

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

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Vol 18 • Issue 9

OUR ANCHOR HOLDS

A constant we
can depend on

The First Day

Prepare to be
unprepared!

You, Me, and Change

Three tips for
coping





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO LEARN AND TO GROW

Children are natural learners. As long as their basic needs are met, their thirst for new information and experiences is boundless. If they're happy and have interesting things to do and safe places in which to do them, that's even better.

Neuroscience research tells us that 90% of a child's brain development occurs at a lightning-fast pace between birth and the age of five. Children soak up information and skills from what they see and hear others do and through their own trial and error. Every sight, smell, sound, and sensation makes an impact. Long before their first step into a classroom, their neurons are building networks, their cognition is exploding, their language skills are developing, and they're laying the foundation for a lifetime of learning.

But for many of us that torrent of learning turns into a gentle stream and eventually a trickle. Life happens. Stress and responsibilities cloud our minds, and our own growth and learning take a back step to things that seem more important—or in any case, more urgent.

It was Gandhi who said, "Learn as if you were to live forever." Even though our time on earth is limited, we're not meant to stop growing and learning. Part of finding and sustaining happiness is remaining open to new things as time passes, though it's not always easy to do this.

Some of the greatest moments in life revolve around learning something, no matter how small it may be. Light-bulb moments like Maria describes in her article on pp. 4–6 can dramatically improve our physical lives, while spiritual growth can renew our vision and faith, as Joyce brings out on pp. 8–9.

I hope you enjoy these and the other articles in this issue of *Activated*.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

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There is only one secure foundation: a genuine, deep relationship with Jesus Christ, which will carry you through any and all turmoil. No matter what storms are raging all around, you'll stand firm if you stand on His love.—Charles Stanley (b. 1932)

DON'T ROLL OVER, BEETHOVEN

BY ANNA PERLINI

WHEN MY FATHER had me listen to Beethoven's 6th Symphony¹ for the first of many times, he was undoubtedly trying to impart to me his passion for classical music.

I was only a small child at the time, yet I remember it vividly. The music started off gently depicting a peaceful pastoral scene, as I happily played at my father's feet. Then a little cloud came, and I started feeling a bit apprehensive and huddled closer to him. Along came a rumble of thunder, then lightning, and it kept building up until the storm got so powerful, so huge, so scary, that I ran to my father's arms. He whispered comforting

words, "Don't worry, my child. The storm will pass. See? It's already going away. The music is changing."

Every so often we would listen to it again—eventually, I was the one asking for it. We would smile and laugh together when the tranquil tune came back after the climax—the peace and calm after the storm.

Many years passed, that little girl grew up, and Beethoven's 6th Symphony was forgotten, replaced by many other soundtracks.

But eventually, the real storms of life arrived. During one particularly troubling time, someone gave me a CD of that symphony, and it happened all over again. I was moved to tears, realizing that my father had known all along what life would hold for me: peaceful days, heavy storms, and then peace again. It was

as though he had wanted to prepare me in advance.

My heavenly Father's arms have always been so comforting, reassuring, and present, even when my earthly father wasn't around. They've helped me to hold on and keep up hope when all around me was chaos and turmoil, because eventually every storm ceases, and all is calm again, and often even more beautiful and sparkling clear than before.

To this day, whenever I listen to that particular piece of music, I shed a few tears. I can't help it, really; it's my life's theme song.

ANNA PERLINI IS A COFOUNDER OF PER UN MONDO MIGLIORE², A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION ACTIVE IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA SINCE 1995. ■

1. Listen to Beethoven's 6th Symphony online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHmWoAj4aI0>.
2. <http://www.perunmondomigliore.org/>



CHASING PROBLEMS? —OR PRE-EMPTING THEM?

BY MARIA FONTAINE,
ADAPTED

MOST OF US ARE PRETTY BUSY PEOPLE. We usually have more to think about and tend to than we can actually fit into our day. We all want to stay on top of our lives, but for me at least, keeping my priorities straight regarding the many things that I want and need to do can sometimes be a challenge, and my days are usually filled with more than I can fit into them.

It's not just that I have too much to do, but rather that I need to work more effectively, more efficiently. Otherwise, I end up chasing problems, trying to catch up, instead of finding the great fulfillment this life can provide as we walk in sync with Jesus. I'm sure many of you face your own set of ongoing responsibilities, challenges big and small, and the never-ending flow of things that have to be done—things that so easily pile

up into stressful, bigger issues if not handled properly.

Too often I've found myself caught in a downward cycle of getting gradually inundated by difficulties and the unforeseen or unexpected complications of life and work. When things would start to pile up, my default was to ignore the less pressing issues, because they didn't appear to be as critical in the moment as the more urgent ones. But then, before I knew it, I'd find myself face to face with one of those once-small problems that I had pushed aside and that had now grown into something much bigger, *demanding* my time and attention. So I'd start trying to fix this newly enlarged issue, which by that time usually had also done some damage or caused more complications

that had to also be fixed and required even *more* of my time. Meanwhile, I'd be repeating the mistake of ignoring all the other little issues that would, of course, keep cropping up during that time.

It's a dilemma that seems to affect many busy people. This pattern of prioritizing based on facing issues only when they become large, rather than dealing with them while they're still small, seems like the obvious thing to do at the time, but it doesn't have to be this way. We don't have to spend our lives chasing and stressing over life's challenges, doing damage control, and feeling frequently overwhelmed by the ongoing spiral of our "problem debt."

I've been trying to pay more attention to things while they're small and easier to manage. I've been changing my modus operandi,



shifting my work and life ethic into more of a “pre-empt and prevent” mode rather than one of ongoing damage control.

It has taken more than just changing in one area. It’s required a mindset change in how I look at whatever comes into my life. It takes a conscious effort to see the issues as they arise and take action—or better yet, to foresee potential issues and be ready to nip them in the bud as soon as they begin to develop.

Sometimes, chasing problems can be the result of a lack of sufficient self-discipline. I’d frequently struggle with stopping my work on something interesting in order to start something else that I had scheduled. I’d get so busy concentrating on one thing that the other things I was supposed to be doing that day would

get pushed back. Finally, I’d find myself rushing to try to get all the other things taken care of, leading to pressure and stress. In turn, the added pressure would often lead to mistakes that required even more time to fix.

I realized I needed reminders to help change this. After praying about it, I got the idea of using a timer to help me stop one project on time in order to go on to another. Such a simple little solution! Why didn’t I think of this before? Well, it’s amazing the little things that are right there in front of us but that we don’t see until we get serious about change and pray about what to do.

Making the best use of your time isn’t the same as just being busy. We need a balanced life that includes times of focused work and times of relaxation to unwind and let go of

the day’s concerns. For example, I had fallen into the habit of continuing my work in the evenings until shortly before bedtime—until I realized it was an inefficient use of that time. The hours I worked late at night weren’t very productive but still required at least the same amount of effort.

I needed to invest time in relaxing to avoid “chasing” the problem of getting less sleep. Working right up to bedtime left my mind so filled with business that even after I’d finally stop, I couldn’t sleep for an hour or two. Investing time in relaxing in the evenings has improved several health issues that were being worsened by lack of sleep.

Having time to relax and wind down before bed is critical to getting the kind of quality sleep that helps to keep us healthy in body, mind,



and spirit. Carrying our work over into our sleep time, even if it's only in our mind, creates a stress-tainted, inefficient sleep that can lead to damage rather than rebuilding and strengthening.

This principle of pre-empting problems large and small is important for everyone in every aspect of our lives, because it affects everything from productivity and finances to safety, security, health, and peace of mind.

I read a good article¹ on how small problems can grow into big ones if we don't deal with them. It's about a couple who recognized the importance of personal family time

1. See https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/10/how-asking-5-questions-allowed-me-to-eat-dinner-with-my-kids/?_r=0.

but struggled to make regular quality time over dinner with their children a reality. They would find themselves chasing a growing pile of complications that began accumulating from the start of their workday, until the backlog made it nearly impossible to make it home on time for dinner together. They knew this time with their children was a priceless opportunity that was being lost forever.

The solution required them to find the root of their problem and pre-empt it. Ironically, it was something they had never imagined. A small lack in foresight was causing a chain reaction throughout their day that left them inundated, trying to play catch-up. But once they took the time to discover what was at the root of the problem, all that was needed was to take some simple steps to pre-empt the problem,

enabling them to achieve their goal of providing what their family needed.

There are many more examples that could be cited. I'm guessing that you can probably think of some from your own experience. Introducing a few new habits and adjustments into your life can make it so much more productive, effective, and less stressful. Why not take a look at your life and make a list of areas where you could take charge of your situation? Discover how much more quality your life can have, free from the stress and frustration of chasing problems!

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



BY CHRIS MIZRANY

TAKING STOCK

I DON'T IMAGINE that the word “spreadsheet” invokes excitement or joy in any but the most hardcore of office warriors. I know it sure doesn't for me.

Nevertheless, this week I needed to overhaul one of our spreadsheets, adding functionality, such as a constant automatic tally of items gone out in a month, remaining stock, breakdown of item stock into various categories, etc. Oh joy!

I ended up battling it out for almost an hour with the main formula. First, not all the cells could be included, for some reason, then the A and B columns had some kind of disagreement resulting in the category separation being messed up, and on it went!

I did eventually get it right and am now the proud creator of a more complete and useful spreadsheet. You know what I learned through that

grueling process, though? It's only right if it's *all* right. It did me no good to have the formula mostly right, or even rewrite it in clever ways—I did try! It only worked when *every* part of it was in order and correct. Then it worked *beautifully!*

It's like our life! All parts—spiritual, physical, emotional—need to be in their correct place for us to function as we were meant to. Otherwise, we'll soon see that things aren't adding up correctly. The only way for us to be whole and purpose-filled is to have our lives in order.

And you know what I discovered—too late—that makes things even easier? There's a list of preset functions and formulas (math, data, financial, etc.) that you can apply. Even if you don't know much about spreadsheets at all, those formulas can help you get things right.

And there's a Great Book full of advice and wisdom on various topics (faith, decision-making, etc.), which we can apply to our lives! Even better, we have a patient Mentor, who can help us out with personal, targeted instruction.

Also worth noting is that the more we study and practice, the better prepared we are. We gain knowledge and experience that we can use later on. I'll never again struggle with a spreadsheet like I struggled that day. I've learned something. I'm moving forward.

Maybe you feel you need to take stock of your life but aren't sure how or what to do. My advice? Don't waste your time and energy. Read the Book. Ask the Mentor. Get it right.

CHRIS MIZRANY IS A WEB DESIGNER, PHOTOGRAPHER, AND MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA. ■

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

I'D BEEN GOING THROUGH A FEW TOUGH WEEKS, when I began questioning my faith. Not questioning God, but questioning how much faith I had to face difficulties. I'd also been concerned about growing older, berating myself for becoming such a wimp, not able to keep up as I used to. So I gratefully accepted an invitation from my daughter Madi to go hiking in a place called Enchanted Rock.

Despite an early wakeup, we didn't quite accomplish our goal of making it there before sunrise. However, the morning was misty, the

1. Colossians 1:27

temperature was still pleasant, and we felt refreshed as we began our climb over the stony hills. We snapped some fun photos. One showed my daughter sitting in what looked like a huge hollow of a hand made out of stone.

When we reached the summit of the second hill, Madi said she was curious to see what was on the other side, off the beaten path. It was exciting, even exhilarating, as we found our way, cutting through rock formations and even squeezing through some narrow passages, looking for a way down to the valley that looked deceptively close.

What happened, happened suddenly! Madi reached a steep incline next to a rock wall. As she stepped onto it, she sped downhill about ten feet on wet granite that was as slippery as ice. I heard the impact as she hit a

rock wall at the base. Thankfully, she was able to hold out her arms and cushion the impact on the top half of her body, but her knee slammed into the wall, and although she kept saying "I'm OK! I'm OK!" I knew she wasn't.

From where I stood at the top of the incline, I could see her knee turning blue and swelling, and I knew I had to go down and check on her. I thought I could get down there carefully, but as soon as I stepped on the slippery slide, my legs gave way and I fell on my hip, banging my head in the process. Both of us ended up at the bottom of the incline with no way up or down.

We checked each other's injuries and then realized the only way out of our predicament was to the side, over some boulders. We prayed for Madi's knee, and miraculously, the swelling stopped and the bruised area even seemed to shrink.

Then there I was, standing in front of a shoulder-high boulder, knowing I had to find a way to climb it. I found a crack to get a grip, and with my daughter boosting me as much as she could, I was able to hoist myself up, then reach back and

help pull her up. Back and forth we went, I helping her, she helping me, until we wound our way over boulders, through caves and narrow places back to the summit. By then, we'd almost forgotten about the aches and celebrated the fact that we were all right and that it hadn't been much worse.

My perceptions about my faith have changed since this incident. I've also realized how much stronger I am than I thought. A wimp wouldn't have attempted to climb those boulders! The strength I felt that day was almost supernatural.

In my concern for my daughter and getting her to safety, I knew I could do anything. Once I realized that the only way out was up, I knew I couldn't let fear get the better of me. I had to face my weakness and turn it into strength. I had to ask God for the strength and courage I needed.

One verse that came especially alive to me that day was, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."¹ He isn't a distant God, and when we need Him, we have the power of Christ within us to overcome any

difficulties and obstacles. We don't have to worry about our own weakness or lack of faith. His strength and His faith are in us whenever we need them to help us face any of the rocks and hard places we find ourselves in.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A RETIRED TEACHER AND WRITER AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, USA. ■

Everyone who achieves success in a great venture, solves each problem as they came to it. ... They keep going regardless of the obstacles they meet.—*W. Clement Stone (1902–2002)*

If we desire our faith to be strengthened, we should not shrink from opportunities where our faith may be tried, and therefore, through trial, be strengthened.—*George Müller (1805–1898)*

Do not strive in your own strength; cast yourself at the feet of the Lord Jesus, and wait upon Him in the sure confidence that He is with you, and works in you. Strive in prayer; let faith fill your heart—so will you be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.—*Andrew Murray (1828–1917)*

THE FIRST DAY

BY ELSA SICHROVSKY



“HOWEVER MUCH YOU’VE prepared beforehand,” my friend warned, “the first day at university will still be an overwhelming experience.” I wasn’t sure why she thought something as innocuous as a university could be overwhelming, but I told her that since I’d done all right in high school, I was sure I’d manage university just fine.

I stepped out of the metro station, campus map in hand, and purposefully struck out in what I hoped was the right direction toward my first class. I’ve never quite figured out how to use a map and never paid much attention to road signs. I ended up roaming helplessly for two hours across the university that boasts eleven campuses. Finally, I stumbled into my class about fifteen minutes before it ended. As I sank wearily into my seat, I recalled my friend’s words.

After asking some of my fellow students for directions, I successfully located my next class, an introductory course on linguistics. A woman was sitting on a bench outside, dressed in a sports shirt and baggy jeans. I assumed she was the janitor and entered the classroom where a woman wearing a blouse, black skirt, and high heels was writing on the blackboard.

The professor, I assumed. She went on to lead the class in a short oral test and survey. Then the woman in jeans swung open the door and introduced herself as Professor (and eminent linguist) Lee. She then introduced her assistant—the woman in a skirt!

There were more surprises in store at the next class, an introduction to Western Literature. I listened for dates, facts, and figures, all of which I studiously jotted down. But it turned out none of that was of any use. Instead, after the first hour, I found myself

in a group of ten absolute strangers tasked with producing a play complete with music, costumes, a stage, and so on—all within two weeks!

Of course, by the end of the semester I knew where to find the best study nooks on campus, my group’s play came out fine, and I learned that professors will dress however they like. As I look back ruefully at my freshman blues, I know they certainly weren’t the last of my life’s experiences as a “newbie.”

Though uncomfortable, these are the situations that can spur me to grow in boldness as I learn to function without all my old safety nets and props. Best of all, the deepened maturity will far outlast the discomfort of my freshman goofs.

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

PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF

BY JESSICA ROBERTS



ANY MOTHER WHO'S TRIED TO GET HER TODDLER TO SIT STILL LONG ENOUGH TO FINISH A MEAL can tell you about children's short attention spans, but there are also moments when they're driven to learn a new skill, such as picking up a small object with chubby little fingers, or crawling, or walking. These new skills require a huge amount of concentration and effort—and a great deal of time, compared to the child's short life up to that point. They also put demands on muscles that are just beginning to learn coordination and are barely strong enough to sustain the child's weight.

When I recently moved to a new country, I went through a difficult time of adjustment. I threw myself into volunteer work, but I felt I wasn't very good at it. For example, I channeled my energy

into a toy-and-book drive for needy families, but when it was slow in taking off, I grew discouraged and felt like giving up.

One day I was playing with a coworker's baby, Rafael, who was trying to crawl. He'd start by pushing himself up on shaky arms and eventually get up on all fours, but then he'd get stuck. No matter how much he rocked or wiggled, he couldn't get any closer to a toy just out of his reach. He did manage to scoot himself *backwards*, but that only moved him farther from his goal. Eventually, he looked at me with *Pick me up!* written in frustration on his little features.

I could sympathize, as I felt just as frustrated in my new situation. I knew, though, that all that struggling was strengthening his muscles and teaching him about his body. So I picked him up and encouraged him

a bit, but then put him back on the floor to try again. He'd have to learn to crawl on his own; I couldn't do it for him.

Suddenly I realized how like Rafael I was. I'd been struggling, trying to fit into a new job, pick up a new language, and familiarize myself with a new culture, and my natural reaction had been to look up to Jesus and say *Pick me up! Save me from this!* But He knows that this time of learning, difficult as it may be, will make me stronger. Even though His love is always there to cheer me on, I have to do the work. I have to persevere. If Rafael could keep it up, so could I!

Rafael is now happily crawling and starting to pull himself up to stand. I'm also taking baby steps in learning new skills and broadening my horizons. I know we'll both be up and running before long. ■

LONG LIFE WITH JESUS

BY W.P. SCHMIDT

MY DAD LIVED UNTIL HE WAS 101, my mom until she was 99, and they were married for over 75 years! They survived two world wars and had nine children, though the twins, who were born right after World War II, went back to heaven at birth. They had 19 grandchildren and 19 great grandchildren.

As they got older and weaker, everybody who knew them was amazed at how well they kept going. They lived in their own home with the help of an aide, and my brothers and sisters who did the shopping, mowed the lawn, etc., until they moved to a retirement home in their last months. They had a beautiful statue of Jesus' mother Mary built into the front wall of their house, and on the entrance door, my dad, who was a medical doctor, had Moses' rod with the snake embroidered in it.

In a veranda on the back of the house, they had a colorful stone mosaic inlaid into the wall, depicting the first miracle of Jesus, when He turned water into wine. My parents used to drink wine every evening until the last few years. They lived in one of the best wine areas



along the Rhine. They'd go to the vintner with family and friends to buy and taste wines. Everyone would get a little glass, taste the wine, and try to guess which area and year it was from, which type of grape, and as many details as they could without seeing the label.

When my dad retired, he began studying history. He said he had to do something to keep his brain functioning. He collected coins and stamps from the Vatican, so he decided to study the history of the popes. He also worked every day in his garden. He used to say, "If it hadn't been for my garden, I'd have been dead a long time ago." My mother went for daily walks with her walker, and she read books every day.

One time, a close friend of our family asked her, "With such a big family, you must face a lot of problems. How do you handle them?" My mother replied, "At home I have a chest of drawers. One drawer I call my 'tolerance

1. Proverbs 3:1-2 NLT



drawer.’ If a problem comes up, I just stick it into that drawer and move on.” Her friend said, “But after some time that drawer is full, isn’t it? Then what do you do?” Her reply, “It always settles so that there is room for more.”

It was a lot of work for my mother to

raise seven kids—including five rowdy boys—and deal with the crazy things some of us did, but I can’t remember a single time she yelled at us. Our parents were thrifty. We would “inherit” lederhosen down from one brother to the next. And we wouldn’t waste food.

My parents believed in Jesus all their lives, and He helped them survive wars, hardships, and deprivation. My dad always gave God the credit. “It’s just His grace!” he’d say.

A few years ago, I asked them if there was anything in their lives that they would have liked to have been different. Both of them immediately answered, “Nothing!” To which my dad added, “We have seven children who get along with each other. What more could we want?” My parents love kids! When my wife and I adopted an orphaned Congolese baby, at first some of my siblings rejected the idea, but my parents immediately accepted her.

My parents loved each other a lot. Their last wish in life was that when one goes, the other can follow soon after. And that’s exactly what happened, three weeks apart. They also wished that people wouldn’t spend a lot of money on wreaths and flowers for their grave. “Why would you?” they asked. “We’ll be in heaven! We won’t need those flowers.” Instead of buying flowers, people donated to support a hospital in Bethlehem and our school project in Congo. I remember my dad saying many years ago, “My suitcase is packed. I’m ready to go.”

Although it wasn’t easy for them to let one of their sons leave home to be a missionary, they were eventually happy about it and supported me in my calling. I’m sure their prayers helped me out of many a messy situation.

People admired how they kept smiling and making jokes all the time. My dad loved to tell jokes, one after another, even if he’d told them to you before. After all, he’d lived all his life in Mainz, the birthplace of Gutenberg, and a city famous in Germany for its humor.

In his last years, I noticed how difficult it was for him to put on his jacket, but when I tried to help him he said, “No thanks, I need to do it myself.” It made me want to never give up either.

The Bible says, “My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. If you do this, you will live many years, and your life will be satisfying.”¹ That’s certainly proven true for my parents.

W.P. SCHMIDT IS A MISSIONARY IN EUROPE AND AFRICA. ■



YOU, ME, AND CHANGE

BY MARIE ALVERO

CHANGE IS A SCARY THING. Even the best of changes have some downsides or fallout, and the worst of changes usually have some silver lining hidden in them. But no matter how much I know this in my head, sometimes it's hard to believe it in my heart.

Regardless of your position on change, the reality is that change is inevitable. No matter where you go, change will find you. I love routine and predictability. Yet I've discovered that the most meaningful and satisfying things in my life came about as the result of changes. The growth into excellence in a new field: the result of drastic change. A stable and fulfilling marriage: the result of a major change—not to mention ongoing changes and adjustment. The joy of parenting: also a change. Meaningful friendships: generally born through change. A healthy lifestyle: yep, because I changed.

The truth is that my life would be far scarier if it had never changed or continued to change—potential unfulfilled, passion not pursued, gifts undiscovered, truths unlearned.

Here are some of my tips and tricks for coping with change and the unfamiliar:

1 REFRAME THE CHANGE: Often, when I'm resistant to change or dreading a specific outcome, it's my perspective on the situation that's off, and getting a new take

can make all the difference. Sometimes that new outlook comes from talking with someone who has a broader view of the situation, sometimes it comes from researching and better informing myself about the change. I can also get it by waiting to form an opinion and being open to whatever happens.

2 CHOOSING CHANGE: Rather than letting change be something unfamiliar that I hide from and resist until it overpowers my life, I can seek out change. Similar to how athletes stay in shape for running a marathon by continually training and improving their performance, I can be ready for change by practicing change in my everyday life. These can be small changes, like trying a new recipe, workout routine, or restaurant; or bigger ones, like pursuing a new hobby, line of work, or friendship.

3 REMEMBER WHAT DOESN'T CHANGE: "I am the Lord, I do not change."¹ No matter what else changes, whether for good or bad, within your control or far beyond your reach, God's sovereignty isn't changing. Times of change and uncertainty can strengthen your faith and reliance on God's love, care, and providence, and that's a very good thing.

MARIE ALVERO IS A FORMER MISSIONARY TO AFRICA AND MEXICO. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES A HAPPY, BUSY LIFE WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN IN CENTRAL TEXAS, USA. ■

1. Malachi 3:6



OUR ANCHOR HOLDS

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG, ADAPTED

CHANGE IS ONE THING that drives us closer to God. “Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”¹ All things change, but Jesus never. He’s the only thing that remains constant.

One of the circumstances when this is most evident is when we move to a new place or job or especially a new country. We become accustomed to our homes, things, friends, or habits, and we tend to rely on or trust in those things. When business-people, teachers, or students go to foreign countries to work or study, some of them experience culture shock, because they’ve been used to having the same thing all their lives—the same language, the same

friends, the same place to live. All of a sudden they can’t rely on those things anymore.

As Christians, we have a head start on adapting to changes because we have an anchor that holds us steadfast and sure. We have a rock that is always solid that we can always trust. In some ways, our lives are much the same every day because we trust God every day. Our Rock keeps us safe and secure all the time, no matter what the waves are like.

No matter what happens or where we go or where we live or what the conditions may be, God’s still there, and He’ll always keep us, no matter what. So we can have a wonderful feeling of security that people without faith may not experience, no matter how long they live in the same place and do the same things and go to the same school and have the same house and the same pets

and the same friends. Their feeling of security can be interrupted at any moment and fall apart when even one of those things on which they rely changes. Whereas “we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls.”² ■

If you feel buffeted by the waves of life, why not invite Jesus to be your anchor too? Simply ask Him:

Dear Jesus, please come into my life and give me the security and stability that comes from knowing You—regardless of what’s going on around me. Amen.

1. Excerpted from H. Lyte’s hymn

“Abide with Me,” 1847.

2. Hebrews 6:18–19 NLT



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

EMBRACING NEW CHALLENGES

It's tough to change the things that have become second nature to you. But when these things are holding you back, they need to be countered, challenged, and overcome. That's what makes change so difficult, but so wonderfully challenging—you're defying human nature in the habits that bind you to doing things in a certain way. You're altering your course to head in a new direction that will bring forth fruit and growth.

So don't ever feel that overcoming ruts and bad habits is not worth the effort. It is worth every tear shed, every ounce of effort spent, and every difficulty. This brings to life the fighter in you. It's breaking loose from the ties of routine and what you've come to believe are unchangeable elements of your personality or circumstances, and it's making a decision to turn around and go in a new direction that will move you forward.

The determination to break the chains of bad habits and ruts can bring out the best in you, for it causes you to rise above the circumstance of comfort and search out a new route—a new challenge in life—and the promise of better things ahead.