

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 17 • Issue 11

THE ART OF FLIGHT

Beating the odds

Bearing Fruit

Unseen results

Slay the Dragon

Conquer your fears





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION GOD'S PROMISES

In the book of Genesis, chapter 12, when Abraham was 75, God promised him descendants. And again in chapter 13. "Some time later," in chapter 15, God promised him a son and descendants as numerous as the stars. In chapter 16, when Abraham was 86, he fathered Ishmael, but God told him he was not

the promised son. In chapter 17, Abraham was 99 years old, and God again promised him a son and "countless descendants," and then once more in chapter 18. Finally, in chapter 21, when Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90, Isaac was born. Abraham had continued to believe God's word as the years and even decades passed, and he reaped the blessing in God's time.

When Pharaoh finally released the Hebrews and Moses led them out of Egypt, God told them to "turn back"¹ and camp at the Red Sea. Then He told Moses He would cause Pharaoh to pursue them, and that's what happened. The Hebrews would surely have preferred to leave Egypt without any complications, and Moses would surely have preferred to skip all the panic and anger he endured when the people realized they were trapped. The sea was before them; Pharaoh's chariots were behind them. But that was God's plan. He said: "I have planned this in order to display my glory through Pharaoh and his whole army."²

God allowed Abraham's and Moses' situations to turn critical, to the point where there was no alternative or hope unless He performed a miracle. But he needed them to hold on to their faith even though they didn't understand what He was doing.

There's a popular saying that "the darkest hour is just before dawn." When it seems to take forever for God to move or answer—hold on! God does His best work in impossible situations.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. Exodus 14:2 NLT
2. Exodus 14:4 NLT

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Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.
—*Philippians 4:6–7 NLT*

BY GABRIELA DELORENZO

MY HAND IN GOD'S

IN MY QUEST TO ACCOMPLISH SOME OF MY GOALS and turn my dreams into reality, I'm currently in a position where things ahead seem quite bleak. There is little I can do to make progress on my own, and I can't really see much farther up the path.

As I lie restless in bed, pondering my situation and trying to pray, I find myself meditating on the picture described by Minnie Louise Haskins in her poem, "The Gate of the Year": Put your hand into the hand of God, and He will be more to you than a light and better than a known way.

I try to visualize myself putting my hand into God's and allowing Him to lead me. I ask Him again and

again for peace, but I eventually hear His quiet voice coming through my muddled thoughts: *How can you put your hand into Mine while your hands are full?*

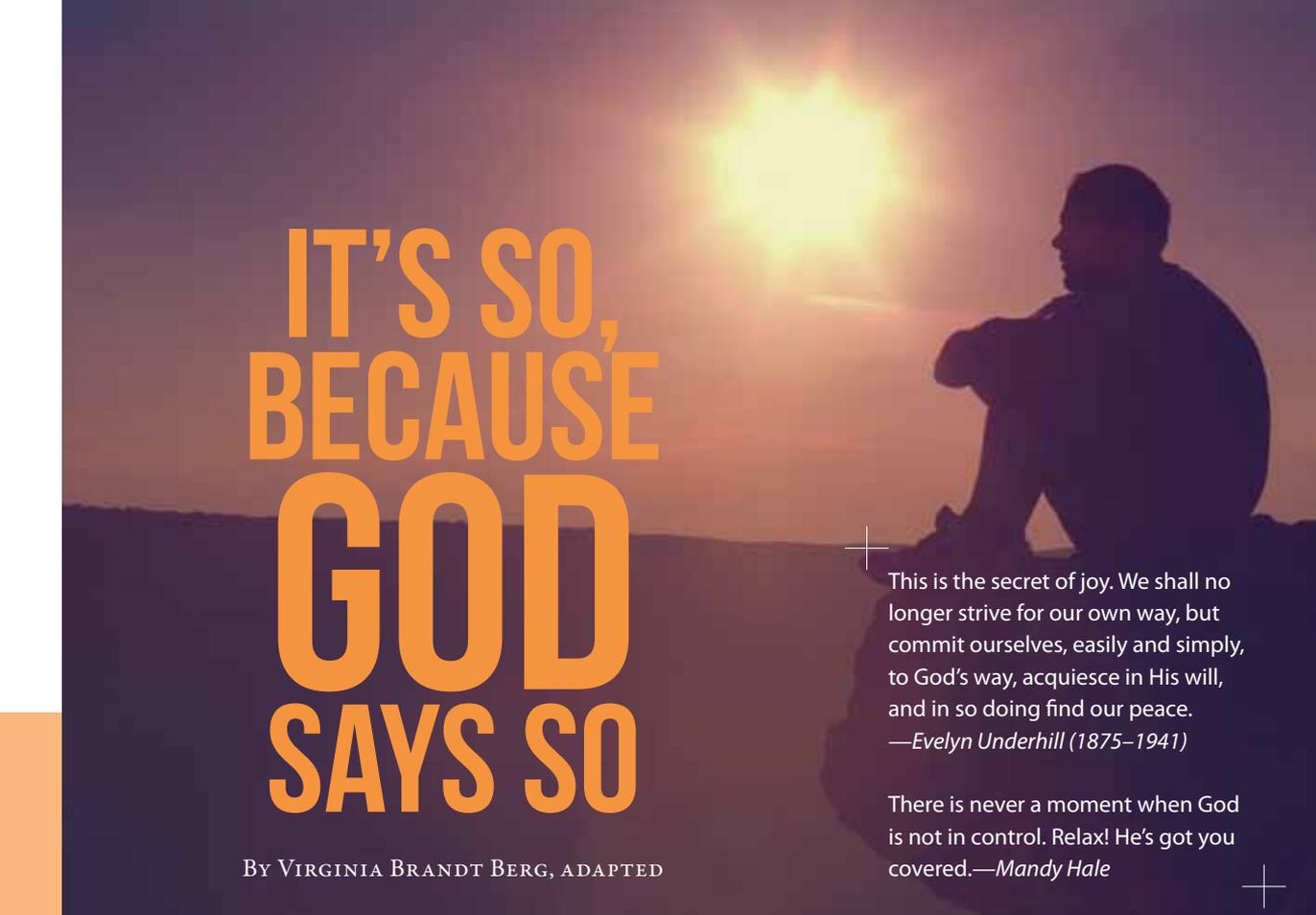
That's when I realize that I'm holding on to all of my own plans a bit too tightly. I have a time frame in which I want things to happen and a certain way I want them to pan out, and I've felt this was the only way I could be happy. But I'm constantly feeling frustrated, as one thing after another seems to go contrary to my plans.

Having goals and making plans is a good thing, of course, but it should be a work of cooperation with God rather than merely our own self-efforts. Trying to forge ahead in my

own steam hasn't been working. I need to trust, to believe that as God has guided my goal-setting, He will help me accomplish them in His time. A bit of patience would also help!

The road ahead is still unclear. I can't be sure of what the future holds, but I know that with my empty hand in God's, He'll lead the way and be the light that I need. I visualize myself letting go, and as I do so, peace comes. I fall asleep, secure in the knowledge that God will work things out.

GABRIELA DELORENZO LIVES IN GERMANY, WHERE SHE IS STUDYING TO BE A CHILDCARE PROFESSIONAL. ■



IT'S SO, BECAUSE GOD SAYS SO

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG, ADAPTED

This is the secret of joy. We shall no longer strive for our own way, but commit ourselves, easily and simply, to God's way, acquiesce in His will, and in so doing find our peace.

—*Evelyn Underhill (1875–1941)*

There is never a moment when God is not in control. Relax! He's got you covered.—*Mandy Hale*

AS YOU KNOW, people aren't always able to fulfill their promises, but God always is. His Word says that He is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think."¹ God stands behind His promises, so hold Him to them in your hour of need, and He will not fail you.

Have you ever had a friend upon whom you could utterly depend, who was absolutely faithful to you even when things were going wrong? Such friends are few, but oh, how we value them! Someone has said, "There is a strange bond that links a man to that

which he has found to be dependable and true. There is a tie that really binds you to the one you can depend upon in stormy weather." Just so, anyone who has tried and trusted the promises in the Bible when there was no other help, no other hope, nothing else to lean on, has found them to be utterly trustworthy. We know through experience that we can put limitless trust in every word and rest our full weight upon them.

All God asks is simple faith—that you take Him at His word and accept His promises at face value. Many modern people think it utterly ridiculous and impossible to take God's promises seriously and cash them in at the Bank of Heaven for

what we ask for—but that is exactly what God wants us to do.

Those with trusting faith are daily doing things that the skeptics say can't be done. Those of faith dare to take the promises from God's Word just as they are, appropriate them for themselves, and act upon them—and they receive in return the most wonderful answers to prayer, solutions, and supply.

These great and precious promises are there for you.² God means them personally for you, and He will not fail His Word.

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

1. Ephesians 3:20

2. See 2 Peter 1:4.



Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.—Romans 8:35,37 NIV

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

HAVE YOU EVER STOPPED TO ASK YOURSELF, “Why am I here in this life? What does it all mean to me personally?” This is a common question, especially when we’re going through difficult times.

Of course, we know that God has placed us here to love Him and others.¹ However, when we are faced with our own unique set of experiences that are part of our personal journey, it can sometimes be challenging to find meaning in all the things that come at us. That’s where we run up against brick walls every so often. We need an outside perspective from Someone who can see the full picture when we can’t.

1. See Matthew 22:36–40.

I think that one of the most important things in our life is to draw experience from everything that comes our way. This experience, coupled with God’s counsel, will gain us knowledge and understanding and wisdom in the Holy Spirit. There’s no shortcut to growth and maturity.

We have the Answer Man, and He is guiding us in the right directions as we follow Him, but He would be robbing us of the full benefits of this life if He just short-circuited any difficult experiences and took us out of them because they might sometimes be painful or traumatic.

I believe He, in His love for us, knows exactly what experiences we need in order to learn and grow,

not just in the moment but also in the bigger picture of eternity. I trust Him when He says that He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear. He’s the God of the universe. If anyone knows what’s best for us and can tailor our life in order to enable us to gain the most from our experiences, He can. He is sure to know what is needed a lot better than any of us can with our limited, finite perspectives.

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



BEARING FRUIT

BY ANDREW MATEYAK

IN MY WORK AS A MISSIONARY VOLUNTEER, it is important to me that I am “bearing fruit” and getting things done in spreading the gospel. But just like when one plants a pear tree and it takes four to six years before it produces fruit,¹ sometimes I don’t see the fruit of my work right away, and that can get discouraging.

Throughout my 20s, I would go to the city park with my brother to distribute Christian leaflets and talk with people about Jesus. Most of those we met were students, though we also met people from all walks of life. In general, the people we would talk with and give something to read would listen, smile, and

pray with us, but we would never see them again. I would sometimes wonder, *Am I really bearing fruit?* I had to take it by faith that God would work in their lives.

Fast forward to today. I recently went out with my wife and kids to deliver the new *Activated* magazine to one of our friends in town. Our friend is the manager of a restaurant, and he usually invites us to have a meal while we read and talk. However, when we arrived, we discovered that it was his day off.

The replacement manager was a woman in her late twenties. She looked at me and said, “You’re Andrew, the missionary worker, aren’t you?”

“When I was in high school, you and your brother gave me something to read in the park and prayed with me to accept Jesus. I was going through a difficult time, but the

message you gave me to read encouraged me to go on.”

I felt so encouraged. My efforts really had borne fruit in someone’s life and even came back around to bless me in return. I was reminded of the verse where Jesus said, “The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”²

We may not always see the fruits of our works and good deeds right away, but the Bible promises that God’s Word does not return empty.³ If we’re obeying Him and doing what He told us to do, we can rest assured that it *will* bear fruit!

ANDREW MATEYAK IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE PHILIPPINES. FOLLOW HIS WORK ON HIS FB PROFILE, ACTIVATED CDO. ■

1. See <http://www.starkbros.com/growing-guide/article/how-many-years>.

2. Matthew 13:23 NLT

3. See Isaiah 55:11.

BY UDAY PAUL

THE ART OF FLIGHT

I AM CURRENTLY READING A BOOK ABOUT THE WRIGHT BROTHERS, who are credited with inventing and building the world's first successful airplane and making the first controlled flight. It had always been a dream of mankind to take to the air and fly like birds, and while hot air balloons had been in use for some time, it was universally assumed that mechanical human flight was impossible.

Wilbur and Orville Wright, however, paid no attention to the chorus of skeptical voices around them. By closely observing the flight of birds, they gained insight into the secrets of aerodynamics. They built and tested their own flying machines, some of which failed, but with each failure they gained more practical knowledge and experience. Wilbur and Orville persevered and eventually designed and built the Flyer, the first airplane in history, ushering in the dawn of a new age of aviation that radically changed the world.

I also found people in the Bible who were great examples of faith, determination, and perseverance. The Old Testament prophet Elijah prayed for rain when there had been a severe drought in the land of Israel for three

and a half years. He got on his knees and prayed fervently over and over until he saw the answer.¹

When Moses was called by God to deliver his people from slavery in Egypt, he initially tried to back out of it, arguing with God that he was incapable of such a monumental task. In the end, though, he obeyed God and stood up to the greatest and mightiest empire of his day, winning freedom for his people.

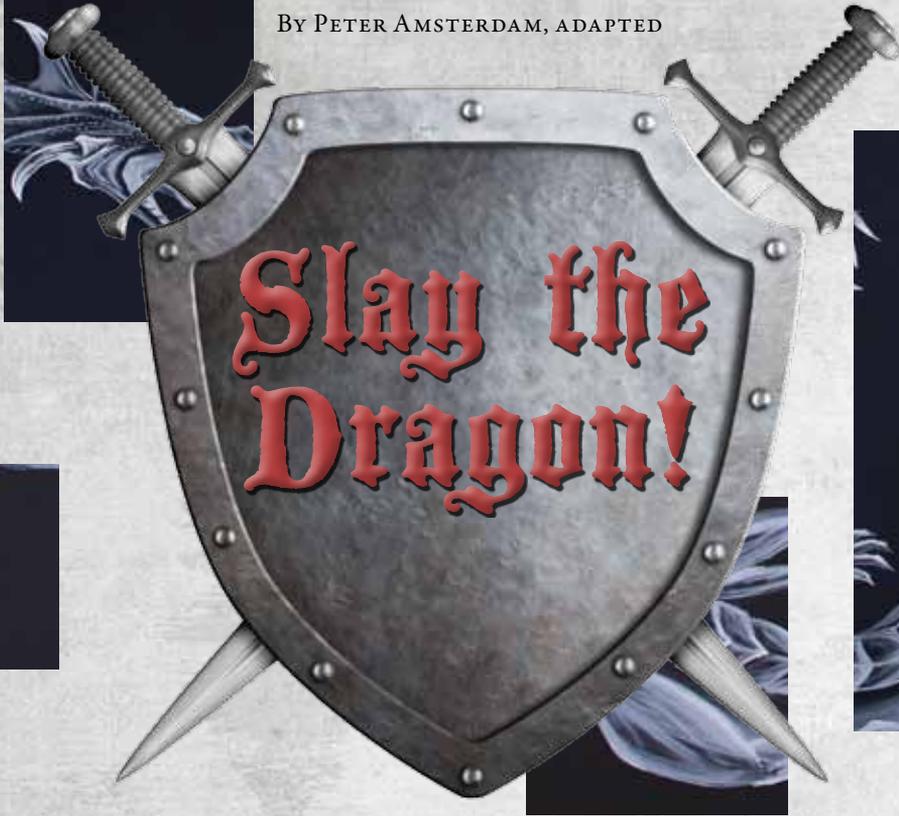
Another example of perseverance in the face of extreme odds was the apostle Paul. He persecuted the followers of Christ until Jesus turned his life around and called him to be His apostle to the non-Jewish world. It took some time for the other believers to recognize God's anointing on him and that he was indeed called to be an apostle, and he faced persecution from the religious and civil authorities for the rest of his life. But he stuck to his task until he had evangelized most of the Roman Empire of his day and changed the face of civilization.

All these, and others, were men of faith who had a vision, and the faith, initiative, and courage to see that vision come to pass. And they changed the world.

UDAY PAUL LIVES IN BANGALORE, INDIA, AND TEACHES ENGLISH AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT COURSES. ■

1. See 1 Kings 18:42–45.

BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED



Slay the Dragon!

THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, we encounter situations and opportunities that have potential to open new doors for our future. Sometimes, it's very clear that God is opening a door; other times, we simply have a sense in our heart. There's often an accompanying feeling of excitement and positive anticipation that calls us to advance into unfamiliar territory.

After preparing and evaluating a plan, we can find ourselves on the verge of making a decision and taking action. Everything is set, we're ready to start. But then what happens? Why do we sometimes

delay making the decision or avoid taking the needed first steps?

Often, the culprit is fear, and it can be paralyzing. In my own life, fear shows up in many ways. I've recognized there are times when I'm afraid of failing or of making a mistake or of what something might cost in terms of hard work and sacrifice.

Those are not the only kinds of fears that hold us back. Sometimes taking the next step involves asking for advice, financial help, or permission. In such instances, the fear of rejection comes to the fore. Even if we don't take the time to analyze and identify our emotions and put these

fears into words, they're there and they hold us back. So what do we do about that?

God's Word says: "There is no fear where love exists. Rather, perfect love banishes fear, for fear involves punishment, and the person who lives in fear has not been perfected in love."¹

Having faith in God's goodness and believing that He wants to bless us puts us on the path to overcoming fear. But this victory over fear can't just be in our thoughts; it's not just a philosophical or spiritual matter. God often expects us to face our fears and *take action* and move in the right

1. 1 John 4:18 ISV



direction. We have to come to grips with our fears and overcome them so that we can be free to pursue our lives and have the full experience that God intends for us.

Let's say you've written a book and are looking for a publisher. In the meantime, you've decided to personally market your book by going to local bookstores and libraries. So you take your printed copies, and off you go to pitch your idea to store managers and those who have the authority to help you. But it's not as easy as you thought it would be to ask them to promote your book. In fact, it's *so* hard you don't get a single order, and you toy with the idea of *quitting*. You *procrastinate*. You go to the bookstores, but then walk out again, telling yourself, *It's not the right time; they're too busy today*. Eventually you pull the books out of the trunk of your car, thinking that maybe after the school year (or holiday or summer or whatever) will be better timing.

This same scenario of procrastination that leads to inactivity can show up in any number of situations or circumstances. Other examples might include asking for a raise at work, seeking a scholarship for college, asking someone out on a date, wanting to take a relationship to the next level, looking for more responsibility in your job, etc.

If we have a dream, *waiting* will not help us achieve it. Telling ourselves that tomorrow is better for X reason is usually just an excuse. We're afraid, and instead of admitting it and taking the chance of a step toward that dream, we talk ourselves out of it and then justify our lack of action.

We have to take the first step. Often, the longer we wait, the more nervous we get. We get used to things the way they are, and change becomes harder and scarier and more uncomfortable.

Growth and development require some discomfort. As my skiing

instructor said, "If you want to get good at skiing, you've got to get comfortable being uncomfortable."

An important aspect of getting out of your comfort zone has to do with starting *before* you feel ready. If you wait until you feel like you're "ready" . . . well, we know what that leads to—procrastination, distraction, perfectionism, and sadly, often total inaction. Realistically, you may never *feel* like you're ready. But if you can muster up the courage to just *start*, even if you don't feel ready, you'll be miles ahead.

The sooner we take the plunge and endure those terribly uncomfortable first steps, the sooner we'll get past that scary stage and start to have a lot more success. It's a predictable cycle: decide what you want to do, be confident of God's blessing in the matter, make a plan, commit to it, begin, do it again and again, and with time you'll get better and better!

When you are faced with doing something that's difficult for you, ask



yourself: *What's the worst that could happen?* When you answer that question and then determine that you'd be able to handle that worst-case scenario, it will relieve the tension and help you to face your fears.

Also, if you're embarking on a new project or challenge that makes you feel uneasy and scared, it helps if you give yourself permission to be awkward and to stumble and to not be perfect. Realize and accept that you're not going to be good in the beginning. In fact, you might fail at first, and that's okay.

There's nothing wrong with being awkward while you're getting the hang of something new, so go ahead with whatever the challenge is and just say to yourself, *It's perfectly fine that I'm not very good at this yet. I'll get better. I'm going through the steps to greatness.*

When you lower your expectations for immediate success, it makes it easier to actually take the first step toward a new challenge. With this

attitude, the "firsts" that we're afraid of can become gateways to amazing progress.

Here's a story that we might all relate to, as told by Rory Vaden:

I once heard a true story of a woman who was trapped in a burning building on the 80th floor. She was terrified of heights and enclosed spaces, and when the fire alarm went off, she refused to follow her colleagues into the stairwell to evacuate to safety.

The firemen did a sweep of the building and found her hiding under her desk, waiting to die. She was screaming "I'm scared, I'm scared!" as the firemen insisted she walk down the stairwell until one fireman said, "That's OK, just do it scared." He repeated it all the way down the 80 flights of stairs, until he brought her to safety.

We've all faced these moments in our careers—when you know what has to be done, but your fear holds you back. In order to stand out, you must develop the habit of acting in the face of fear. It's fine to be scared—do it scared. It's fine to be unsure—do it unsure. It's fine to be uncomfortable—do it uncomfortable. Just do something.²

I'd say taking that first daunting step is the hardest part. The next biggest test comes in *persisting*. When you're not good at something, you encounter a lot of seeming "failure." But if you keep doing it over and over, and learning from the reactions you get, pretty soon you'll be good and then great.

A new challenge can be very awkward, even scary at first. But if we deliberately put ourselves out there and do the very thing that we're afraid of, it becomes easier and we get better at it. Eventually we will no longer be afraid. That is conquering our fears!

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

2. "To Reach the Top, Do What Others Won't," CNN, March 12, 2012

POINTS TO PONDER

FACING FEARS

BE STRONG and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified ... for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.—*Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV*



If you wait for perfect weather, you will never plant your seeds. If you are afraid that every cloud will bring rain, you will never harvest your crops.—*Ecclesiastes 11:4 ERV*



Facing your fears robs them of their power.—*Mark Burnett (b. 1960)*



Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy.—*Dale Carnegie (1888–1955)*



Winners are those people who make a habit of doing the things that [others] are uncomfortable doing.—*Ed Foreman (b. 1933)*

Don't wait. The time will never be just right.—*Napoleon Hill (1883–1970)*



You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.—*Wayne Gretzky (b. 1961)*



You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop and look fear in the face. ... You must do the thing you think you cannot do.—*Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962)*



Do the thing you fear and keep on doing it ... that is the quickest and surest way ever yet discovered to conquer fear.—*Dale Carnegie*



Each of us must confront our own fears, must come face to face with them. How we handle our fears will determine where we go with the rest of our lives. To experience adventure or to be limited by the fear of it.—*Judy Blume (b. 1938)*

Waiting to develop courage is just another form of procrastination. The most successful people take action while they're afraid!—*Unknown*



The greatest failure is the failure to try. When I die I want four words written on my tombstone: "At least he tried." For the glory of God. You've got to take risks. That's what brings abundance. That's what brings success in life. Don't be afraid to go out on a limb, that's where the fruit is.—*Rick Warren (b. 1954)*



[The things we need to do to reach our goals] may all be things that are uncomfortable at first. So what! Do it anyway! One of the ways to get through the discomfort is simply to do the thing you are uncomfortable doing.—*Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, The Aladdin Factor (New York: Berkley Trade, 1995)* ■

FOCUS ON THE GOAL

BY STEVE HEARTS

IT'S ONE THING TO DREAM OF REACHING A GOAL OR ACCOMPLISHING SOMETHING.

This is an important first step. For some, it may be the pursuit of a new endeavor. For others, it could be acquiring a new skill. For yet others, it might be making changes in habit or lifestyle. Whatever the case, effort, perseverance, and often sacrifice are required in order for our dreams to become reality. Once we realize this, it's up to us as individuals to decide how determined we are to reach our goal, whatever it may be, and how much we're willing to give of ourselves in order to see our dreams fulfilled. This is where the importance of motivation comes in.

My mother was very consistent when it came to teaching me to read Braille, despite my lack

of motivation and desire at the start; that is, until I heard about other blind children my age who had tackled this challenge and were now able to read their favorite books and stories on their own. From that point on, I diligently applied myself to learning Braille, which took a little over three months. But because I was so intently focused on the objective, these three months seemed like mere weeks. Once I could read Braille, learning to write it went even quicker.

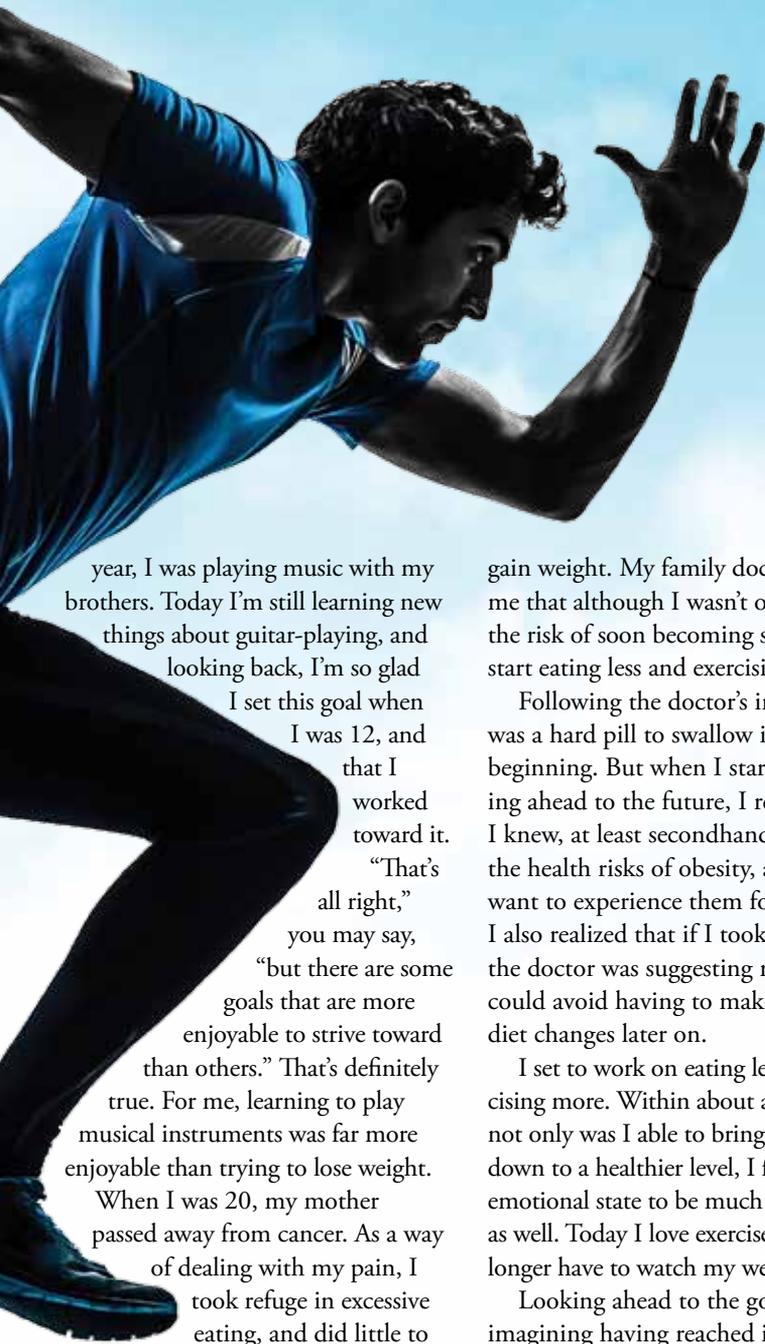
When I was about six, I'd hear my two older brothers play the guitar and I would dream of being able to do so myself someday. But when one of them actually handed me a guitar and tried to give me my first lesson, I got frustrated and said, "Forget it!" Not only did my

fingers hurt from pressing the strings, but it seemed impossible to remember so many different finger positions for all the chords.

It was not until I was 12 that I made a conscious decision to learn to play the guitar, regardless of the initial difficulty. I paid close attention to what I was being taught, and practiced what I learned. Sure, there were moments of frustration, and I occasionally tired of the effort. But I kept thinking about the goal I was striving toward. This spurred me on and kept me inspired, and in a little over a

1. KJV
2. www.just1thing.com





Let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up.

—Galatians 6:9 TLB



year, I was playing music with my brothers. Today I'm still learning new things about guitar-playing, and looking back, I'm so glad

I set this goal when

I was 12, and

that I

worked toward it.

"That's all right,"

you may say,

"but there are some goals that are more

enjoyable to strive toward

than others." That's definitely true. For me, learning to play

musical instruments was far more enjoyable than trying to lose weight.

When I was 20, my mother passed away from cancer. As a way

of dealing with my pain, I

took refuge in excessive eating, and did little to

no exercise. I felt justified in this, considering the emotional stress

I was under, but I began to steadily

gain weight. My family doctor told me that although I wasn't obese, I ran the risk of soon becoming so if I didn't start eating less and exercising more.

Following the doctor's instruction was a hard pill to swallow in the beginning. But when I started thinking ahead to the future, I realized that I knew, at least secondhand, some of the health risks of obesity, and I didn't want to experience them for myself. I also realized that if I took the steps the doctor was suggesting now, I could avoid having to make drastic diet changes later on.

I set to work on eating less and exercising more. Within about a month, not only was I able to bring my weight down to a healthier level, I found my emotional state to be much improved as well. Today I love exercise and no longer have to watch my weight.

Looking ahead to the goal and imagining having reached it is an excellent way to stay motivated. In Hebrews 12:1–2, Paul encourages us to take a lesson from Jesus: "Let

us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."¹

Jesus kept His eyes on the goal of fulfilling His mission on earth, and was undeterred by all the mistreatment He suffered, including death itself, and because of this, we have salvation and eternal life in Him today.

What then is the secret to successfully reaching the goals we set? As I see it, it's looking beyond the tedium, work, and sacrifice involved, and looking ahead with our focus on reaching that finish line.

STEVE HEARTS HAS BEEN BLIND SINCE BIRTH. HE IS A WRITER, MUSICIAN, AND MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN NORTH AMERICA. THIS ARTICLE WAS ADAPTED FROM A PODCAST ON JUST I THING,² A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. ■



HELP COMES FROM THE LORD

BY ROSANE PEREIRA

God's help is available to all. Even better, He *wants* to help you! Just ask Him: *Jesus, I trust You and I want to have You by my side always. Please come into my heart and help me face life's storms. I know that with Your help I can navigate whatever comes my way. Amen.*

A MISSIONARY'S HUSBAND PASSED AWAY AT THE AGE OF 37, leaving her with seven children aged seven months to 14 years old. Her husband was in the process of emigrating from Argentina to Brazil, so she received no widow pension from either country. She lived in Foz do Iguaçu, a city in the border zone between Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil. Her sisters offered to help raise some of her children, but she decided to keep the family together.

With the help of a friend she kept her husband's small silk-screen business alive, and like many of the people living there, set up a small-scale import-export business—T-shirts from Brazil to Argentina, potatoes and garlic from Argentina

to Brazil, and electronic goods from Paraguay to Brazil.

Once, when finances were tight, she was taking a fax machine from Paraguay to Brazil for a friend when she saw an elderly woman, a couple, and a crying baby walking in the hot sun. She gave them a lift, and it turned out that the man was from the same neighborhood in Rio as she was, and needed a fax like the one she had. He offered to buy it from her, and the small profit was the exact amount she needed to pay her back bills.

Throughout those difficult years, she clung to God's promise: "I will teach all your children, and they will enjoy great peace."¹ She read the Bible with her children every morning and prayed for every need they had.

When her mother died, she was able to secure a grant for the schooling of her children, even though the paperwork took three years to complete. Then she moved back to Rio to be close to her sisters.

Now all her children have become upstanding adults, some with children of their own. During those difficult years she clung to the promise of Psalm 121:1–2: "I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

How do I know all that? I was that woman!

ROSANE PEREIRA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND WRITER IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

1. Isaiah 54:13 NLT

KEEPING THE SPARK

BY ANNA PERLINI

WHEN I WAS A CHILD I remember bursting into tears when thinking of my parents growing old. I loved them so much, and just the thought that one day they could lose some hair and get a few wrinkles was so hard! Thinking about it now, something in me was dreading the aging process. I felt strongly that everything beautiful should never end or lose its spark.

As time went on, that particular fear slowly disappeared. I can't honestly say I'm excited about growing physically old, but besides feeling stronger now than when I was in my twenties, due to being more physically active and keeping a better diet, I'm starting to realize that what I actually dread the most is becoming old inside: losing my enthusiasm, my ideals, and the desire to continue to learn and move forward. For this

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

reason, I'm glad every time I have a chance to stretch and in some way start anew and remain young inside. I'm a hopeless idealist, that's all.

A few years ago, I attended a school reunion and saw many of my friends that I hadn't seen in over 30 years. When I was young I was a very good student and a leader in political and social causes. Then I decided to dedicate my life to missionary and humanitarian causes and spent the next 38 years doing that, often in very difficult circumstances, never accumulating much for myself in terms of material goods. In contrast, quite a few of my friends are now accomplished professionals—doctors, lawyers, and businessmen.

At one point, someone dared to ask me the hot question: "But ... do you have any regrets? You were such a brilliant student. We all admired you and thought you would become a great doctor or writer."

I simply answered that, no, I didn't have any of that sort of regrets. I knew that I'd found and followed God's calling in my life, and that is the highest form of reward. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief and almost unanimously exclaimed: "We are so glad to hear that and to know that you are still fighting for the ideals you gave up so much for! You continue being a role model for us."

I realized then that I wasn't the only one who hates quitting. It's not a matter of always appearing strong and never making mistakes. That is impossible anyway, and there are many falls along the way, and even times when one is forced to take a break. What I'm talking about is not quitting for good, but instead continuing to believe, give, move, and change.

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A hand is shown from the right side, reaching out with fingers slightly spread, palm facing up. The background is a bright, golden-yellow sky filled with soft, white clouds. The lighting is warm and ethereal, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is one of hope and divine presence.

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

HOLD ON

Do not give up! Do not let go! Hold on to Me, because I love you. Hold on to My Word, which gives courage, strength, faith, hope, life, and power, even where there is none. I have so much more to give you, to show you, and to work through your life. There's so much ahead for you!

Don't let go of all that I have in store for you just because you can't yet see it. This is not the end; it's just a bend in the road. I know the way looks dark, bleak and dreary, but around the corner there will be sunlight, happiness, and fulfillment.

Put your hand in Mine, like a child who utterly trusts her loving father and is willing to go into the fierce and raging storm, though to her it looks so great and fearful, clinging desperately to his hand. As she puts her hand in his and steps into the dark and stormy night, little by little, step by step, her fear is replaced by faith as she sees her father leading her through the storm, safe and unharmed.