

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# activated

Vol 17 • Issue 2

## THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF GOD'S LOVE

Pillar of the universe

## The Jasmine Bush

A token of hope

## Practicing Gratitude

Making the good happen



## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION A TALE OF TWO RIDDLES

The other day, someone sent me a list of riddles, which led to the realization that I'm not very good at riddles. I figure I need practice, so I've been testing the patience of those around me, thinking up riddles of my own, some better than others. Here's one: What do a picnic in Wales, a jasmine blossom

in Indonesia, and a prison visit in the Philippines have in common? (As usual, the answer shouldn't be provided right away, so I'll come back to this later.)

On to the topic of this issue—do you ever wonder what's on God's mind when He thinks about you? None of us is as kind, generous, or loving as we should be and want to be. The reality is that our selfishness and arrogance often cause us to fall short even of our own low standards. It'd be easy to imagine God being tired out with our never-ending shenanigans. And yet, the answer to this riddle is the exact opposite: God's Word promises that "the Lord's unfailing love and mercy still continue, fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise."<sup>1</sup>

God cannot get tired of us, because He is love itself.<sup>2</sup> He loves the world He made, and He loves each of us despite our mistakes and shortcomings. In fact, God loves us so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to become one of us and to open the way for us to have eternal life if we simply believe and receive Him.<sup>3</sup>

In His ministry, Jesus traveled through Galilee and Judea, teaching God's Word, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and even raising the dead. In every way, He demonstrated God's love for us and His desire to heal us spiritually as well as physically, and He continues to do so today. It is His nature to be kind and to give happiness.

So what do the picnic, blossom, and prison visit have in common? The contributors to this issue of *Activated* have listed them as demonstrations of God's love they experienced in their lives. I hope you'll enjoy reading how they came about.

Samuel Keating  
Executive Editor

1. Lamentations 3:22–23 GNT
2. See 1 John 4:8.
3. See John 3:16.

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# Picnic Lunch

BY CHRIS HUNT

ON ONE OF THOSE GLORIOUS SPRING DAYS THAT MAKE YOUR HEART SING, our family went on a day’s outing to Bodnant, a famous botanical garden in North Wales. We spent hours exploring 80 acres of lawns and terraces; bathing in a cascade of color and fragrance as we walked amongst the rhododendrons, tulips, and lilies; admiring the specimen trees lurching up to touch the blue sky, framed in the distance by the mountains of Snowdonia.

By then, we were ready for lunch and sat down to enjoy our picnic of cheese, ham, and tomato sandwiches.

For this we might have said a word of appreciation to John Montagu. He was an eighteenth-century British Lord of the Admiralty. The story goes that sometimes he was too busy to take a meal, so he would ask his servants to bring him meat inside two slices of bread, so that he could eat at his desk. His formal title was the Earl of Sandwich, and that is how the “sandwich” came about.

Bread is the food most frequently mentioned in the Bible. *Lehem*, the Hebrew word for “bread” in the Old Testament, is used 295 times. In the New Testament, the Greek word is *artos*, and it is used 98 times. The Bible

lists breads made of wheat, barley, rye, beans, lentils, millet, and even manna. They would have been cooked on flat stones or iron griddles, perhaps in an oven; they would have been flat and hard, or leavened cakes.

“Give us this day our daily bread,” Jesus taught us to pray.<sup>1</sup> Of course, we mean a lot more than bread itself—the “sustenance of life” might be more precise, and it is both literal and figurative. We are not to “live by bread alone,” but “by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

God nourishes our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. His provision of our needs—both literal and spiritual—is another of those things to make your heart sing.

✠ He makes grass grow for the cattle, ✠  
and plants for people to cultivate—  
bringing forth food from the earth:  
wine that gladdens human hearts,  
oil to make their faces shine,  
and bread that sustains their hearts.

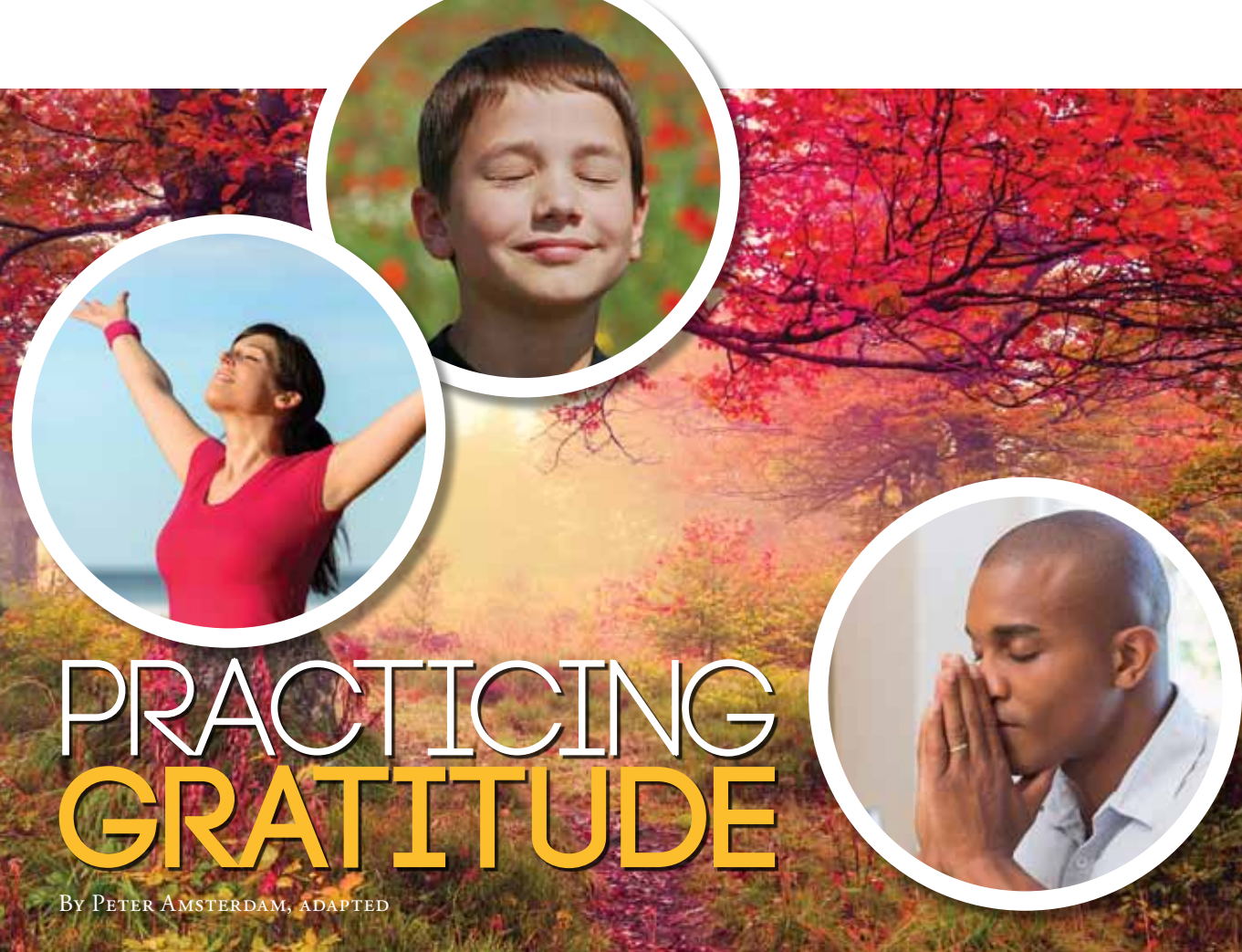
—*Psalm 104:14–15 NIV*

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

1. Luke 11:3

2. Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3





# PRACTICING GRATITUDE

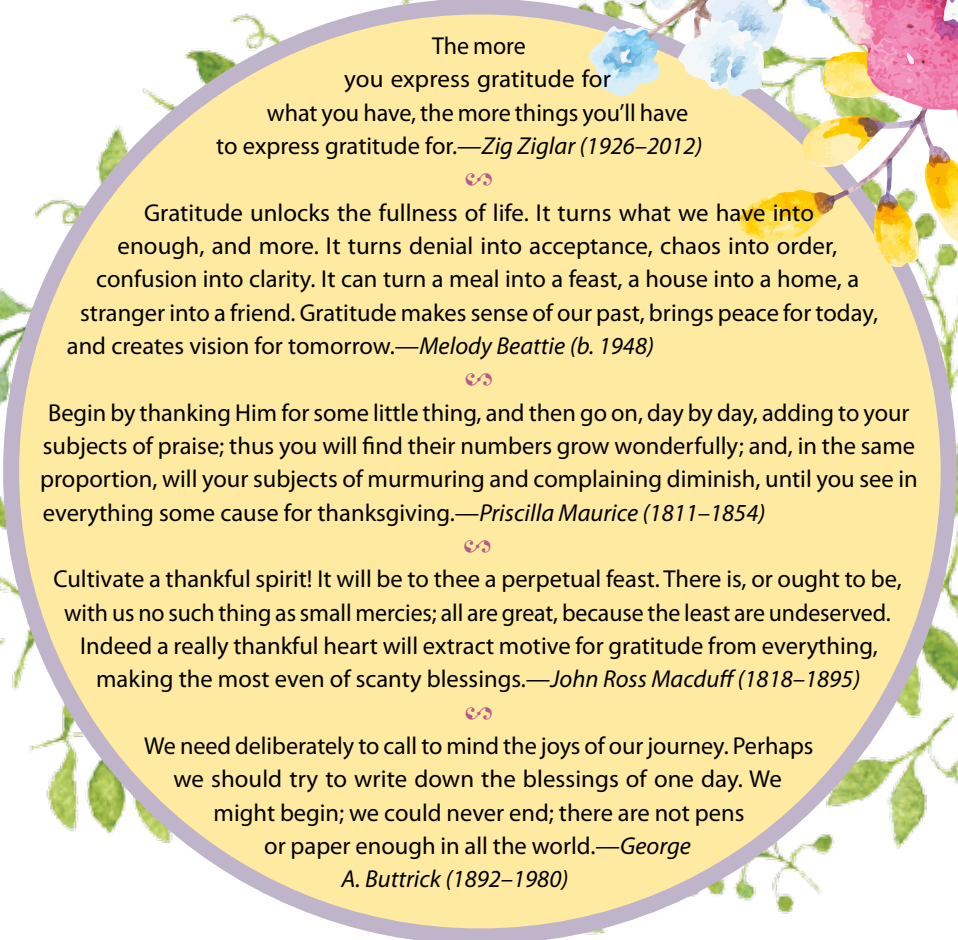
BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED

EACH OF US IS A RECIPIENT OF GOD'S LOVE AND CARE. Developing an attitude of gratefulness to God builds within us an attitude of gratefulness for life and for all that it brings our way. When we take a moment to stop and look around, when we see the birds, the sky, the view, the flowers, the greenery, when we reflect on the things we enjoy—the love that we have and that we share with others, our children, our experiences—we find plenty of reasons to be grateful. It's not surprising that there is so much in the Bible about gratitude and thanksgiving.

Gratitude causes us to focus on all the wonderful things that we have instead of what we think we're missing or haven't yet received. Recognizing that we have so much, and focusing with gratitude on that abundance, opens the door for more of God's blessings to come into our lives, as I experienced a while back when I started filming a series of videos about Jesus' parables.

My first film session really didn't go very well—actually, it went horribly! It took me hours longer than I expected to produce the final footage, and I came out of it quite disheartened about my lack of

presentation abilities. Afterwards, when I was praying about the way things went, I realized that there were many things to be thankful for. I feel truly blessed to be able to study these passages and to share the life-changing words that Jesus told through His parables. I'm thankful for the good equipment I have access to and for the technology that allows the spread of content—specifically the Christian message—far and wide. I am thankful for how my faith is being renewed daily as I study and prepare this material, and that God can use me in spite of my many lacks.



The more  
you express gratitude for  
what you have, the more things you'll have  
to express gratitude for.—*Zig Ziglar (1926–2012)*

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into  
enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order,  
confusion into clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a  
stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today,  
and creates vision for tomorrow.—*Melody Beattie (b. 1948)*

Begin by thanking Him for some little thing, and then go on, day by day, adding to your  
subjects of praise; thus you will find their numbers grow wonderfully; and, in the same  
proportion, will your subjects of murmuring and complaining diminish, until you see in  
everything some cause for thanksgiving.—*Priscilla Maurice (1811–1854)*

Cultivate a thankful spirit! It will be to thee a perpetual feast. There is, or ought to be,  
with us no such thing as small mercies; all are great, because the least are undeserved.  
Indeed a really thankful heart will extract motive for gratitude from everything,  
making the most even of scanty blessings.—*John Ross Macduff (1818–1895)*

We need deliberately to call to mind the joys of our journey. Perhaps  
we should try to write down the blessings of one day. We  
might begin; we could never end; there are not pens  
or paper enough in all the world.—*George  
A. Buttrick (1892–1980)*

What did practicing gratitude in this way do for me? Well, first, it buoyed my somewhat discouraged heart and spirit. It helped me to refocus on Jesus and on the purpose behind the project, the value of it, and why I was doing it in the first place. And that gave me renewed hope that even though the first filming round had been grueling, the next one would be better. It adjusted my perspective and gave me fresh courage.

When it came time to do the next video in the series, I prayed fervently that this session would go better—also thanking God for the blessing

this project is and the gifts that He has given me—and I'm happy to say that the filming did go much more smoothly and took much less time.

Something that's helping me cultivate more thankfulness in my life is keeping a gratitude journal. I love how it reminds me of what God has done for me—about the many joys I have in my life, the prayers answered, the victories won, the things He's done in the lives of my loved ones. It reminds me that God is involved in my life, and causes me to love Him and thank Him all the more.

Now I try to encourage others to keep a gratitude journal as well.

You'll realize how very special every day is, and how little things are wonderful things. By stopping to write them down, you'll notice more of them and appreciate them more. Being grateful for the good makes more good things happen.

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. *THE STORIES JESUS TOLD* IS A VIDEO SERIES AVAILABLE FOR FREE AT [HTTP://DIRECTORS.TFIONLINE.COM/TAG/STORIES-JESUS-TOLD/](http://directors.tfionline.com/tag/stories-jesus-told/). ■

Photo courtesy of Dina Ellens

# The Jasmine Bush

BY DINA ELLENS

MY BROTHER'S DEATH HIT ME HARD, perhaps because it was so unexpected. John died of a heart attack at only 51. Until then, he had seemed strong, healthy, and in the prime of life, so it was difficult for me to come to terms with this loss.

We had been very close as children, and both of us were keen on nature and the great outdoors. After college, however, we drifted apart. I moved to Southeast Asia, where I raised a family and taught school, while John worked as an engineer in rural Montana.

In recent years, though, we had gotten back in touch. I thought about visiting, but I was busy with work and family responsibilities and kept postponing. Now it was too late. John was gone—just like that! Regrets flooded my mind. *If only I had visited!*

One evening I prayed, “Dear God, please give me a sign that John’s okay.” I’m not sure what I expected, but nothing came. As I dropped off to sleep later, I asked for a comforting dream, but when I awoke the next morning, I couldn’t remember anything.

At the time, I was staying in a garden suite, which gave me the advantage of stepping into a lovely garden right outside my door. Right by the doorway was a jasmine bush I’d been watching for a week or more, eagerly waiting for it to blossom, and as I stepped outside that morning, something caught my eye.

There on the jasmine bush was a perfect, single white jasmine blossom! Jasmine flowers usually grow in little clumps and bloom all at once, and it’s very rare that only one flower blossoms.

Suddenly, I felt that *this* was the sign I’d asked God for. It was as clear and definite as if I’d heard John’s voice saying, “I’m all right!” God used my love of nature to give me a sign that was meaningful for me.

You may think it’s a small thing, but to me, it was a reminder of God’s love. His care is manifest in even the smallest details of His creation and our lives. “Not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered.”<sup>1</sup>

Now whenever I see a jasmine blossom and smell its fragrance, I remember that morning. I no longer wonder if John’s okay. I know he is and that I’ll see him again.

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

1. Matthew 10:29–30



# PASSION REKINDLED

BY ANNA PERLINI

I DON'T REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME WE MET; he just always seemed to be around when I was growing up. My parents made a point of inviting him to join us on summer vacations and practically every other family event. We used to walk to and from school together—we were quite close back then and talked a lot.

When I got older, I began to feel annoyed and imposed upon. I wanted to make new friends and have new experiences, and he was an embarrassing reminder of my past. Eventually, I decided I simply couldn't have him hanging around anymore and told him that I needed a break.

I don't remember what he said, but I remember the hurt in his eyes. He agreed to give me space, and I felt liberated for a while, finally

getting to travel on my own, meet new friends, and build memories that didn't include him. Every so often, his face would pop into my mind and I'd wonder what he was up to, but I tried to avoid dwelling on the subject. Sure, dumping him was hard, and I felt a bit guilty for how things had gone down between us, but ... what to do?

Once, I thought I caught a glimpse of him on a crowded street. Another time, I had to stare closely at a beggar at a corner, as I thought for a moment that I recognized something in his face.

Then one day I went to watch a new musical with some friends, and to my surprise, there he was—on the big screen! Somehow I'd missed him becoming a superstar, but there was no mistake—it was him up there singing, dancing, and oh so cool! Incredibly charming and attractive, but also brave, unconventional, and compassionate.<sup>1</sup>

As I watched, my heart was overwhelmed by all kinds of emotions, some new and some I recognized from our previous life together. *I really must not have known him as well as I thought I did. Or have I changed?*

It wasn't long before we bumped into each other. His happiness to see me and his warm, loving hug erased all the misunderstandings of our past, and suddenly everything made sense again.

Since then, we've renewed our relationship and spend as much time together as we can. I've gone back to thinking he's the most fun, adventurous, and tender person I know. We still experience ups and downs, but I can't imagine a life without my best friend, Jesus!

ANNA PERLINI IS A COFOUNDER OF PER UN MONDO MIGLIORE,<sup>2</sup> A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION ACTIVE IN THE BALKANS SINCE 1995. ■

1. *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Norman Jewison, Universal Pictures, 1973

2. <http://www.perunmondomigliore.org/>

# A MAN AMONG MEN

BY NYX MARTINEZ



IT LOOKED LIKE A SMALL SETTLEMENT—rows of matching buildings on one side and neat vegetable gardens on the other. In the distance was a basketball court. Farther yet, a vendor sold fruit.

I walked up the dirt path behind my father, who chatted with some men as he walked. Small crowds gathered as we passed by. They stared and whispered. I didn't know what they were saying, but I walked on, trying not to show any sign of fear.

Was I afraid? Of course! I was 15 years old, these were no ordinary men, and this was no ordinary village. This was the country's national

prison, where men were put away and forgotten.

My father and I walked until we came to a small chapel. A few men had already gathered, waiting on the benches for some kind of entertainment. It was hot, and I wished I were at home, sipping orange juice and watching TV rather than trying to escape the tension of the moment.

I listened as my father spoke with the inmates. As an ex-seaman and now a traveling counselor, my dad conversed comfortably with everyone from politicians to drug addicts, and he taught us kids to do the same. But I could not understand the passion that drove him to make these visits to the prison every week.



My father and mother were moved by the plight of others. Our large family could only afford the basics and a few small luxuries, but when they saw the need in others' lives, they always tried to help. Dad spoke of building a Sunday school for the inmates' children. He said he would try to organize sports tournaments and workshops. Whatever he did, he tried to do better. Wherever he worked, he could work harder—and he did.

Dad turned and motioned me toward the front. "Come help me sing," he said.

I stood by his side, facing the crowd of prisoners. They were hushed, expectant. He pulled out his nylon-string guitar, strapped it on, and thumbed through the hymnal till he came to the song he had in mind. He wasn't a particularly talented musician, but that didn't matter. Dad had spirit in everything he did, and when you were around him, you felt it. A few riffs broke the silence. He began to sing:

*O Lord my God! When I in  
awesome wonder  
Consider all the works Thy hand  
hath made.  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling  
thunder,  
Thy power throughout the  
universe displayed. ...*

1. Matthew 25:34–36,40





His eyes signaled to me. As I joined in on the chorus, so did some of the men. They closed their eyes, as if picturing a wonderful and loving God, a God who ruled the entire universe, yet wanted to be in the heart of every man.

*Then sings my soul, my Savior  
God, to Thee;*

*How great Thou art, how great  
Thou art!*

And then my father read from the Bible about God and His love—a love with power great enough to forgive any sin and love any sinner.

That day I understood Dad a bit better. I saw that he felt compelled to walk among outcasts as Christ had done two thousand years before him. It made no difference that their past was reprehensible and their future bleak. When he looked at each one,

he saw a human being, a unique and beloved creation of God, and he wanted to make their present world a better place.

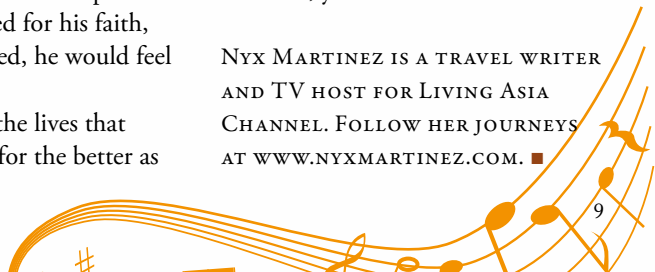
Years passed. Many of Dad's dreams eventually became realities. The sports league was organized; Sunday school activities were led by the inmates themselves. As a result of my dad's efforts to raise awareness of the prisoners' plight, sponsorships began to pour in for new initiatives. Dad's seemingly insignificant efforts created a ripple effect that reached into thousands of hearts. My dad was granted access to any prison ward in the country, and he traveled often into those dark corners, continuing his mission of hope. If he were ever imprisoned for his faith, Dad sometimes joked, he would feel right at home.

Thinking about the lives that have been changed for the better as

a result of the way my parents have continued to help others everywhere they walk, be it a high road or low, reminds me of another who walked among men, the One commissioned to bring God's love to the world long ago.

Jesus said, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. ... Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."<sup>1</sup>

NYX MARTINEZ IS A TRAVEL WRITER AND TV HOST FOR LIVING ASIA CHANNEL. FOLLOW HER JOURNEYS AT [WWW.NYXMARTINEZ.COM](http://WWW.NYXMARTINEZ.COM). ■



# GOD NEVER LETS GO



BY JANET KLUCK

QUITE A FEW YEARS AGO, when I had barely begun my journey as a volunteer missionary, I was faced with a big decision. I was fretting and fearful and ended up struggling for days with this decision. God eventually answered by giving me a simple illustration.

It was a picture of a little girl holding her father's hand as they walked. All the while, she was fearfully begging her father to hold on to her: "Daddy, *please* don't let go of my hand!" On and on she went, until finally her

father stopped, knelt down, and looked straight into her eyes. With a firm but loving voice, he told her that he would *never* let go of her, that as long as she wanted to stay close to him, he would always lead her and walk beside her.

I got the point and made my decision. There have been many other important decisions to make since then, but when I struggle with fear of the outcome, of making a mistake, or of going astray, this illustration always comes back to me.

Of course, life is full of wrong turns and missteps, and sometimes we zig when we should zag, but we

can always return to God's side and find our way again. He promised to never leave us or forsake us.<sup>1</sup>

On the lonely and rugged mountain trails, He is our companion. On the trek through the desert, when we thirst and feel the dryness of life and wonder when (and if) we'll find the oasis, He is bringing us closer with each step. When we push through the crowds and confusion of day-to-day life and struggle against endless questions, weariness, and discouragement, He walks beside us and tells us, *I'm here. Talk to Me. Tell Me all about it.*

And say we do fall, we blow it, and mess up—like so many of His followers that have slipped, tripped, and fallen on their way through life's journey. Does He ever give up on us?

Of course not. The thought would never even cross His loving and forgiving mind.

Then why do we worry and fret? No matter what decisions I've faced or how daunting they might have seemed, I can sincerely say that I have never regretted holding on to His hand!

JANET KLUCK IS A BLOGGER AND MOTHER OF 10 WHO RESIDES IN THE U.S.A. ■

1. See Hebrews 13:5.



# RESERVED for HIM

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG, ADAPTED

SOME OF THE LONELIEST PEOPLE ARE SURROUNDED BY OTHERS, yet they feel that no one understands them.—That is, the real person that they are. They long for someone to share their interests and problems, to sympathize with them. But it's true that even your lifelong companion, your closest friend, does not really know you, does not really understand you after all, because in every life there's a locked door or two where no one enters but yourself.

Why do we have this deep craving to be understood? Why is there this intense longing to have someone enter into what we feel of joys and triumphs, sorrows and defeats? When reality is that when we climb the heights of exaltation, there is

no one who can fully enter into our emotions, and in the depths of sorrow, some tears are always shed alone. Why is that?

God made you for Himself, and He knew that this very sense of isolation, of not being understood, would drive you to Him. God Himself is the answer, the fulfillment. And only as He Himself fills that longing will you ever be satisfied. He made you that way, He made you for Himself, and not until He fills your life will you ever be free from that loneliness. He's put a little sign on the table of your heart, which reads, "Reserved for Me." He knows that when we find human sympathy so lacking, we seek for the divine.

God is big enough, great enough to fill any soul, and His is complete companionship, ideal and perfect friendship. This lack we all

sometimes feel, this incompleteness, is a need for God. He who made us is the only One who can fill every part of our life. There's no need to ever be lonely. Jesus said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you, for lo, I am with you always."<sup>1</sup> Let Him come into your lonely heart and take over, and then you can say, as Jesus said, "I am not alone because the Father is with me."<sup>2</sup>

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS AN AMERICAN EVANGELIST AND AUTHOR. ■

You can turn to God's Son when you're feeling alone by praying this simple prayer: "Thank You, Jesus, for Your love and for saving me. Please come into my heart and accompany me on my life's journey."

1. Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20
2. John 16:32

# the Kaleidoscope of God's Love

## POINTS TO PONDER

Love is like a stream. Some days it flows and rushes, for there is plenty. On other days it trickles, and you can see it bouncing against the unseen rocks. But even when love is dry and has lost its flow and lies nearly empty on the muddy bottom, there is more love to come.

We remember how Jesus loved, how He forgave, and how He reached out to show He cared. By using Jesus as the Source of love, we can fill up the stream again. Life has the extra dimension found in Jesus Christ. He is the Authority on love. Jesus loves when love is hard. He loves when love is rejected. He loves when love makes little sense. Jesus loves when others would quit. Jesus loves when others are ugly. Jesus loves when others are cold. Jesus loves when others are unworthy.

And when we feel that love has dried up, we reach out to Him, and learn to love again.—*Author unknown*

Nothing you will ever do could make God love you more than He does right now: not greater achievement, not greater beauty, not wider recognition, not even greater levels of spirituality and obedience. Nothing you have ever done could make God love you any less: not any sin, not any failure, not any guilt, not any regret.—*John Ortberg (b. 1957)*

Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture. None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely *nothing* can get between us and God's love.—*Romans 8:35,37–39*  
*MSG*

The love of God is one of the great realities of the universe, a pillar upon which the hope of the world rests. But it is a personal, intimate thing, too. God does not love populations, He loves people. He loves not masses, but men. He loves us all with a mighty love that has no beginning and can have no end.—*A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)*

God's love reflects His eternal absolutes. God's love is eternal, like He is: more durable than time, wider and deeper than the incalculable dimensions of the cosmos. As He tells us, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."<sup>1</sup>—*David Jeremiah (b. 1941)* ■

1. Jeremiah 31:3



# POSTCARD *from* VERONA

BY ANNA PERLINI



I WAS BORN IN THE HOMETOWN OF ROMEO AND JULIET. Every day on my way to school, I used to walk past the famous balcony where Shakespeare has the pair exchange passionate vows after a party. I recently returned to Verona, in the north of Italy, and passed by again—but the thick crowd of tourists made it almost impossible to get near the famous balcony. I noticed the walls around were covered with signatures and it seems that the city has to periodically repaint them, so as to allow more starstruck tourists to write their names. The street hosts a number of shops that sell love-related souvenirs.

I don't know what Shakespeare would think of the way his story has been reimagined and adapted countless times. One thing for sure, it's never been more famous—when I'm asked where I'm from, my answer usually brings on smiles and wistful sighs: *Romeo and Juliet*.

When I was a teenager, I too felt very attracted to Romeo and Juliet's tragic story, and for a number of years,

I was secretly longing for my Romeo to come by and fulfill all my heart's desires, but life—and 38 years of marital ups and downs—taught me many lessons along the way.

I recently came upon a great quote: “There's a big difference between falling in love with someone and loving someone. Falling in love simply happens. But in order to really love someone you need to sweat, to suffer, to laugh, to stay awake, to give of yourself. Real love doesn't just happen. Real love is something you make happen.”<sup>1</sup>

As much as I cherish great romantic stories, I've learned that real love is something quite different. It stands the test of time, it's about giving and not getting, and it's foremost a commitment. Back to Shakespeare: “The course of true love never did run smooth.”<sup>2</sup> Quite a challenge then.

ANNA PERLINI IS A COFOUNDER OF PER UN MONDO MIGLIORE,<sup>3</sup> A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION ACTIVE IN THE BALKANS SINCE 1995. ■

1. F. Roversi
2. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
3. <http://www.perunmondomigliore.org>





# My Little Girl

BY BETH JORDAN

AS MANY FIRST-TIME MOTHERS CAN PROBABLY RELATE TO, nothing holds my interest like observing my little girl. Her facial expressions, the excitement in her eyes, her curiosity—just about everything she does brings out the motherly love in me. And one wonderful day I realized that's how Jesus, in His unconditional love, is looking at me.

As I watched my Ashley Elle sitting up on the bed and gazing at me with her bright blue eyes, all smiles, I thought, *How could I not love her? Sure, at six months she is as active as a puppy, she makes messes, she fusses, she wakes up in the night and wants to be fed when I just want to sleep—but no matter what she does, there is no way that I could ever stop loving or caring for her!*

Then I remembered the previous day, when I had felt so low and far from God. I had made so many mistakes! Surely He had stopped loving me—or so it seemed. Yet as I looked into my baby's eyes, He spoke to me. *How could I ever stop loving you? Why would I ever want to stop caring for you? You are the joy of My heart. Sure, you aren't perfect and you sometimes make a mess of things, but that's all just part of growing up. My love for you is ever constant, never changing. And don't worry, you will always be My little girl!*

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If one feels the need of something grand, something infinite, something that makes one feel aware of God, one need not go far to find it. I think that I see something deeper, more infinite, more eternal than the ocean in the expression of the eyes of a little baby when it wakes in the morning and coos or laughs because it sees the sun shining on its cradle.—*Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890)*

Your children are the greatest gift God will give to you, and their souls the heaviest responsibility He will place in your hands. Take time with them, teach them to have faith in God. Be a person in whom they can have faith. When you are old, nothing else you've done will have mattered as much.—*Lisa Wingate*

# ARMS AROUND ME

Quiet Moments  
BY ABI MAY



**HAPPINESS IS MADE UP OF MANY THINGS:** it is a smile of a child, the golden glows of a sunrise, the warm hug of a loved one, health after sickness. But such happiness is also transitory: a child does not always smile, the sunrise may be overshadowed with dark clouds, a loved one may leave, sickness may not pass. There is another happiness, that is deeper and everlasting, and that is the happiness that comes into your soul when you realise the depth, breadth, and height of God's love for you, a love embodied in His Son, Jesus.

To find Jesus is to discover that no matter your weakness, no matter your inabilities, no matter your despair, there is a strength you can draw upon, a hope you can lean upon, a love you can dwell within. Truly, "Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!"—*Psalm 144:15*

The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.—*Deuteronomy 33:27*



Behold the love of God. In those years that have passed away, it never failed. When we fell, it raised us; when we wandered, it recalled us; when we fainted, it revived us; when we sinned, it pardoned us; when we wept, it comforted us. In those moments of agony and doubt and almost despair, which some can recall, it was all-sufficient.—*Rev. Canon Money, adapted*



Help us never to forget your love, but to dwell therein whatever we do, whether we sleep or wake, live or die, or rise again to the life that is to come. For your love is eternal life and everlasting rest. O let its flame never be quenched in our hearts; let it grow and brighten, until our whole souls are glowing and shining with its light and warmth.—*Prayer of Johann Arndt (1551–1621), adapted*

O God, whose smile is in the sky,  
Whose path is in the sea,  
Once more from earth's tumultuous  
strife

We gladly turn to thee.  
We come as those with toil far spent  
Who crave thy rest and peace,  
And from the care and fret of life  
Would find in thee release.  
—*John H. Holmes*



Safe in the arms of Jesus,  
Safe on His gentle breast;  
There by His love o'ershaded,  
Sweetly my soul shall rest.  
—*Fanny Crosby (1820–1915)*

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# TRY ME

If you don't know Me yet, then I have a proposal for you: rather than trying to figure Me out, why not give Me a chance to show you the truth? I am not just talking about right and wrong, or good advice, but supernatural truth. All that I am cannot be comprehended by the mind. You have to seek and understand with your heart. Why not see for yourself if I am real and “the way, the truth, and the life,” as I told My first disciples?<sup>1</sup> Why not put Me to the test? Accept My love and presence into your life, and then see what I can do for you.

I can be your closest friend and confidant. I can help you when things go wrong and you need support. I can give happiness in place of grief, and I can bring beauty out of the ashes of failure and mistakes. Once you ask Me into your life, I will never leave you. That's a solemn pledge! I will always love and care for you in spite of everything, including your own faults and heartbreaks.

Once you connect with Me personally, and as you delve into what I have revealed in the Bible—particularly in the Gospels—you will discover pure and life-giving truths. There's a personal message from Me to you within that book.

All you need to do to start receiving all that I have to offer is open your heart and invite Me in.

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1. See John 14:6.