I have ever been, God gave me the one thing I wanted most, which had seemed impossible—twenty minutes with Him in an enchanting forest, with a rippling stream on one side and rolling green hills on the other.

God goes out of His way every day to show us His love. No need of ours is too small or too big for Him to meet. I now have complete confidence in that.

JESSE O'CONNOR LIVES IN MEXICO. ■

POINTS TO PONDER

Meet the Peacemakers

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS,
FOR THEY WILL BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD.—*MATTHEW 5:9 NIV*

We who work for peace must not falter. We must continue to pray for peace and to act for peace in whatever way we can, we must continue to speak for peace and to live the way of peace; to inspire others, we must continue to think of peace and to know that peace is possible.

—*Peace Pilgrim (1908–1981), born Mildred Lisette Norman, pacifist and peace activist*

I believe all suffering is caused by ignorance. People inflict pain on others in the selfish pursuit of their happiness or satisfaction. Yet true happiness comes from a sense of peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through the cultivation of altruism, of love and compassion, and elimination of ignorance, selfishness, and greed.

—*The 14th Dalai Lama (b. 1935)*

As I have said, the first thing is to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself...

Great peacemakers are all people of integrity, of honesty, but humility.
—*Nelson Mandela (b. 1918), South African statesman and recipient of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize*

If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.

If there is to be peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.

If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbors.

If there is to be peace between neighbors,
There must be peace in the home.

If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.
—*Lao Tzu (570–490 BC)*

The followers of Jesus have been called to peace. When He called them they found their peace, for He is their peace. But now they are told that they must not only have peace but make it.—*Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), German Lutheran pastor and theologian*

If we are peaceful, if we are happy, we can smile and blossom like a flower, and everyone in our family, our entire society, will benefit from our peace.—*Thich Nhat Hanh (b. 1926), Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist*

If you yourself are at peace, then there is at least some peace in the world.—*Thomas Merton (1915–1968), Anglo-American Catholic writer and mystic*

Peacemaking is a healing process and it begins with me, but it does not end there.—*Gene Knudsen Hoffman (1919–2010), writer and peace activist* ■



PEACE—THE STEADFAST FRUIT

BY RAFAEL HOLDING



“THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS love, joy, **PEACE**, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”¹

Jesus promised us peace. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”² Just as Jesus calmed the stormy sea when His disciples thought their ship was sinking and they were about to drown,³ He can calm the storms of life and give you inner peace. This begins by turning to Him at the first sign of trouble. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition,

with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”⁴

King David learned this principle and practiced it in his psalms, many of which were actually prayers. He would begin by enumerating his problems to God, which inevitably caused him to remember God’s goodness and power, which set his heart and mind to rest, which helped him remain steadfast in his faith until conditions and the time were right for God to help him put those troubles behind him.

RAFAEL HOLDING IS A WRITER IN AUSTRALIA. “PEACE—THE STEADFAST FRUIT” IS ADAPTED FROM THE *GET ACTIVATED* BOOK *GOD’S GIFTS*, AVAILABLE FROM AURORA’S ONLINE STORE ([HTTP://SHOP.AURORAPRODUCTION.COM/](http://shop.auroraproduction.com/)). ■

1. Galatians 5:22–23
2. John 14:27
3. See Mark 4:35–41.
4. Philippians 4:6–7 NIV

PEACE IN THE MIDST OF STORM

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

AT AN ART CONTEST HELD TO SEE WHO COULD BEST ILLUSTRATE PEACE, most of the participating artists contributed tranquil scenes of lazy summer days in the countryside, where all was stillness and harmony.

Well, that’s a form of peace, but the picture that won the award illustrated the hardest kind of peace to have. Barely visible on a branch overhanging a raging, roaring, storm-swollen waterfall was a little nest where a tiny bird was singing peacefully away, in spite of the turmoil below.

That kind of peace comes only through the Prince of Peace—Jesus—and the knowledge that whatever happens, He’ll take care of you! ■



Peace of the running waves to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,
Deep peace of the shining stars to you,
Deep peace of the shades of night to you,
Moon and stars always giving light to you,
Deep peace of Christ, the Son of Peace, to you.

—*Traditional Gaelic blessing* ■



I'LL TAKE THE MOUNTAIN

BY THERESA KOLTES

AS THE CAR KEPT WINDING UP, up, up, I couldn't help but wonder if our friend's house had been built on the very top of the mountain. Darkness had fallen by the time my sister, two friends, and I got to our destination, but even at night the mountains seemed alive.

Our friend led us up a flight of dark and wobbly steps to the balcony, where we gazed at the panorama. Before us was the most beautiful view of the city of Iskenderun, Turkey, far below. Twinkling lights of all colors lined the Mediterranean, as though an angel had scooped up a ladle of stars and flung them across the darkness.

Even better—the silence.

The next morning, I awoke to birds chirping and a soft breeze wafting through my window. Our

friend took us for a traditional village breakfast: goat cheese, roasted sausage, sautéed peppers, spiced olives—everything fresh beyond words. We sat with our legs outstretched; a brook trickled down through the pines and past our table.

Two boys with half-tucked-in shirts and fruit-smearing cheeks sold us a bag of plums. They had the sweetest smiles and looked as though they spent every day playing in the sunshine and climbing forest trails. We made conversation, and I watched their eyes light up and their smiles grow.

We spent only a weekend at the mountain house, but I wished I could steal the stillness and take it home with me.

As I lay in the tall grass and let ladybugs crawl over my fingers, I thought about how even Jesus sometimes needed to distance Himself

from His work and the busyness around Him in order to connect with His Father. Often, it seems, He managed to slip away to a secluded spot alone,¹ but I imagine there were also times when that wasn't possible and He needed to find His “mountain retreat” in spirit.

Are things any different now? Thousands of years later, the world certainly hasn't gotten any less chaotic or stressful, and we all struggle sometimes. Our faith and patience are tested. Sometimes we can't cope any longer. We fall short. We mess up.

The choice is ours, though: to stay in the valley or get back on the mountain in spirit. Some people resign themselves to life's gloomy days, but after having tasted the heavenly, I'll take the mountain!

THERESA KOLTES IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND GLOBETROTTER. ■

1. Mark 1:35; 6:46–47; Luke 5:16; 6:12

LIVING WITHOUT STRESS

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

STRESS IS ONE OF THE BIG “JOY KILLERS” THAT GOD WANTS TO HELP US MINIMIZE. Stress makes it difficult to operate and is a cause of terrible unhappiness, illness, and even death. According to one news article that I read, between 75 and 90 percent of doctor visits in developed countries could be directly or indirectly traced back to stress.

Faith is an antidote for stress. Faith and trust that everything is in God’s hands, that He is in control, and that He is able to bring about something good from even the worst situations, automatically eliminates a lot of stress from our lives.

Each of us is able to trust in God for certain things, but there are always aspects of our lives that we feel we need to worry about or burdens we feel we need to carry,

1. Psalm 46:1
2. See Psalm 55:22.
3. Matthew 11:28–30
4. Isaiah 26:3 CEV. See also Job 22:21.

instead of giving them to God and trusting that He can take care of them better than we can. And if we let those burdens settle on us—whether physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual—eventually they will cause stress, which can have devastating effects on both body and spirit in the long term.

Most of us have at least one or two areas where our lives have gotten out of balance or our perspectives have gotten skewed. Often this is because we’ve been carrying a load for too long without sufficient breaks or balance. God wants to help provide those things in order to lighten those burdens and make them easier to bear.

A common misconception is to equate stress with hard work, or to feel that some amount of stress is inevitable in a busy life. But that doesn’t have to be the case. You can be a very hard worker yet not be overcome by stress *if* you:

 Maintain a balanced life. Work when it’s time to work, play when it’s time to play, and above



all, keep your time with God sacred. If you go through a period that's extra busy and you have to cut corners on your relaxation and fellowship with others, make sure that things slow down again when that project or period of time is over. Don't let it continue indefinitely. That fast pace can become an unhealthy addiction.

 Let God carry your burdens, which means exercising your faith by committing difficult and stressful situations to Him, instead of trying to resolve them on your own. Stressful situations are part of life; there's no way around that. When one of your children is sick, it's stressful. When you're low on finances, it's stressful. When you have tight or unrealistic deadlines, it's stressful. But you don't have to solve those problems alone. God is a "very present help in trouble."¹

 Know your limits and don't try to do more than is healthy. Learn to be realistic, and if you're not realistic,

listen to others who are, so that you don't wind up creating unnecessary stressful situations for yourself and those around you.

 Step back from time to time and take stock. How are you doing on each of the points above?

A lot of stress comes from negative mindsets, rather than actual deadlines or events. Worry, fear, concerns, excessive pride, and self-centeredness, for example, can all create or contribute to stress.

Rising above stress isn't easy. Changing habits and mindsets is usually difficult and takes time. There are two things that can help keep you on track while you are trying to make such changes. First, make a conscious effort to trust in God, which you do by reminding yourself that He is in control and that His timing is best. Then determine what practical steps you can take to reduce the load you are carrying while He works out more long-range solutions.

How can you "cast your burden on the Lord" so He can sustain you?² God has promised in His Word, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."³

Stress doesn't need to be an overwhelming burden in your life or circumstances. Even though we will probably never attain a once-and-for-all victory over stress, because we're human, we can learn to overcome or reduce its negative effects each time it comes around by replacing it with trust in God, which brings peace. "The Lord gives perfect peace to those whose faith is firm."⁴

MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■



SNAIL PATROL

BY JAY PHILLIPS

TODAY I WENT FOR A WALK WITH THE KIDS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE SURROUNDING THE VILLAGE IN WHICH WE LIVE, an area consisting of farmland, dirt paths, and small woods. The weather was great, so it was a good opportunity for the kids to get some fresh air and exercise as they ran around looking for the little creatures that are abundant in spring and summer.

It was an enjoyable break for me as well. Out on those country trails there are no computers, no pressing work, no chores, no meetings, no messes to clean up, and none of the myriad of other things that keep us busy most of the day.

Time can seem to stand still while out in nature—at least until the kids excitedly holler, “Ladybug!” or “Spider!” But even such sudden alerts are okay, because just a few minutes of peace is usually all I need to clear

my head. When Jesus said that unless you become as little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven,¹ maybe He wasn’t just talking about heaven to come, but also about the peace and little bit of heaven we experience in our hearts here and now when we put our cares aside, quiet our minds and spirits, and tune in to His voice speaking to us through creation.

Children seem to do that naturally. They’re not worried about work that needs to get done, or the bills that need to be paid; they’re simply full of energy and excited about life, and happy to have a big guy along to watch out for them and take snapshots of their activities. How much more should *we* have peace, knowing that we have the ultimate Big Guy looking out for us and, I’m sure, taking snapshots of our lives too.

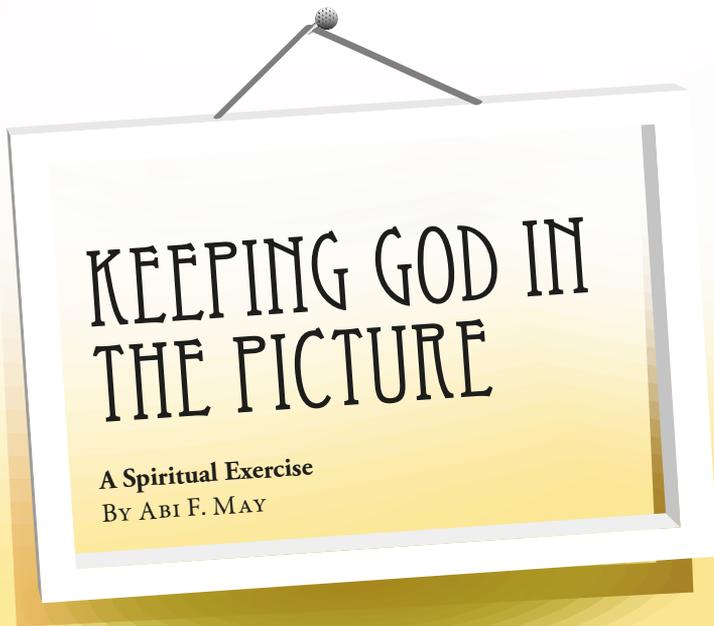
JAY PHILLIPS IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN CROATIA. ■

OUT IN THE FIELDS WITH GOD

The little cares that fretted me,
I lost them yesterday,
Among the fields above the sea,
Among the winds at play;
Among the lowing of the herds,
The rustling of the trees;
Among the singing of the birds,
The humming of the bees.

The foolish fears of what might
happen,
I cast them all away
Among the clover-scented grass,
Among the new-mown hay;
Among the husking of the corn,
Where drowsy poppies nod,
Where ill thoughts die and good
are born—
Out in the fields with God!
—*Elizabeth Barrett Browning* ■

1. See Matthew 18:3.



PEACE COMES NOT FROM THE ABSENCE OF TROUBLE, but from the presence of God.—*Author unknown*

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.—*Colossians 3:15*

To have peace reign in your heart may seem impossible when your mind is whirling in confusion at the stress of daily life. Yet such peace is promised; Jesus told us, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. ... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”¹

Keeping God in the picture is another way of saying that we should give Him an active role in our daily lives, which we do by acknowledging His presence and power, and by asking for His counsel and help in matters big and small. Daniel, whose

story is told in the Old Testament book of that name, had just such a relationship with God, and that paid off when he faced a challenge that makes most of ours pale by comparison.

Daniel had been taken captive in his youth, when the Babylonians conquered Judah, but eventually he rose to a position of power and influence in the Babylonian royal court. Then, when the Medes overthrew the Babylonians, Daniel became a senior administrator during the reign of King Darius.

Politics have always been fraught with rivalry and intrigue, and this period was no different; Daniel’s fellow governors became jealous and plotted against him. They persuaded Darius to decree restrictions on prayer and worship, under penalty of death, but Daniel’s well-known devotion to his God compelled him to ignore the decree. Darius favored Daniel and realized that he had been

manipulated, but he could neither change nor ignore his own decree. When Daniel was thrown into a den of hungry lions, it seemed that would be the end of him, but the next morning he emerged from the den unscathed.²

Keeping God in the picture enables us to survive life’s tribulations with our faith and peace of heart and mind intact.

Take the way of peace: Praying for the day ahead when you wake; pausing to pray when things get hectic or a decision or problem arises; taking a few minutes for quiet reflection in the evening—these are all ideal times to find peace in God’s presence.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.—*Philippians 4:7*

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1. John 14:27

2. See Daniel chapter 6.



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

PEACE, BE STILL

I can give you peace that defies understanding,¹ that calms storms, and that overcomes stress and worry. The storms may come and the waves may rise, you may be buffeted and besieged on all sides, but you will not sink, because I am the Master of the sea and everything is within My control.

I will continue to be with you always—through hills, across rivers, over mountains, through plains and meadows, through rain, sun, and wind, through heat and through cold. Through it all, I will love you, hold you, and help you. And you will learn and grow and experience new things, profound things, transformative things. You will come to know Me in a truly deep and personal way, and you will come to know and appreciate the gifts that I have for you—how bountiful, how perfect, and enduring they are.

Rest in Me. Trust in Me. Lean on Me. Take each day and each challenge as it comes, one step at a time, one moment at a time, and I will give you what you need at each turn.

1. See Philippians 4:7.