

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

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PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

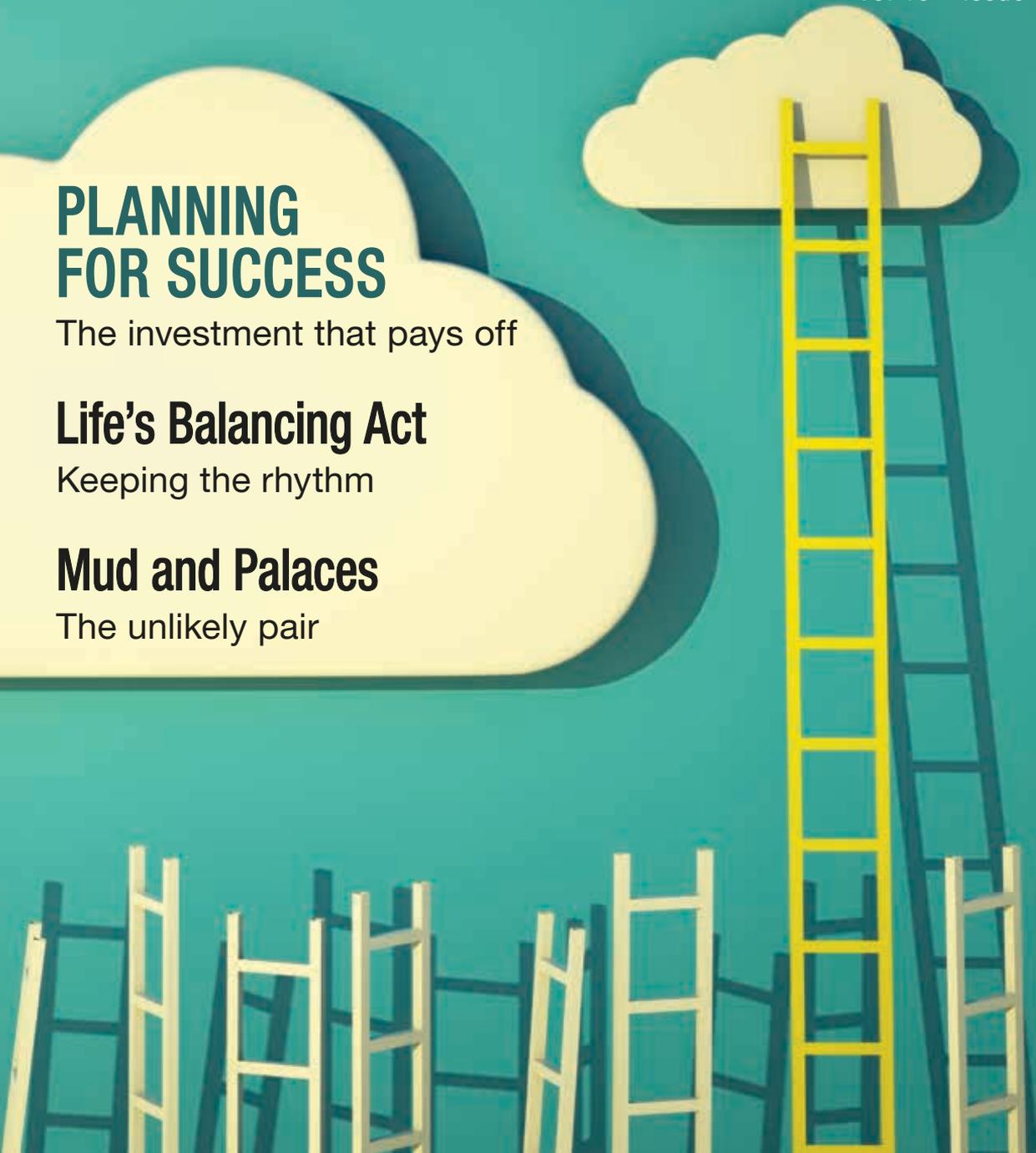
The investment that pays off

Life's Balancing Act

Keeping the rhythm

Mud and Palaces

The unlikely pair





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION FRIENDLY WITH GOD

I think most parents would agree that the highest hopes we have for our children are for their health and happiness. Recently, I've been wondering if there was something more specific that I could be asking God for on my daughter Audrey's behalf, and I considered praying for her future success.

It seemed like a good request, when defined as being fulfilled, finding our place in the world and thriving in it. But it's the other, more materialistic, meanings that left me feeling a bit uncomfortable. You see, I don't think success can be measured by money, gadgets, or the people we know. That kind of success is usually fleeting and doesn't guarantee happiness.

Take Mother Teresa (1910–1997), who labored for decades among the poorest of the poor in Kolkata, India. She lived in poverty and often faced immense opposition and difficulties. Yet in my book—and, no doubt, God's—she was definitely a success, someone whose life was entirely dedicated to Jesus and others, and who fulfilled her destiny.

That's not to say that success and happiness can only be found in the kind of total devotion and abnegation that Mother Teresa demonstrated, but it illustrates how success and happiness can come in many different ways.

The other day, I came across the following quote by the Scottish evangelist and author Oswald Chambers (1874–1917): “God's call is for you to be His loyal friend, to accomplish His purposes and goals for your life.” A life that accomplishes God's goals and purposes—whatever those are in each case—sounds like a successful life, and a person who's on friendly terms with God sure sounds like a happy person.

In a nutshell, that's the kind of success I wish for Audrey—and myself, for that matter.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

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LIFE'S BALANCING ACT

BY DINA ELLENS

“MY BUSINESS IS DOING WELL,” a friend recently told me, “but I’m having more trouble with allergies than ever. It seems like when I stress out, they get worse, and I’m wondering if it’s related.”

Being busy is something we can all relate to, yet Jesus tells us, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”¹

The word “yoke” in this verse has little meaning for most of us urban city dwellers, but here in Asia, you still often see both men and women carrying huge loads to market. They manage by using a wooden frame

across the shoulders with baskets hanging from each end. The secret is in keeping a perfect balance. They’ve developed a rhythmic walk so neither basket swings too far out on either side.

Even though Jesus knew His time on earth was short, He didn’t get frantic and try to cram as much as He could into each working day. Instead, He managed to carry His big loads by keeping a balance, resting when He was tired,² and encouraging His disciples to do the same.³ He also made time to get away, pray and hear from His Father.⁴

We too can carry big loads if we get into the right rhythm, keeping a balance between attending to our responsibilities and taking time away to rest and recharge.

DINA ELLENS LIVES IN WEST JAVA, INDONESIA, WHERE SHE IS ACTIVE IN VOLUNTEER WORK. ■

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.—*1 Peter 5:7*
NLT

A time for everything: A time to relax and a time to be busy, a time to frolic and a time to labor, a time to receive and a time to give, a time to begin and a time to finish.—*Jonathan Lockwood Huie (b. 1944)*

It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s how you carry it.—*Author unknown*

The major work of the world is not done by geniuses. It is done by ordinary people, with balance in their lives, who have learned to work in an extraordinary manner.—*Gordon Hinckley (1910–2008)*

Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance, order, rhythm, and harmony.—*Thomas Merton (1915–1968)*

1. Matthew 11:28–29 NIV
2. See Matthew 8:24.
3. See Mark 6:31.
4. See Mark 1:35.



BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED

PLANNING FOR

FACED WITH A MAJOR PROJECT OR CHALLENGE? You probably have a general idea of where you want to go, but it takes a strategy, a plan of the steps to take in order to reach that objective.

Planning is an investment. To plan wisely and well takes time, effort, patience, good research, and counsel—and for those of us who include a spiritual dimension, time in prayer—but a well-formed plan will pay for itself many times over.

There are many ways to create a strategy, but here are a few tried-and-proven principles:

1 DEFINE YOUR LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES.

What exactly do you hope to achieve? Spell out each objective in concrete, concise terms. For the greatest chance of success, narrow your focus to a few primary

1. Proverbs 3:5–6. See also Proverbs 16:9.
2. Matthew 7:7. See also 1 John 5:14–15.

objectives. You can take on more or diversify later, as resources permit.

2 SET SHORT-TERM GOALS.

In order to reach your long-term objectives, stepping stones are needed along the way. These should be smaller goals that get you closer to the final destination. As much as possible, they should be detailed and specific, concrete and measurable.

Reaching large objectives takes time. Having a number of smaller goals will help keep your motivation level high, because you'll see more tangible progress. And every time you tick off one of your smaller goals, you'll be that much closer to your long-term objective.

3 IDENTIFY ANY OBSTACLES.

Once you have determined your long-term objectives and your short-term goals, take a look at any obstacles that stand in the way of achieving the results you're after. If

you are alert to potential problems, you can head them off by seeking out potential solutions.

4 FORMULATE A STRATEGY.

Once you have determined your long-term objectives and the short-term goals, it's helpful to have a plan that includes specific tasks that will help you reach each of your short-term goals. Your plan should be realistic. A lofty plan may look impressive, but if it's too complicated or difficult to implement, it will never get off the ground.

If your project involves working with others, assign the specific tasks to those who will be involved. Determine who will be responsible for each step and when they should have it done by. Accountability is vital to success.

5 ASK GOD FOR GUIDANCE.

Once you've taken the preceding steps, ask God to confirm that you're going in the



R SUCCESS



right direction, that you have chosen the right priorities, that you haven't overlooked anything crucial, and that your long-term objectives and your short-term goals are realistic. "Lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."¹

6 DOCUMENT THE PLAN.

Having a written plan clearly helps avoid things being forgotten or left undone. Good documentation is vital for follow-through, accountability, and gauging progress. Many people find it helpful to keep a project diary.

7 EXECUTE!

The most common pitfall of planning is failing to implement the plan. People invest in creating a great plan, and they have the best intentions for carrying it out. But things come up, life is busy, and they don't follow through.

8 PRAY IT THROUGH.

Ask God for His help in bringing your project to fruition. "Ask and it shall be given you."²

9 MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS.

Set in place a means to monitor progress at regular intervals. Make sure that tasks are getting done when they're supposed to and that progress is being made toward reaching your short-term goals. If you don't stop regularly to check your "map" and see where you are, you're less likely to stay on the road to success.

10 EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED.

Be flexible. Things rarely happen exactly as we imagine they will. As you monitor your progress, be prepared for new factors and adapt accordingly. If something comes up that makes it impossible to carry out a task as you had hoped, look around for alternatives. If something isn't working, change it. Generally follow your plan, but don't set it in stone.

11 KEEP IT SIMPLE.

When you first plan something, it often looks simple enough. But as you go along, the project grows—either because you keep adding new ideas or because things are just more complicated than you thought—and usually some of both. Recognize when your plan is becoming overloaded, and determine what is necessary and what is not. Be willing to cut the frills and scale back on aspects that are just too costly in terms of resources.

12 CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESSES.

Don't wait till you reach your long-term objectives before you celebrate; marking the completion of short-term goals generates satisfaction and excitement.

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



Red Nile

BY ELSA SICHROVSKY

FOR MY NINTH BIRTHDAY, I got an instruction book on watercolor painting. I was thrilled and eagerly flipped through its pages, only to frown in disappointment—the entire first quarter of the book consisted of tonal exercises and descriptions of brush strokes and color mixing. How boring! Sighing, I skimmed the book’s next section: advice on various paintbrushes and grades of paper. *I don’t need all this. Where’s the fun part?*

I skipped to the middle of the book, where a still-life painting of strawberries caught my eyes. The finished product looked promising, and the step-by-step instructional photos seemed easy to follow. Here was the real action! I dipped my paintbrush into the water and began.

The base wash of lemon yellow for the highlights on my strawberries went smoothly enough, but when I

tried to apply the orange paint for the mid-tones, it turned out that my mixture contained far too much water and far too little paint. I had never mixed paint and had no idea how it’s properly done.

The thin, poor-quality paper I was using refused to absorb the deep red for the darkest tones and began to dissolve into soggy shreds, oversaturated by the abundant, watery washes of paint that I hadn’t allowed to dry. My beautiful colors resembled a plague-stricken Nile River!¹

In a desperate attempt to salvage my efforts, I tried to paint on the strawberries’ green caps, but my oversized paintbrush sent green paint streaking into the red wash, forming a grotesque brownish pool. By the time I managed to clean up my soggy mess, I’d determined to never pick up a paintbrush again.

By morning, however, my devastation had given way to new resolve:

I would spend some of my precious pocket money on the correct materials, and I’d take the time to study and practice. Eventually, I had the pleasure of painting those landscape and still-life pieces—yes, even the strawberries—and I saw then how all that “boring stuff” had been the foundation for my later success.

I often long to reach my goals quickly and easily and become dismayed and disheartened when I face obstacles, setbacks, and difficulties along the way. I haven’t discovered a magic pill for success, but the “Red Nile” lesson reminds me to buckle down and persevere through the tedious, unpleasant, or tough times. That’s the only way to get strawberries on a canvas.

ELSA SICHROVSKY IS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT. SHE AND HER FAMILY ARE ENGAGED IN MISSIONARY WORK IN TAIWAN. ■

1. See Exodus 7:14–25.

STEP BY STEP

POINTS TO PONDER

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him.

—*Psalm 37:23 NIV*

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.

—*Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968)*

Winners have the ability to step back from the canvas of their lives like an artist gaining perspective. They make their lives a work of art—an individual masterpiece.

—*Denis Waitley (b. 1933)*

Don't be afraid to take a big step if one is indicated. You can't cross a chasm in two small jumps.

—*David Lloyd George (1863–1945)*

The first step toward success is taken when you refuse to be a captive of the environment in which you first find yourself.

—*Mark Caine*

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

—*Lao Tzu (c. 604–531 BC)*

Life is a series of steps. Things are done gradually. Once in a while there is a giant step, but most of the time we are taking small, seemingly insignificant steps on the stairway of life.

—*Ralph Ransom (1874–1908)*

Focused, hard work is the real key to success. Keep your eyes on the goal and just keep taking the next step towards completing it.

—*John Carmack (b. 1970)*

The first step toward getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are.

—*Author unknown*

Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success.

—*Author unknown*

Most great people have attained their greatest success just one step beyond their greatest failure.

—*Napoleon Hill (1883–1970)*

The vision must be followed by the venture. It is not enough to stare up the steps; we must step up the stairs.

—*Vance Havner (1901–1986)*

Never look down to test the ground before taking your next step; only he who keeps his eye fixed on the far horizon will find the right road.

—*Dag Hammarskjold (1905–1961)*

May you have enough happiness to keep you sweet,
Trials to keep you strong, sorrow to keep you human,
Hope to keep you happy, failure to keep you humble,
Success to keep you eager, friends to give you comfort,
Wealth to meet your needs,
enthusiasm to look forward,
Faith to banish depression,
And determination enough to make each day better than yesterday.

—*Author unknown* ■

MUD AND PALACES



BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

AS MUCH AS WE WOULD LIKE IT, life is not always as wonderful as we'd wish, and we sometimes find ourselves having to brave the tumult of experiences that are hard to bear. Sometimes, when our patience and faith are tried, when all our attempts to do the right thing end up caked in the mud of problems and troubles, it seems impossible to find a sense of value in what we're doing.

It's easy under these circumstances to feel like our days are as hard to wade through as a mud pit, but

we can draw encouragement and motivation from the fact that we're not alone. God's power and love have to be demonstrated in the worst of times as well as the best. They have to work in the mud, not just the palace.

Consider the apostle Paul. Here is a man whom many Christians look to as an example of unshakable faith in the face of ongoing persecution and difficulties. However, even though he usually remained positive in the face of his struggles, he had his share of "mud" times.

Immediately after his encounter with Jesus and subsequent conversion in Damascus, Paul threw himself into the life of a disciple. He gave it his all, only to find that his change of heart had so enraged his former Jewish colleagues that they had assassins planning to kill him before he could leave the city. Neither was he trusted by his new brethren in

Christ—his prior persecution of Christians even caused many of them to doubt the sincerity of his conversion.

When he was abandoned and shipped off to his hometown of Tarsus,¹ it must have been very difficult for Paul to avoid feeling that he'd failed. But he didn't give up, and in time God sent Barnabas with the vision to spread the gospel in Asia Minor and eventually throughout the Roman Empire.²

It's true that many great men of faith had moments when they were "flying high," like Joseph with Pharaoh, or Elijah calling down fire from heaven, or Daniel in the lions' den, but most of the time they were down there in the mud with everyone else, because that's where their faith could be clearly demonstrated and strengthened.

One moment, Joseph was on top of the world;³ the next, he was

1. See Acts 9:22–31.
2. See Acts 11:25–26; 13:1–3.
3. See Genesis 37:9–11.
4. See Genesis 37:28.
5. See Genesis 39.
6. See Genesis 40–41.
7. See Exodus 2:10–15.
8. See Acts 7:29–30.
9. Matthew 8:20 NIV
10. Psalm 139:7–12 NIV and NAS



being sold into slavery in a foreign land.⁴ Then he worked his way up until eventually he was running the household of one of Egypt's most prominent figures. But again, his success was short-lived, as he found himself the victim of this man's vengeful wife, who landed him in a prison cell for standing up for his convictions.⁵

He must have felt like a total washout, but he used what little he had to carry on, even interpreting dreams for some other unlucky souls down in the "mud" of the prison. It was two years before he was released and catapulted into the position God had prepared for him as second in command in Egypt.⁶

And then there's Moses. God had allowed Moses to be raised in Pharaoh's court; yet young, strong, and confident Moses was not ready to become the instrument God would use to free His people.⁷ God

had to put him down in the mud of Midian, struggling for 40 years in the wilderness as an exile until he was ready for God to fulfill His plan through him.⁸

And what about Jesus? He certainly had "mud" time! He even said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."⁹

If you've ever felt like things in your life have gone so wrong that God could no longer rescue you, just remember what King David said. He'd done some terrible things, yet he knew that he'd never be abandoned by the divine love that held on to him through everything.

"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your

hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you."¹⁰

Jesus works in each of our lives in a tailor-made way because no two people or lives are exactly the same. God's examples of those He calls great all had one thing in common: they were determined to stay faithful through times when they couldn't see God's plan for them. Whatever the present and future hold for you, remember that He's promised He will walk through it all by your side, whether in the palace or the mud.

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



THE PERSEVERANCE PATH

All the performances of human art, at which we look with praise or wonder, are instances of the resistless force of perseverance: it is by this that the quarry becomes a pyramid, and that distant countries are united with canals. If a man was to compare the effect of a single stroke of the pickaxe, or of one impression of the spade, with the general design and last result, he would be overwhelmed by the sense of their disproportion; yet those petty operations, incessantly continued, in time surmount the greatest difficulties, and mountains are levelled, and oceans bounded, by the slender force of human beings.
—*Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)*

If you wish success in life, make perseverance your bosom friend, experience your wise counsellor, caution your elder brother, and hope your guardian genius.
—*Joseph Addison (1672–1719)*

Though today may not fulfil
All your hopes, have patience still;
For perchance tomorrow's sun
Sees your happier days begun.
—*Unknown*

God is teaching you by His great picture book of nature to wait, to sow your seed, and wait for the slow ripening of the harvest under the patient heavens. He does not give you perfect and full-formed things at once. He sows the seeds of things that will gradually grow and ripen and bear fruit. He gives buds first, and then full unfolded blossoms, and then perfect fruit.
—*Hugh Macmillan (c.1850), adapted*

Consider the farmer who waits patiently for the coming of rain in the fall and spring, looking forward to the precious fruit of the earth.—*James 5:7 CEB*

Lord, when you call us to live and work for you,
give us the wisdom to remember
that it is not the beginning
but the faithful continuing of the task
that is most important in your eyes,
until we have completed it to the best of our ability;
through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who laid down his life for us
in order to finish your work.
—*Author unknown* ■

THE CLEAN PLATYPUS

BY CHALSEY DOOLEY



SOME DAYS SEEM MAGICAL—things go well, I try some new ideas, I have something to show for the hours I've spent at various tasks. Then there are other times when I get to the end of the day struggling to find something of note that I accomplished. Sure, the kids were fed and dressed, they did their home-learning activities, they played in the park ... but I still feel I want more. I want to be able to check off several things from my long to-do list. I want to be able to say I made leaps of progress. But rather than that, I feel like I'm falling further behind in so many areas of life.

At the end of a long day a few months back, I was trying to push off the weight of despondency from having so much to take care of, with problems piling up faster than I could keep up with. Then I walked

into the bathroom and found Patrick (two years old) had taken his soft, fuzzy, stuffed platypus, filled up the sink, given it a good wash, and now had poured baking soda (which I use for cleaning the sink) all over it.

I didn't need more messes to clean up. But it did look kinda cute, so I chuckled to myself, thinking, *Even though I can't seem to get around to any of my other goals, at least the platypus is clean!*

Later, as I looked at the children, happy, cozy in bed, waiting for their bedtime story, I decided to change my criteria for "accomplishment" and a "good day."

Now I go down a new list and see how many "checks" I can put.

- ✓ Did I help my children smile today?
- ✓ Was I patient when things didn't go smoothly?

- ✓ Did I show each son that I loved him personally?
- ✓ Was I available to help, listen, and encourage, even at the cost of not "getting something done"?
- ✓ Did I pray for someone today?
- ✓ Did I laugh and choose to take things in stride when I felt like I was being pushed over the edge?

Tomorrow's another day. Eventually the to-do list will work out. Plod. Breathe. Smile. Plod. Breathe. Smile. We'll get there, eventually, wherever "there" is actually meant to be.

CHALSEY DOOLEY IS A WRITER OF INSPIRATIONAL MATERIAL FOR CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS AND IS A FULL-TIME EDU-MOM LIVING IN AUSTRALIA. CHECK OUT HER WEBSITE AT WWW.NURTURE-INSPIRE-TEACH.COM. ■



BUILDING A LEGACY

BY SUKANYA KUMAR-SINHA

HAVE YOU, like me, ever wondered what kind of an impression you make on people? Or more importantly, if you have any lasting impact on people's lives?

Living in multi-religious India, where Christians form only 2% of the entire population, I am constantly mindful of the fact that people will probably judge my God by the way I live my life. I know that the way I conduct myself will play a big part in helping others form positive opinions of Christians in general, and even of Jesus Himself.

My aunt once offered a glass of water to an elderly couple who had been stranded on the road outside her house and were waiting for the tow truck to arrive. The husband gratefully accepted the glass of water and said, "You must be Christian."

While driving home from work the other day, I got mad at

a motorcyclist who had brushed against my car. Then I suddenly realized that as he looked at my angry face telling him off, he must have also seen the cross hanging from my rearview mirror. Did he go about the rest of his day with a good impression of the Christian woman he'd encountered? I don't think so, and I instantly felt ashamed of my example.

As you can see, I have some room for improvement, which is why I was encouraged by the following game that my extended family recently played. We prepared cards with each of our names on them, and we all wrote encouraging things on one another's cards. Then all the cards were gathered in a pile, so we didn't know who had said what.

When my turn came to read what others had said about me, I was a little surprised that no one

had commented on what I felt are my more visible skills, abilities, and talents. Instead my card contained points like:

"You have strong faith in prayer."

"I like how you have such a good relationship with God."

"You put Jesus first in all you do."

Later, I realized how much these compliments meant and how precious they were, coming from the people who know me the best. These are small examples from everyday life, but in the end, these everyday attitudes and actions are often what make the greatest impression and what we will be remembered for.

SUKANYA KUMAR-SINHA IS AN *ACTIVATED* READER FROM INDIA. SHE LIVES IN GURGAON, AND WORKS AS SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER IN A DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN NEW DELHI. ■

SECRETS TO SUCCESS WITH PEOPLE

BY CHRIS HUNT

THE BIBLE IS A RICH STOREHOUSE OF SPIRITUAL AND PRACTICAL ADVICE, and examples of strong relationships are one of the recurrent themes. In fact, Martin Luther commented that the entire Christian life consists of relating to people around us.¹

So what can we learn from the Bible about how to succeed with people?

TREAT OTHERS WITH KINDNESS, THE WAY YOU WOULD WANT TO BE TREATED.

In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.—*Matthew 7:12 NIV*

We should not live to please ourselves. Each of us should live to please his neighbor.
—*Romans 15:1–2 NIV*

1. "The Freedom of a Christian," *Luther's Works*, ed. Harold J. Grimm and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 365

Be gentle and kind to everyone.
—*Titus 3:2 CEV*

LOOK FOR THE GOOD.

Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.—*Philippians 4:8*

BE ADAPTABLE.

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.—*Romans 14:19 NIV*

I am not anyone's slave. But I have become a slave to everyone, so that I can win as many people as possible. When I am with the Jews, I live like a Jew to win Jews. And when I am with people who are not ruled by the Law, I forget about the Law to win them. I do everything I can to win everyone I possibly can.
—*1 Corinthians 9:19–22 CEV*

ALWAYS FORGIVE.

Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?"

"No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"
—*Matthew 18:21–22 NLT*

BE SUPPORTIVE.

Share each other's burdens.
—*Galatians 6:2 NLT*

I am glad and rejoice with all of you.—*Philippians 2:17 NIV*

We have not stopped praying for you since the first day we heard about you. In fact, we always pray that God will show you everything he wants you to do and that you may have all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives.—*Colossians 1:9 CEV*

CHRIS HUNT LIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND HAS BEEN READING *ACTIVATED* SINCE IT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1999. ■



TIPS FOR OVERCOMING STRESS

BY ROSANE PEREIRA

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A VERY ACTIVE PERSON. Ever since I was a teenager, people have told me that “Busy” seems to be my middle name.

After my husband passed away, I started to experience stress. I found myself getting overwhelmed by even small obstacles, and I knew I needed to find strategies to cope with and minimize stress in my life.

The first and hardest step was to slow down and adjust my work to my capacity. I longed to keep going at the same speed as I always had. It wasn't until I lost my memory for a whole day after a very stressful week that I finally got serious about setting limits to the things I take on and the hours I put in.

Second, I now make a to-do list for each day, right after my morning

devotions. After breakfast, I begin tackling the items one by one, and whatever doesn't get done by the end of the day moves to the next day's list. This has freed me from a lot of anxiety over what to do next and whether I'm forgetting something.

Third, I focus more on my spiritual life, like reading or listening to the Bible and other inspirational materials daily and listening to uplifting songs as I tidy, cook, or sew. I've also committed to fellowshiping with other Christians on weekends.

Fourth, I go to recreational activities more often, like the beach or birthday parties, which help to clear my mind of worries and put things in perspective. When taking the dog for a walk at the end of the day, I thank God for the sunset and the mountains, and all my other

blessings, instead of thinking of work, and this has also had a soothing effect on my soul.

Children sure know the secret—they seldom have problems with stress and they always enjoy the moment. They don't worry about the future, because they know their parents will take care of them. Jesus said that we should be like little children to enter the kingdom of God.¹ So in addition to all my other strategies, I try to remind myself daily that my Father will care for me now and forever, and that He wishes for me to enjoy the biggest gift He has given me, life itself.

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1. See Matthew 18:3.



QUIET MOMENTS

COME TO HIM

BY ABI MAY

“My beloved spoke and said to me, ‘Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me.’”¹

Martha was someone who learned a lesson on the importance of valuing above all things the peace and inspiration that Jesus gives. Once, when Jesus came to visit, she was so concerned with the duties of a hostess that she rushed and fussed, but in the hurry and flurry of her busy activities, she didn’t make time for Him.² There’s a lesson here for all of us.

Lord, help me to come to You so that I can enjoy Your company.

Pay attention, come close now, listen carefully to my life-giving, life-nourishing words.—*Isaiah 55:3 MSG*

Come close to God, and God will come close to you.—*James 4:8 NLT*

1. Song of Solomon 2:10 NIV

2. See Luke 10:38–42.

Just as birds have their nests ... and the deer have bushes and thickets ... so too we should choose someplace every day ... as a retreat to which we may occasionally retire to refresh and recreate ourselves.

—*St. Francis de Sales (1567–1622)*

Lord, help me to make space in my busy days to come quietly into Your presence.

Blessed quietness, holy quietness,
Blest assurance in my soul!
On the stormy sea, Jesus speaks to me,
And the billows cease to roll.

—*Manie P. Ferguson (1850–1932)*

God is a tranquil Being, and abides in a tranquil eternity. So must thy spirit become a tranquil and clear little pool, wherein the serene light of God can be mirrored.

—*Gerhard Tersteegen (1697–1769)*

Lord, help me to not only find a place that is quiet externally, but also to find quietness within.

[Jesus] did not come merely to give bread; He said, “I am the bread.” He did not come merely to shed light; He said, “I am the light.” He did not come merely to show the door; He said, “I am the door.” He did not come merely to name a shepherd; He said, “I am the shepherd.” He did not come merely to point the way; He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

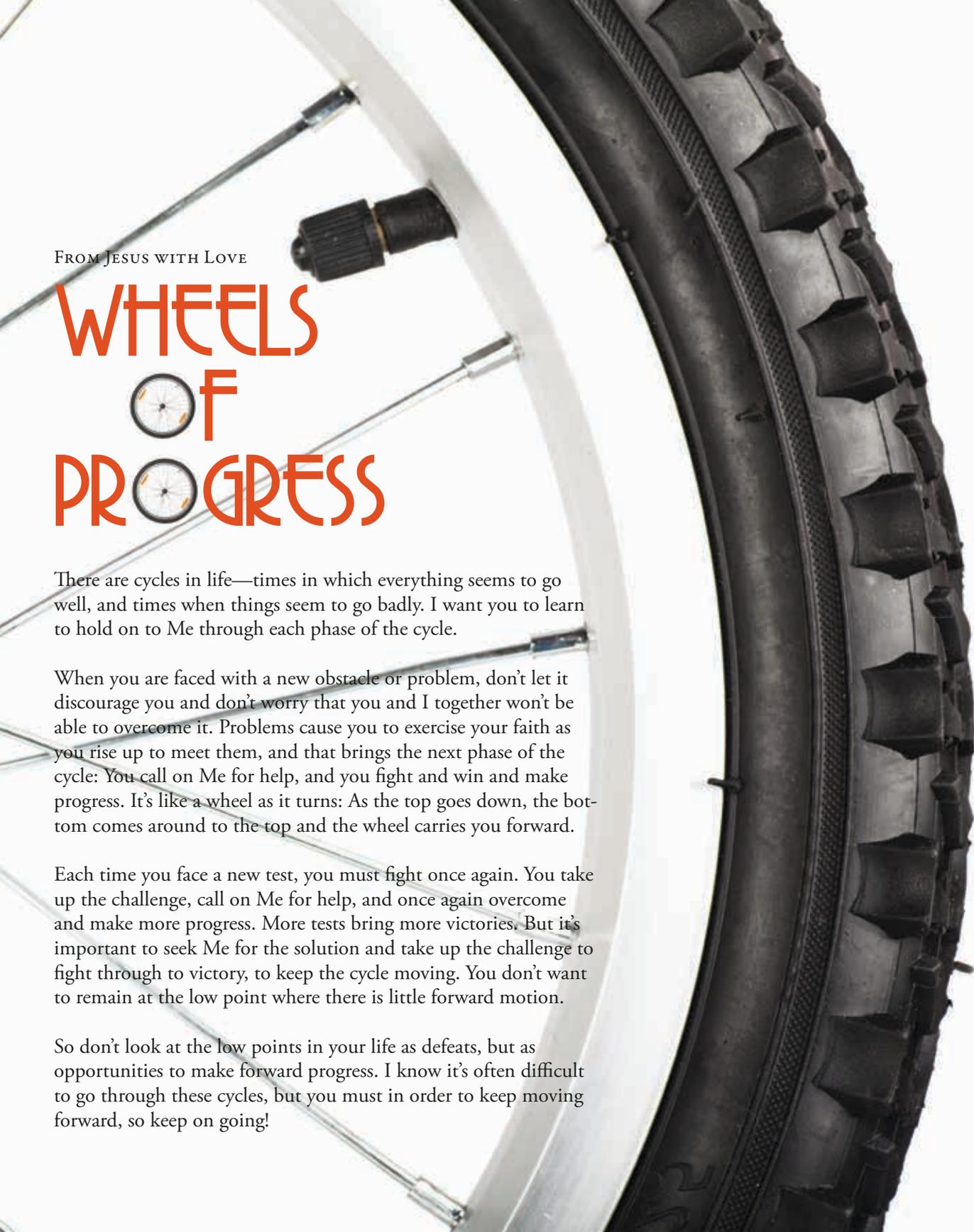
—*J. Sidlow Baxter (1903–1999)*

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.—*John 3:36*

He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him.—*Hebrews 7:25*

I believe in You, Jesus. May I get to know You better each day and prepare for a life forever with You.

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

WHEELS OF PROGRESS

There are cycles in life—times in which everything seems to go well, and times when things seem to go badly. I want you to learn to hold on to Me through each phase of the cycle.

When you are faced with a new obstacle or problem, don't let it discourage you and don't worry that you and I together won't be able to overcome it. Problems cause you to exercise your faith as you rise up to meet them, and that brings the next phase of the cycle: You call on Me for help, and you fight and win and make progress. It's like a wheel as it turns: As the top goes down, the bottom comes around to the top and the wheel carries you forward.

Each time you face a new test, you must fight once again. You take up the challenge, call on Me for help, and once again overcome and make more progress. More tests bring more victories. But it's important to seek Me for the solution and take up the challenge to fight through to victory, to keep the cycle moving. You don't want to remain at the low point where there is little forward motion.

So don't look at the low points in your life as defeats, but as opportunities to make forward progress. I know it's often difficult to go through these cycles, but you must in order to keep moving forward, so keep on going!