

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 17 • Issue 3

DISCOVERING FAITH

Seek and find

Butterfly Encounters

On the wings of hope

Easter Wonders

The third day





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION A CHRISTIAN'S HOPE

Most people understand hope as wishful thinking, as in *I hope something will happen*. But this is not what the Bible means by hope. In the Bible, *hope* is used in the sense of “joyful and confident expectation.”¹

Maybe you hope for good things to happen, or like me sometimes, you tend to rather hope that bad things *won't* happen. In my case, when those less-than-ideal things do occur, as they do for everyone, I've found the following affirmation comforting: “You've got to believe that God is in control of your life. It may be a tough time, but you've got to believe that God has a reason for it and He's going to make everything good.”²

This philosophy works for the mundane difficulties of life, but might not be enough for life's deeper troubles, such as the diagnosis of a terminal illness, or the loss of home and livelihood. In types of serious trouble we need serious hope, and that's what we can receive through Jesus. His resurrection, which Christians commemorate this month, includes the promise of our own eternal life with Him. As King David of old said, “Because of this, my heart will be glad, my words will be joyful, and I will live in hope.”³

And in the meantime, Jesus left indications of how He wants us to lead our lives:

As His Father sent Him, so He sends us.⁴ He calls us to be His hands, His feet, His eyes, His lips; to bind up the brokenhearted, comfort those that mourn, feed the hungry, raise those whose spirits have died from despair and loneliness, give new sight to the blind by giving them Jesus the light, share the gospel with the poor, undo the heavy burdens, and set the spiritually oppressed free.⁵ “Freely you have received, freely give.”⁶

Let's place Jesus at the heart of our Easter celebrations and share with everyone we can the wonderful news of His birth, death, and resurrection, which provide “confident expectation” of a new life for all who reach out to Him.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. E.g., 2 Corinthians 1:7 AMP
2. Joel Osteen, b. 1963
3. Acts 2:26 CEV

4. See John 20:21.
5. See Isaiah 61:1–3.
6. Matthew 10:8

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Butterfly Encounters

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

AS I WAS RESEARCHING MATERIAL FOR A SHORT STORY about an antique dealer who collected rare butterflies, I came across a website¹ that revealed a rich resource of stories involving those fascinating creatures.

I was amazed at the vast quantity of stories that had been contributed to this one website—hundreds of experiences—and I was struck by how big an impact the tiny butterfly has had on the lives of us mortals throughout the ages! Over 2,000 years ago, the ancient Greeks were already using the transformation of butterflies from pupa to adult as a metaphor of the soul's resurrection and immortality.

A common thread running throughout the accounts I read on the website of butterfly encounters was how these wondrous creatures have comforted people in particularly difficult times in their lives. After reading so many of these stories, I wondered if butterflies could work their magic for me too. I was going through a rough time and especially missing my oldest daughter, who had passed away seven years earlier.

One evening, I asked God to send me a butterfly as a sign that she is still with us in spirit, and then forgot

about it. However, the next day, as we were packing our equipment and loading up after a show in a distant rural area, a colorful butterfly persisted in fluttering by me the entire time. Then later as I was commenting on this to my friend while we were stopped at a traffic light, another butterfly passed in front of our windshield, as if to say, *I am still with you.*

But the most remarkable butterfly encounter occurred on Christmas Day. As our family was gathered around the tree, opening presents and enjoying one another's companionship, a butterfly floated into the room and rested near the light. It stayed with us all day and all that night. The next morning it was gone, as if it had completed its mission. We were encouraged and thankful for its visit, feeling this was a sign to remind us of her at this special time.

Of course, our encouragement and comfort should not be dependent on such signs, but we can nonetheless appreciate them when they occur. God's Word promises that if we ask, we will receive.² If you need comfort or direction in your life, God can send messengers to your aid in a variety of forms—with or without wings.

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A SCRIPTWRITER AND MIME ARTIST³ IN GERMANY. ■

1. <http://butterflywebsite.com/discover/stories.cfm>

2. See Matthew 7:7.

3. <http://elixirmime.com>

HAVING FAITH IN FAITH

BY TINA KAPP

IT'S SECOND NATURE FOR SOME PEOPLE TO HAVE FAITH AND SHOW TRUST IN GOD. They somehow see the good in difficult people or trying situations. To them, the glass is always half full. You'll often hear them say things like, "God will supply," and, "Don't worry, things will work out." Upon meeting a person like this for the first time, you'd probably think their life has been pretty peachy—with very few problems and everything going their way.

1. Romans 8:28
2. Psalm 86:10–13 NIV
3. www.just1thing.com

It might surprise you, though, to discover that people with such exemplary personalities didn't necessarily become faith-filled and positive because their lives floated along like a song. Many people have taken on this nature as a result of facing difficult, trying, sometimes heart-breaking and painful circumstances, and choosing to wait to see how God would come through for them—even though it sometimes took a while.

They may have fought battles with their health or watched their children battle an enduring sickness or lost a loved one. Whatever it was, these faith-filled people came out strong, courageous, and compassionate. I take

my hat off to them. They give life and meaning to the word faith and show me that no matter how bad things get, God will be there to help me through; all I have to do is hold on to Him and to the faith I have received through His Word, which will keep doubts and discouragement away.

God promises, "All things work together for good to them that love God."¹ It took me a while to realize that the verse doesn't say, "All things are always good" but that, "All things work together for good." To me, that means that even though bad things do happen to all of us, God works them into the story of our lives to bring about good on our behalf,



whether now or in eternity. When I take this approach, I also realize that we can't thank Him for all the good in our lives and then blame Him for the bad things. It means we can trust Him *through* the bad and be absolutely confident that He'll make our difficulties become something good, or through them bring something good into our lives.

The Bible is so full of examples of this principle, and I think it's because God wanted to get this point across.

King David is one of my favorites. Imagine for a second that your big career plan was to be a shepherd, which from my vast knowledge of shepherding (and my vivid imagination) amounted to watching sheep eat for hours, fighting off the odd life-threatening beast, and fiddling on your harp. Then suddenly, you're hitting the big time: you get anointed king; you kill a giant in front of two armies, the king, and your big brothers; and you become best buddies with the heir to the throne. At that point, if David was all like, *Yeah, God's really great*, you'd know it was easy for him to say that.

However, reality hit later on when he nearly lost the kingdom (a few times), had his own son betray him, and had to face God's punishments for some seriously bad choices. You know that when he praised God after *that*, he was doing it from a place where he knew exactly what it meant to trust God through ups and downs.

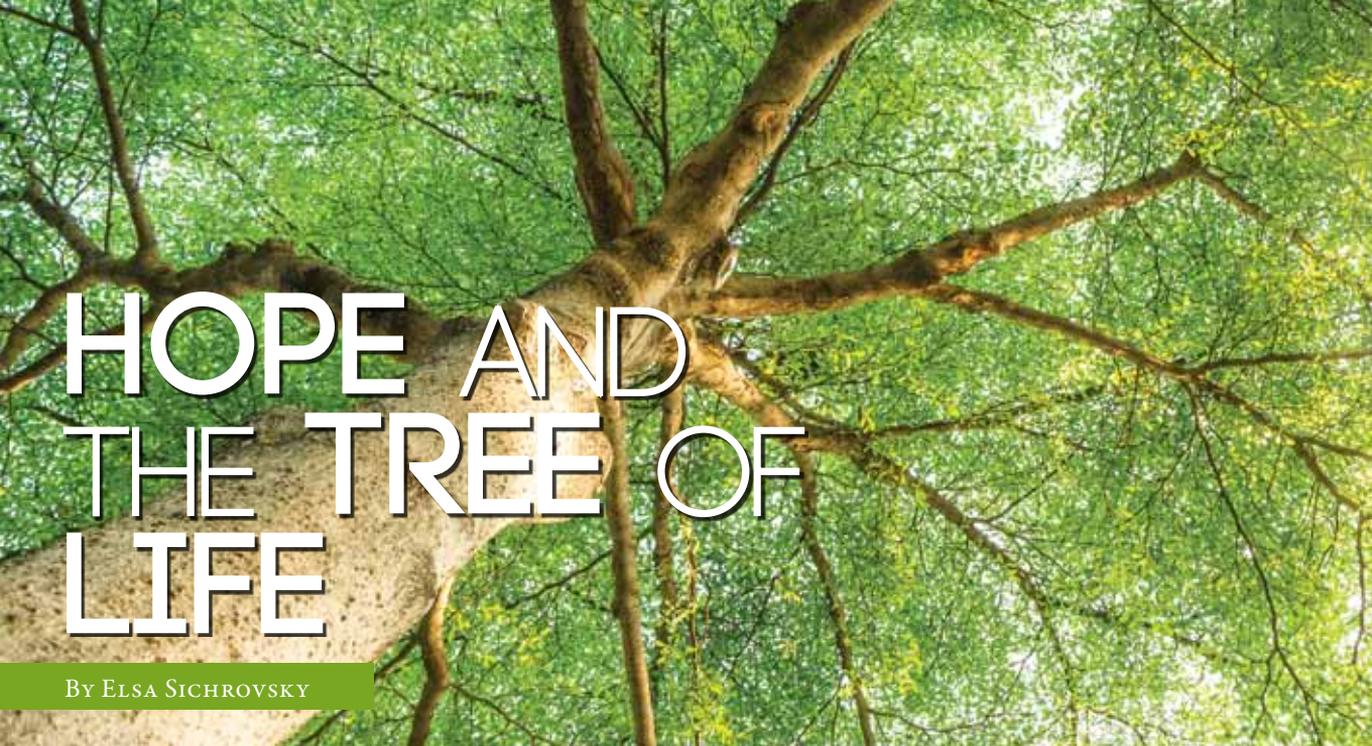
I was reading where King David says to God, "You are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead."² In that psalm he's desperately praying yet again for God to deliver him from his enemies, but he also knows and is confident in God's protection and care, so that his faith is not shaken but is stronger than ever.

Faith is compared to gold in the Bible. And like gold, faith has high value. Faith that weakens when it is tested would be like having a currency with little or no value, which would be pretty useless. But *like*

gold, faith is precious, rare, costly, and lasts a lifetime.

In my own life, I can look back at situations and events that weren't easy to experience, or that I definitely wouldn't want to relive, but I realize that if I hadn't gone through the tough times, I would have missed some of the wonderful things that I gained along the way. Having this knowledge and experience has strengthened my faith and given me the assurance that no matter what emotional storms I go through, I know Jesus is behind them, waiting to shine through and give me exactly what I need to move forward with grace and strength, ready to face whatever else life throws at me.

TINA KAPP IS A DANCER, PRESENTER, AND FREELANCE WRITER IN SOUTH AFRICA. SHE RUNS AN ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY THAT HELPS RAISE FUNDS FOR CHARITY AND MISSIONARY PROJECTS. THIS ARTICLE WAS ADAPTED FROM A PODCAST ON JUST 1 THING,³ A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. ■



HOPE AND THE TREE OF LIFE

BY ELSA SICHROVSKY

HE'S A TALL, tanned, lanky fellow in his mid-sixties—older than most of the other vendors at the fruit and vegetable market. He invariably greets his customers with a radiant smile.

One hot July morning when I approached his stall, I was surprised to see that he was wearing a thick brace around his neck. It stretched from the tip of his chin to his shoulders, and although he did not complain, his eyes betrayed his discomfort. He explained that he'd had an automobile accident and was recovering from an operation.

It was the peak of Taiwanese summer, when humidity levels soar and temperatures rise to uncomfortable levels. I cringed as I imagined how he felt to be wearing a brace of woven plastic in the blistering, sultry heat of an outdoor market. He saw

my concern and smiled. "It will get better. All wounds heal, and whining about how hard it is won't help any." I paid for my purchases and promised to pray for him.

When I saw him again two weeks later, the brace remained, but so did his smile.

"Are you in a lot of pain?" I asked. "That brace must be so bothersome!"

"It *is* painful and stifling," he agreed, "but what keeps me going is thinking of that wonderful day when it'll be gone and I will move about freely again. Having something to hope for really helps!"

As time passed, that "wonderful day" seemed to not arrive. He didn't recover as quickly as anticipated, and the brace remained for over a month. But my friend kept clinging to hope and kept refusing to despair, even as he struggled to maintain his business while undergoing treatment.

At last, the day came when he was freed from the brace's grip. A large

red scar was visible on his neck, but he held his head high with no trace of self-consciousness and willingly shared how glad he was to be free of the brace. His joy reminded me of the verse, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life."¹

My friend is a testimony of what Paul calls "endurance inspired by hope."² His hope wasn't just a vague desire or fanciful idealism. It was a choice to believe that no pain lasts forever, that all wounds heal. It didn't matter how long or difficult the process; what mattered was keeping his spirit buoyant and clinging to the promise of a better future. As I weather life's storms, his example inspires me to hang on when things look bleak. I will cling to the One in whom my hope is "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."³

ELSA SICHROVSKY IS A FREELANCE WRITER. SHE LIVES WITH HER FAMILY IN TAIWAN. ■

1. Proverbs 13:12 NLT
2. 1 Thessalonians 1:3 NIV
3. Hebrews 6:19

Dear Bill

BY IRIS RICHARD

BILL AND I ARE OLD FRIENDS. When we met up for coffee recently, he told me about his difficulties. His wife has developed a chronic condition which has left her bedridden, and Bill is struggling with her care. Meanwhile, he is overwhelmed by the demands at his workplace and the fear of losing his job. This has led to a crisis of faith. I had found myself battling with similar emotions not long ago. We prayed together, but later I felt I had more to share, and this is the letter I wrote.

Dear Bill,

It was nice meeting with you, even though it saddens me to hear of your setbacks and hardships. Recently I went through a rough spot in my life. Perhaps what brought me through could help you as well.

When I lost sight of God, I came to realize that I had to become quiet—like early in the morning, when only the birds are up and chirping, or in the quiet of night when all external commotion has ceased—calming my mental processes, to be able to hear from God clearly again.

Talking with a trusted friend about my heartaches helped me process the difficult situations. I learned not to be afraid of tears.

Reading a variety of spiritually feeding materials did wonders, as I found passages that turned my key. As I kept searching for hope, it did eventually spring forth.

Finding even small reasons for gratitude kept the nagging voices of negativity and misery at bay and helped me to keep open the door to regaining my faith.

Since then, I have made some commitments:

- Whenever I find myself too worn out to pray, I pray anyway—trusting that God will hear my plea.¹
- When feeling too weary to read the Bible, I read it anyway—God's Word is living and powerful.²
- When too impatient to find my inner stillness, I seek for it anyway—reminding myself that God mends broken hearts.³
- When my thoughts are downcast and sad, I look up anyway—trusting that the fog will lift, for God rewards those who seek Him.⁴

To end this letter, dear Bill, I wish you all the best and promise to keep your situation in my daily prayers.

Your friend,
Iris

IRIS RICHARD IS A COUNSELOR IN KENYA, WHERE SHE HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER WORK SINCE 1995. ■

1. See Job 22:27.
2. See Hebrews 4:12.
3. See Psalm 147:3
4. See Hebrews 11:6.

THE WORLD'S BEST PICTURE

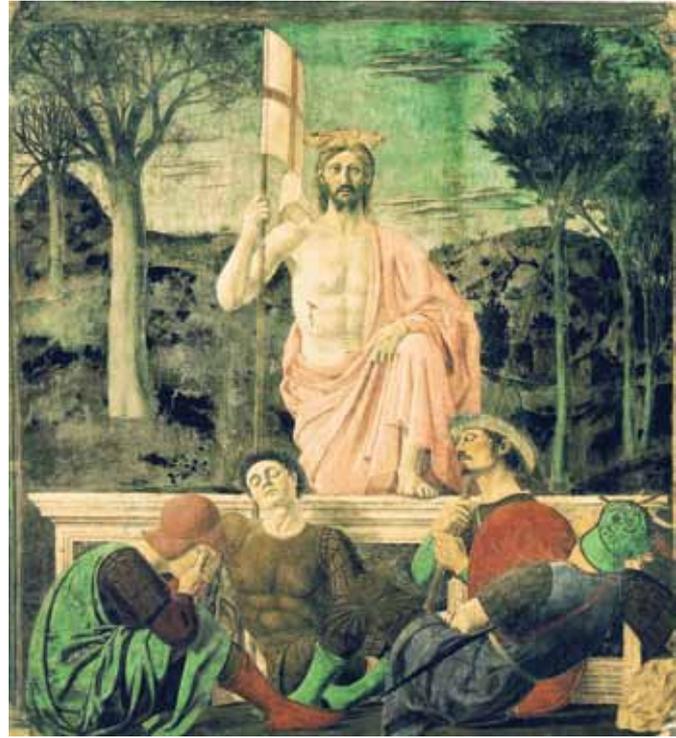
BY MARIE BOISJOLY

THE OTHER NIGHT I WATCHED A FASCINATING DOCUMENTARY about the famous fresco *The Resurrection*, by Piero della Francesca, painted around 1463 in Tuscany, Italy. Jesus is in the center of the composition, portrayed at the moment of His resurrection. He is seen rising above four soldiers sleeping at His tomb, illustrating the difference between the human and divine spheres. The symbolism continues in the background landscape. On one side of Jesus, we see old, dead, leafless trees; on the other side, the trees are young and flourishing, reminding us that Christ's resurrection from the dead is an affirmation of eternal life for all who place their hope in Him—"Because I live, you will live also."¹ Aldous Huxley described the masterpiece as "the greatest picture in the world," but it was the story of its preservation during the Second World War that captured my attention.

Toward the end of World War II, the Allies were fighting to rid Tuscany of the German occupation. Some British forces arrived on the hills overlooking the town of Sansepolcro, where the building housing *The Resurrection* is found, and orders were to begin shelling at once.

At this point, British artillery officer Tony Clarke remembered having read Huxley's 1925 essay describing the painting, and he faced a dilemma. In the end, the realization that the painting he had read about was located in the town below caused the art-lover to go against the orders he'd received—risking court-martial—by holding back his troops from firing.

As it turned out, the German occupiers had already

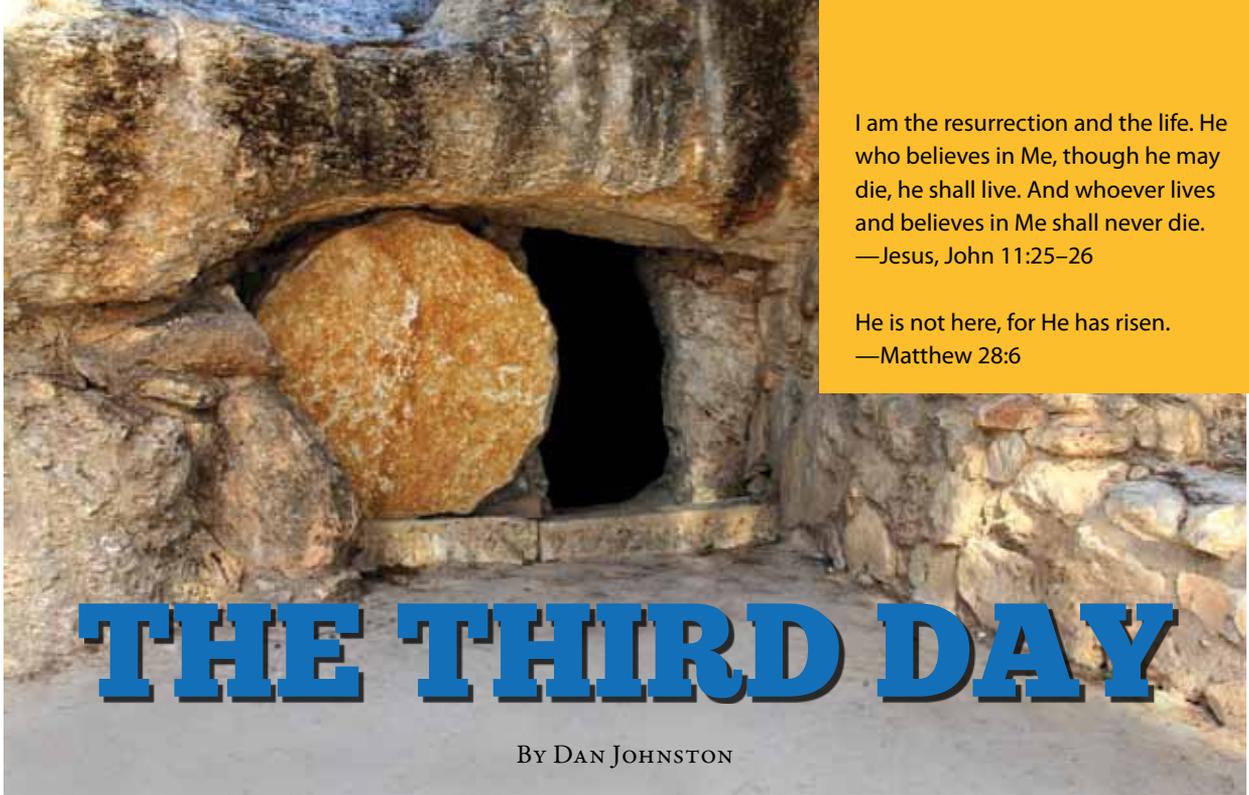


left Sansepolcro and the British troops were able to peacefully enter the following day. Both the town and the painting survived unscathed, owing their narrow escape to Tony Clarke's determination and a line in a book. For having saved their town from destruction, the appreciative residents of Sansepolcro later named a street after him.

I don't know if the officer was a believer, nor Huxley, the satirical writer. Still, their words and actions helped keep this portrayal of the resurrection of Jesus as a testimony for generations to come. To me, this is a vivid reminder of divine intervention in the most unlikely of circumstances. Just a few words remembered at the right time can be used by God to answer the prayers of His children in need of protection.

MARIE BOISJOLY IS A LAUGHTER THERAPIST AND DIRECTOR OF "COLOREANDO EL MUNDO" (COLORING THE WORLD), AN INTERACTIVE CLOWN AND PUPPET SHOW IN MEXICO. ■

1. John 14:19



I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.

—Jesus, John 11:25–26

He is not here, for He has risen.

—Matthew 28:6

THE THIRD DAY

BY DAN JOHNSTON

IT WAS EMPTY, they had said. The doorway was open, and the tomb was empty. There had been more, but that had been enough for the two now rushing through the sleeping town.

Off they went, racing down the long, dark road as fast as their feet could take them. The first rays of the sun were just beginning to light the sky.

They had buried Him only three days before. *What more could they want with His body? Hadn't they beaten Him enough while He was alive?*

Peter could still remember how the soldiers had struck Him with their whips again and again, long beyond the point of human endurance. And He had let them.

Jesus could have stopped it. Why did He let them go on? He said that He could have called legions of angels to protect Him. Why didn't He?

A thought struck Peter. It was something from the prophet Isaiah: "He was hurt for our wrong-doing. He was crushed for our sins. He was punished so we would have peace. He was beaten so we would be healed."¹

He did it for us.

The opening of the tomb loomed in front. John was already there, staring into the tomb.

Peter slowed down as he approached. The sun was now peeking over the small rise behind them. The day had begun.

He went in, and John followed close behind. The tomb was empty. The linen cloths that had been used to cover the body were lying on the ground, and the cloth used to wrap the Lord's head was neatly folded a little distance away.

The body was gone. Taken.

"Who, what...?" John was at a loss for words. Finally it came out. "Where did they take Him?"

There was no answer, only silence. The atmosphere was electric. There was something they were missing. Something important.

They stood there for a few minutes, waiting. Then the realization dawned on them as brilliantly as the sunrise that morning. Jesus had talked about this. They hadn't understood it at the time, but now it made perfect sense.

"The Son of Man shall be delivered up to evil men, and on the third day He shall rise again."²

ALL FOUR GOSPELS TELL THE STORY OF JESUS' RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. THIS ARTICLE IS AN ADAPTATION OF THEIR ACCOUNTS. ■

1. Isaiah 53:5 NLV

2. Luke 18:32–33

EASTER WONDERS

BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED

AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, we celebrate the very heart of our Christian faith—the resurrection of Jesus. It is the central theme of the gospel, the key component which proves the validity of everything Jesus taught. The resurrection tells us that Jesus is the Son of God; that as believers we have salvation and forgiveness, we are God's children, and we'll be with Him for eternity in heaven.

The apostle Paul said that if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, then the message of Christianity would be without foundation, and the faith of those who believe would be worthless.¹ But as the angel told the women who came to Jesus' tomb, He *has* risen from

the dead, just as He said He would. This fact validates our belief system and our faith. Jesus is alive! He lives! And because He does, so do we.

A SENSE OF RENEWED AWE AND WONDER

Jesus rose from the grave, conquering death, and in doing so, freed us from being bound only to this life. Though we presently live in a broken world, we have the promise of a perfect world to come. While we experience heartbreak and disappointment today, our tears and fears will be forever wiped away in our life after this one.² While we sometimes struggle with confusion, sadness, fear, and uncertainty, when we join Him and are in His presence in heaven, we will experience joy unspeakable.

This is possible because God, who so deeply loves us and wants us to

be in relationship with Him, made a plan by which we could become His children. This plan required God entering this world through a miraculous birth, and after living among us, giving His life for us on the cross—and then rising from the dead. Through the completion of His plan, we can enter into the relationship with Him that we were created for—both now and forever.

It is awesome that God has made it possible for us to have His presence in our lives now and to dwell in His presence eternally. The appropriate response on our part is one of eternal gratitude, praise, worship, and adoration, for we have been given the greatest gift possible.

INCREASED FAITH FOR LIFE

If we think about, meditate on, and appreciate what Jesus'

1. See 1 Corinthians 15:12–20.

2. See Revelation 21:4.

3. Mark 16:15 CEV

4. John 3:16 ESV

A marvelous and mighty paradox has thus occurred, for the death which they thought to inflict on Him as dishonor and disgrace has become the glorious monument to death's defeat.
—*Athanasius of Alexandria (296–373)*

resurrection meant, what it achieved, and how it has changed our lives forever, we can gain increased faith for every area of our lives. Jesus not only rose from the dead, but He's in the business of helping us rise above the dead ends, deadwood, and deadweights in our lives.

Sometimes we resign ourselves to situations and circumstances because we feel there's no hope for change, that things are what they are and that we simply have to endure them. However, God is in the business of changing things, of breathing new life into hearts, relationships, or situations that seem or may be "dead." Perhaps you're in a situation that seems out of your control or as if all hope is gone, but no situation is beyond Jesus' control; His power is unlimited. When Jesus was on earth, He regularly did the impossible. He

multiplied the loaves and fishes, walked on water, healed the paralyzed, and gave sight to the blind. Dead people were even raised to life.

RENEWED COMMITMENT TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

Jesus coming to earth, dying on the cross for us, and His subsequent resurrection forever changed the course of history. These actions allowed each of us the opportunity to accept Jesus and become part of God's family.

When Jesus told His disciples to "preach the good news to everyone in the world,"³ He showed that He wants each man, woman, and child to have the opportunity to become a part of His family, to be saved from their sins, and to experience His forgiveness and reconciliation. Each person who has already received His

marvelous gift, who knows what it is to live within God's family, to be forgiven for our sins, to have God's Spirit within us, will naturally want to share this with others.

We who believe in the resurrection, have been saved because of the resurrection, and will experience resurrection, should remind ourselves as we celebrate the resurrection of God the Son that we are proclaimers of the risen Christ to those who have not yet heard that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."⁴

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



the EASTER PEOPLE

DO NOT ABANDON YOURSELVES TO DESPAIR. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song.—*Pope John Paul II (1920–2005)*



A man who was completely innocent offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act.—*Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)*



Christian hope is faith looking ahead to the fulfillment of the promises of God. Christian hope is a certainty, guaranteed by God himself. Christian hope expresses knowledge that every day of his life, and every moment beyond it, the believer can say with truth, on the basis of God's own commitment, that the best is yet to come.—*Adapted from Jim Packer (b. 1926)*

1. 2 Corinthians 4:14 NIV

What happens when a Christian dies is not a matter of speculation, but of certainty based on truth. Something tremendous happened in history that has taken the issue of life after death out of the realm of conjecture and moved it into verified fact. Paul openly and clearly states the reason for his confidence. “We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.”¹ The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a precedent for the resurrection of all those who are in Christ. In other words, our future resurrection is based on the historicity of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a peripheral issue, but is central and crucial to the Christian faith. . . . The fact that Jesus is alive and makes His home in us doesn't only change our perspective on the next life, but in this life as

well, because until we are ready to face death, we will never really know how to live freely. The Christian faith is not about escapism, but about life here and now, lived in the love, strength and wisdom of the presence of Christ within us. In this, we have the assurance of the One who was raised from the dead raising us up to our eternal home with Him.—*Charles Price*



No tabloid will ever print the startling news that the mummified body of Jesus of Nazareth has been discovered in old Jerusalem. Christians have no carefully embalmed body enclosed in a glass case to worship. Thank God, we have an empty tomb. The glorious fact that the empty tomb proclaims to us is that life for us does not stop when death comes. Death is not a wall, but a door.—*Peter Marshall (1902–1949)* ■



BEYOND WISHFUL THINKING

BY SUKANYA KUMAR-SINHA

I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD WHEN I LOST MY GRANDFATHER AT THE AGE OF 65. My family is very close knit and this was a big blow to all of us.

I remember kissing Nanu's cold cheek and bidding him farewell. But something inside told me this was not a permanent goodbye. I always had a fervent hope of reuniting with him one day. Every time we visited the graveyard, I cried at not being able to see him, touch him, talk to him; but deep down, there was always a confident knowledge that I was going to see him again. In expectation of this eventual reunion, I'd think thoughts like *When I see Nanu again, I'll ask him about the time he was chased by a gang of armed robbers*, or *When I see Nanu again, I'll reprimand him for not getting his kidney operation done in time*. As I grew older, however, I adjusted to his absence.

After Nanu's death, my grandmother, Nanna, was the heart of our big family, and now she too is gone. When she died recently and we gathered to clear out her house, I ran my hand over the quilt on her bed and couldn't stop weeping. At church, I would find myself looking at her regular seat and asking Jesus, *Why?*

As the weeks passed, the pain became less raw, less constant, but it was nevertheless always there. Until one day I caught myself thinking, *When I see Nanna again, I'm going to tell her how much we've all missed her. I'll give her that hug I couldn't at the hospital ...*

And that's when I realized that the promise of eternal life isn't just fit for the childish wishful thinking of an eight-year-old, but that it can comfort throughout life. As Christians, we have an undying hope and faith that death is not the end. God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth so we could have eternal life with Him. All we need is childlike faith to believe God's promise.

I don't know exactly how the relationships we enjoy so much on earth will continue in heaven, but I know that eternal life with God awaits us. Death is the door we pass through to reach it.

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



Discovering FAITH

BY ROSANE PEREIRA

I GREW UP IN A CHRISTIAN FAMILY, but at 13 I declared that I was an atheist. When I was 18, I left my hometown of Rio de Janeiro with a backpack and set off to see the world. I visited the British Isles, then crossed the Channel and took a bus overland to India, through Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. I learned that Arabic-speakers use the same expression, *As-salamu alaykum*—the peace of God be with you—for hello and goodbye. Once in a little town in Afghanistan, I heard a boy singing a beautiful song in his father’s tailor shop. When I asked what he was singing, he said, “The Koran, of course.” When I arrived in Goa, I stayed with a group of French young people who would sit in their hut and spend hours silently contemplating a lit candle on the table.

1. See Matthew 17:20.

I remember thinking, *There must be a God. Everywhere I go, people are seeking Him.* Soon I found my Christian roots again and became a missionary, and that’s when I began learning what having faith really means.

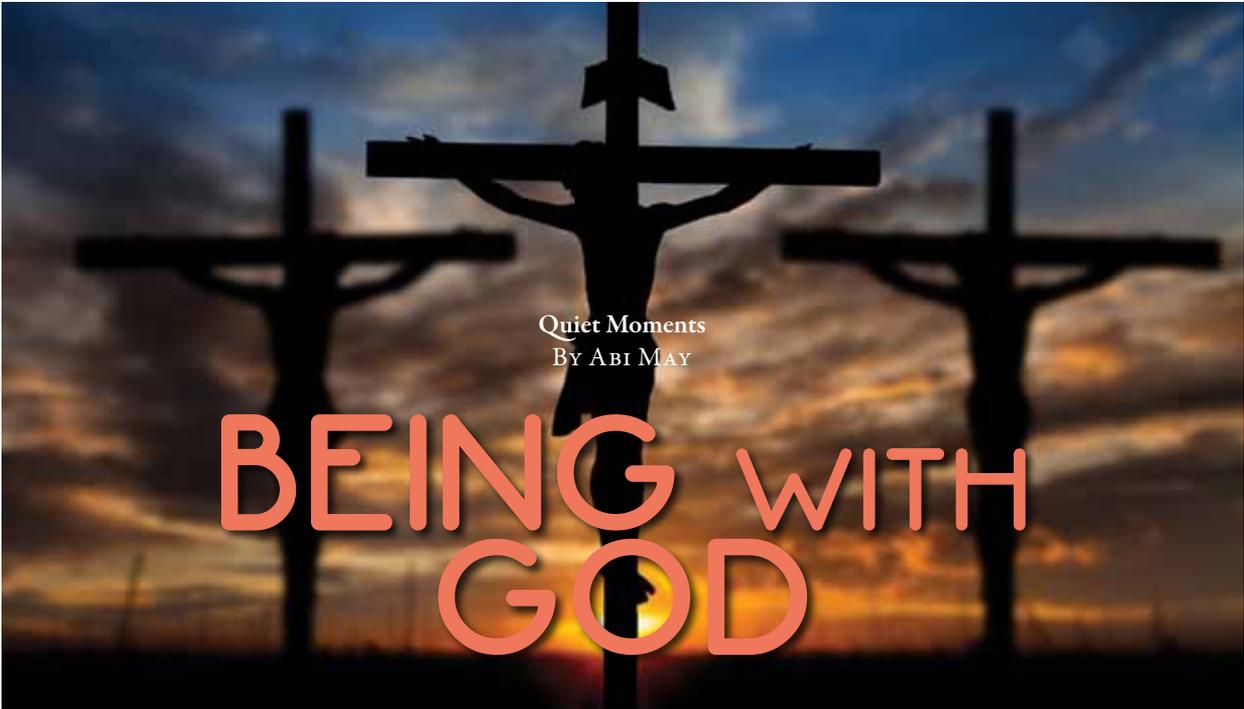
In my experience, as you pass the tests of life one by one, you will find that faith beckons you onward. It keeps you going when setbacks and discouragement scream that you should give up. It is a still small voice that tells you in the midst of turmoil that everything is going to be all right. Faith grows through the challenges we overcome day by day.

If you think your faith is still small, remember what Jesus said. Even if your faith is as tiny as a mustard seed, it can move a mountain.¹

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The resurrection completes the inauguration of God’s kingdom. ... It is the decisive event demonstrating that God’s kingdom really has been launched on earth as it is in heaven. ... The message of Easter is that God’s new world has been unveiled in Jesus Christ and that you’re now invited to belong to it.
—N. T. Wright (b. 1948)

Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God, that You died on the cross in my place, and rose again from death. Please grant me the gift of Your forgiveness, that I may live forever at peace with You.



Quiet Moments
BY ABI MAY

BEING WITH GOD

IF THERE IS ANYTHING THAT EASTER REMINDS US, it is that “salvation”—God’s wonderful gift of peace with Him in this life and in the life to come—is not something we achieve by what we do. It’s something that has already been done for us. Jesus died on the cross for our sins; He rose again on the third day. *He* did it, not us.

“This day you will be with Me in paradise,” He told the dying thief, hanging on the adjacent cross.¹ There was nothing that thief could do about his situation, his past, and certainly not his future, as he was being executed for his crimes. There was, however, something he could think and say. “Remember me, Lord, when you come into your kingdom.”² An expression of faith was all it took.

1. Luke 23:43

2. Luke 23:42

3. See Titus 3:5.

That’s a lesson for us. How easy it is to be busy for God for good causes, for other people. We can fill our days with good deeds, kind words, acts of generosity. But that is not enough to reconcile us with God, because just as we have our good moments, we have our bad ones too—the times when our deeds aren’t wise or measured, when our words aren’t as kind as they should be, when we selfishly think of our own wants just a bit more than someone else’s. We get angry, we don’t forgive, we grumble.

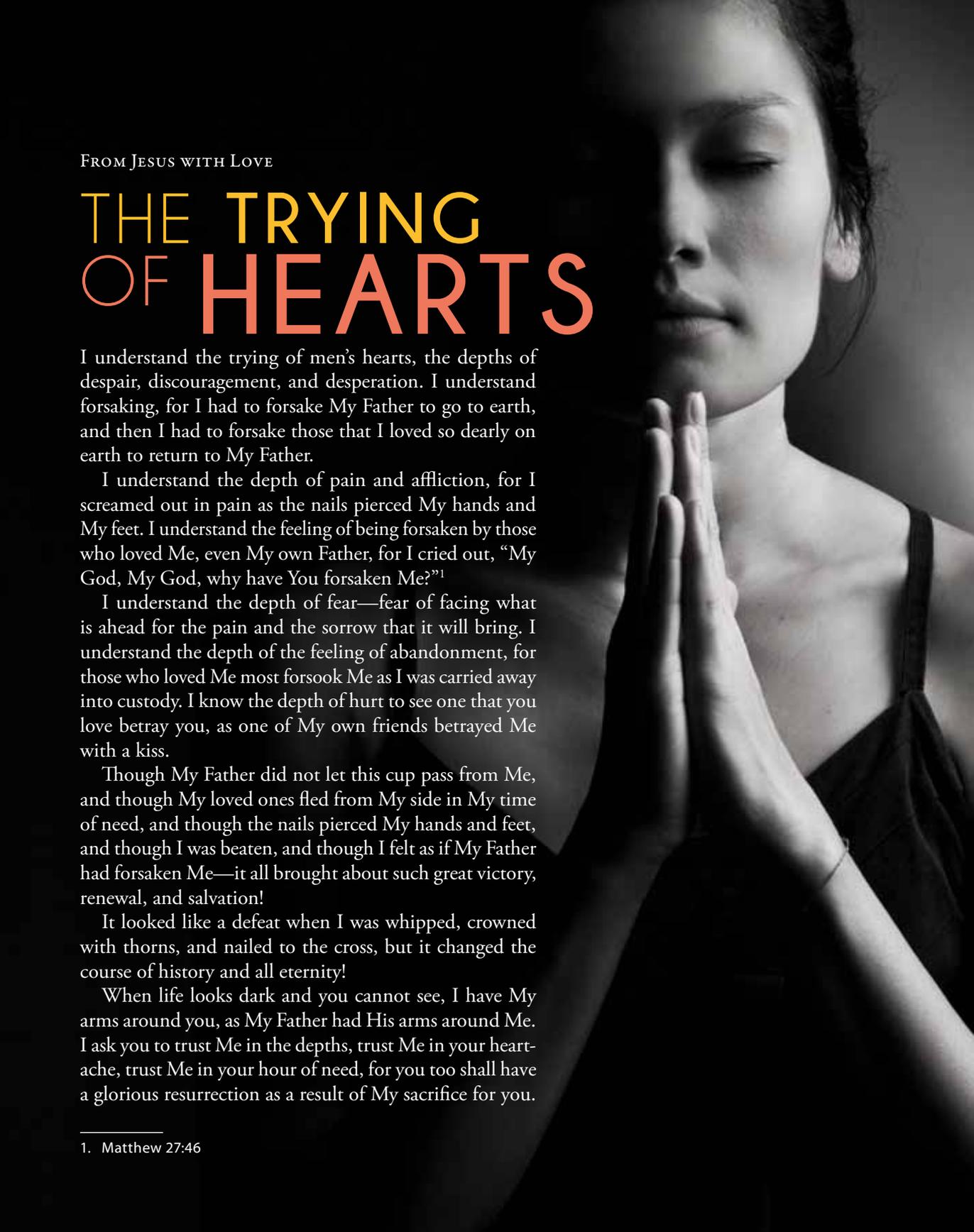
None of us quite make the grade. If reconciliation with God were dependent on the things we do, we wouldn’t get it. That’s why none of our good deeds or best efforts will earn us a place at His side.³

The wonderful thing is we don’t *have* to make the grade. The Son of God took on the life of a human being, lived amongst us, listening, watching, touching, healing. His

love for us was so great that even though He knew what He was about to suffer, He allowed Himself to be taken, to be beaten and whipped, and finally to be nailed to the cross. And even there His love reigned; He forgave those that crucified Him, He made arrangements for the care of His weeping mother, and He gave the thief courage with His promise: “This day you will be with Me in paradise.” *He* did it; not us.

No matter our fears and worries, no matter our regrets and guilt, no matter our feelings of inadequacy, when we pray, “Remember me, Lord,” He does. Let’s set our concerns and cares aside and be with Him today.

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

THE TRYING OF HEARTS

I understand the trying of men's hearts, the depths of despair, discouragement, and desperation. I understand forsaking, for I had to forsake My Father to go to earth, and then I had to forsake those that I loved so dearly on earth to return to My Father.

I understand the depth of pain and affliction, for I screamed out in pain as the nails pierced My hands and My feet. I understand the feeling of being forsaken by those who loved Me, even My own Father, for I cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"¹

I understand the depth of fear—fear of facing what is ahead for the pain and the sorrow that it will bring. I understand the depth of the feeling of abandonment, for those who loved Me most forsook Me as I was carried away into custody. I know the depth of hurt to see one that you love betray you, as one of My own friends betrayed Me with a kiss.

Though My Father did not let this cup pass from Me, and though My loved ones fled from My side in My time of need, and though the nails pierced My hands and feet, and though I was beaten, and though I felt as if My Father had forsaken Me—it all brought about such great victory, renewal, and salvation!

It looked like a defeat when I was whipped, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross, but it changed the course of history and all eternity!

When life looks dark and you cannot see, I have My arms around you, as My Father had His arms around Me. I ask you to trust Me in the depths, trust Me in your heart-ache, trust Me in your hour of need, for you too shall have a glorious resurrection as a result of My sacrifice for you.

1. Matthew 27:46