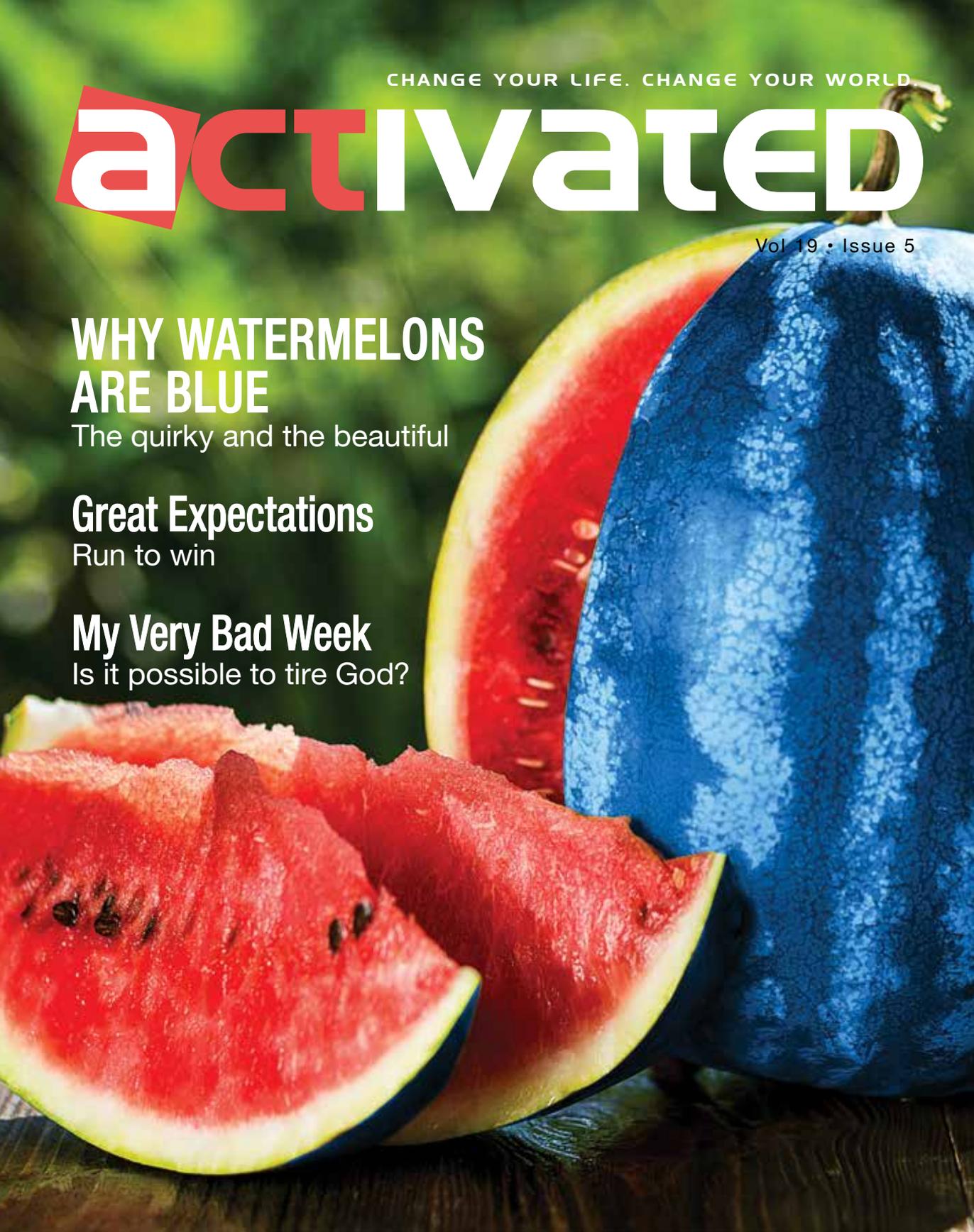


CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD

# activated



Vol 19 • Issue 5

## WHY WATERMELONS ARE BLUE

The quirky and the beautiful

## Great Expectations

Run to win

## My Very Bad Week

Is it possible to tire God?



## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

### HIGHS AND LOWS

The Christian life is made up of mountains and valleys. There are times when we're on exhilarating peaks of joy and happiness. And then there are times when we feel demoralized, abandoned, and alone.

Think of when Jesus miraculously multiplied five loaves and two little fish and made enough to feed a crowd of 5,000 men, not counting the women and children!<sup>1</sup> Imagine being one of the disciples distributing that unending supply of food! They were probably overflowing with the electric sensation of being part of a miracle. They must have felt like they were walking on air.

But when we next see them, they're in a boat in a raging storm, facing waves that are threatening to drown them. In the midst of their fear and despair, Jesus comes to them, walking on the water, and says, "It's me. Don't be afraid."<sup>2</sup>

It's interesting how the disciples had those two experiences one right after the other. What a day! First, they're on a giddy pinnacle of happiness, witnessing their Lord's abundant supply and blessings, and the next thing you know, they're fearing for their lives in a wild storm.

Perhaps Jesus did that to show His disciples that living for Him wasn't only sunshine and gladness. That there are also raging storms that threaten to drown us with fear and doubt. He may have been trying to prepare them for both scenarios.

Actually, it's often those times when the storms of life overtake us, when waves of doubt and fear rise up against us, that we see Jesus most clearly. When everything we've trusted in has fallen away, our vessel is filling up with water and sinking, if we call out to Him: "Master, we perish!" we too will see Him walking on the water toward us. And He will say the same thing to us as He said to His disciples: "It's me. Don't be afraid."

Samuel Keating  
Executive Editor

1. See Matthew 14:13-21.
2. Matthew 14:27 MSG

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God has plans and purposes for each of our lives. But the beauty is that He doesn't call us and leave us on our own. Jesus actually lives in us to pull off the amazing things that He has invited us into.—*Louie Giglio (b. 1958)*

# A Planned Wedding

BY ANDREW MATEYAK

**NOTHING HAPPENS** to God's children by accident. As I stand here, minutes before my wedding, looking down the aisle at the beautiful flowers and decorations all over the room, and thinking of the many miracles that made this moment possible, I truly understand how "All things work together for good."<sup>1</sup> But wait—I'm getting ahead of myself. To tell this story properly, I have to go back in time:

A little over a year before, my fiancée Melody and I were at the birthday party of one of our friends. Around midnight, we went to say goodbye to our hostess. However, she insisted that since it was so late, she would have her son drive us across town back to

our house. We were glad for the ride, and as there was barely any traffic, we expected to be home soon.

But when we came to the turn that led to our house, our driver continued driving straight ahead. At first we thought that maybe he had missed the turn by accident. But when we told him, he just ignored us, finally saying, "I just want to stop and see a friend first."

This was slightly worrying. Who decides to stop to see a friend at one o'clock in the morning when he's supposed to be taking you home?

We did stop at his friend's house and even got introduced to her. She was a Christian and ended up subscribing to *Activated*. We stayed in touch infrequently until about a year later, when she moved to Manila.

When Melody and I set a date for our wedding, we began sending out invitations. Since this woman had moved to Manila, I sent her a text message to tell her the good news. "That's wonderful!" she said. "Here's what I want you to do. Go to the house where you first met me and talk to my mother. She's a wedding planner and decorator, and she will help you for free as my wedding gift."

And that brings me to where I am now—standing here looking down the aisle. As I admire the decorations and beauty of the whole setup, I think, *God did have a plan.*

ANDREW MATEYAK IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE PHILIPPINES. ■

1. Romans 8:28

# THE UNEXPECTED BIRTHDAY GIFT

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

I HAVE A DEAR FRIEND who told me about something that happened on his birthday. His car was in for repairs, and on this particular day he was driving someone in their own car on an all-day excursion. Planning to pick up his car from the shop after his long day's drive, he brought along a substantial amount of money to pay for the repairs.

However, when he went to collect his car, he discovered that the envelope with the repair money wasn't in his bag where he'd carefully put it. He quickly called the owner of the car that he had chauffeured to see if the money might have somehow fallen out of his bag inside the car.

"No, I'm very sorry, I don't see it," came the answer.

My friend said that the terrible sinking feeling, combined with the exhaustion after a long day of driving, was overwhelming. There was nothing to do but cry out to God that somehow the money would be returned. Yet the chances of that looked too small to even hope for.

He was heavy of heart and beset by a bad migraine headache, and his birthday, of all days, had turned into a disaster. Struggling with the migraine and worry about finances, as well as blaming himself that he had somehow



allowed that money to be lost, he spent several hours trying to figure out why this had happened. Finally, he chose to put the whole situation into God's hands and trust Him.

He went to work the next day feeling a peace that everything would work out for good. He wasn't counting on seeing those funds again; he just knew that somehow God would take care of things.

Midmorning he received a call. It was the woman he had chauffeured the day before. "We found the envelope with the money when we looked again in the car," she said. "So we have it here safe and sound for you."



What a relief and cause for praise. My friend was glad that he had chosen to entrust everything to God's care.

He could have been tempted to give in to despair and anxiety. But he made the choice to praise God no matter what circumstances he faced. It wasn't about what God did or didn't do for him or whether it looked like God was being "good" or "bad" to him. What mattered was that he trusted Jesus. He knew he could always trust in God's love, regardless of what challenges or losses he faced, because Jesus had given up everything—even His life—for him.

Being a follower of Jesus doesn't guarantee that everything will always work out the way we want it to. Nevertheless, once we've done what we can, we can leave it with Him to do what He knows is best. Even if something is lost or taken away, God will always supply, or redirect us, or show us how we can do without something we thought was needed. Through it all, we need to trust that He never fails and that He works all things together for our good.

It takes faith to endure times of testing and loss. When we strive to give thanks in everything, we will be in a better position to trust God to provide whatever He knows is best for us.

My friend got something very precious from Jesus on his birthday, the gift of reinforced faith that he could always trust Him in all things. That is a present that will last forever.

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

Worry is blind and cannot discern the future, but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief.—*Ellen White (1827–1915)*



Pray, and let God worry.—*Martin Luther (1483–1546)*



Faith is a reasoning trust, a trust which reckons thoughtfully and confidently upon the trustworthiness of God.—*John R. Stott (1921–2011)*



Worry implies that we don't quite trust that God is big enough, powerful enough, or loving enough to take care of what's happening in our lives.—*Francis Chan (b. 1967)*



Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.—*Proverbs 3:5–6*



Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord is a rock for all ages.—*Isaiah 26:4 CEB*



I say to the Lord, "You are my refuge, my stronghold! You are my God—the one I trust!"—*Psalms 91:2 CEB*



Blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence.—*Jeremiah 17:7 NLT*



Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.—*Psalms 37:5 NLT*



Trust God, my friends, and always tell him each one of your concerns. God is our place of safety.—*Psalms 62:8 CEV* ■



# WHY WATERMELONS ARE BLUE

BY JESSIE RICHARDS

EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD, I've had a difficult time falling asleep and staying asleep. Over the past several years, I've gotten considerably better at both through learning various dos and don'ts. On an average night, though, it still takes me as long as 90 minutes to fall asleep—and that's usually not because I drank coffee too late in the day or didn't exercise enough.

My mind seems to have a mind of its own, which definitely does *not* want to go to sleep—ever. When it is meant to be shutting down for the night, it instead revs up and begins doing something else entirely, from planning to philosophizing.

As I lie there, knowing that I can't make myself think about

*nothing*, I try to steer my thoughts toward things that are pleasant and not stressful—ideally, things that have as little as possible to do with real life. Eventually my busy thoughts give way to semi-busy thoughts, which give way to entertaining thoughts. Then at last comes the moment I cherish every night, the moment of the completely nonsensical thought.

The internal dialogue will go something like this: *Tomorrow I need to reply to Christy first thing. ... You're not supposed to be planning your to-do list now. ... That lecture I listened to the other day was fascinating. ... No, that's not going to work. Too interesting. ... So, this weekend I'm going out to dinner with a friend.*

*... And that's why watermelons are blue.* I smile, grateful to know that in a few moments I will be sleeping peacefully.

It's a case of something that seems “wrong” or nonsensical paving the way for something good. In the case of my insomnia, the good—the sleep—doesn't come *in spite of* the bizarre, random thoughts, but rather the random heralds the harmonious.

That makes me wonder if there are other ways and times when similar scenarios play out, perhaps without my even noticing the pattern.

We all hear the occasional story of the bizarre turned beautiful on a grand scale—someone meeting the love of their life while they were stuck at an airport due to a weather



We shouldn't be afraid to embrace whimsy, that nagging idea that life could be magical; it could be special if we were only willing to take a few risks.—*Donald Miller (b. 1971)*

I encourage everyone to know that God has a plan for their life and that God never makes a mistake even though it seems like He is not listening or paying attention sometimes.—*Nick Vujicic (b. 1982)*

I was raised to believe that God has a plan for everyone and that seemingly random twists of fate are all a part of His plan.—*Ronald Reagan (1911–2004)*

delay, for instance—but there are also less dramatic, more everyday scenarios. I recently lost something that was really pretty insignificant, but in searching for it I found something else that mattered much more to me, which I hadn't been able to find for months.

I've long believed that some good could be found in every situation, in spite of the bad—that God could somehow make things right again, or at least better again, no matter what. But along with that I've had the mindset that getting to the good would be ugly and messy and I wouldn't enjoy it.

Now I'm starting to find a bit of anticipation and pleasure in getting through the “ugly and messy.” I'm

learning to delve into things that could be nasty with the attitude that “this could lead to something wonderful!” That doesn't turn out to be the case every time, but I have more positive energy and more fun if I hope for the best rather than dread the worst. I've found that when I look for the good not *only after* the “bad” but *during* it, I sometimes find that the two are tied together, that the “bad” helps bring about the good.

It's not simply a matter of “praising God anyway,” no matter how bad things get. I'm actually happy when things seem wonky, because you just never know. It could be one of those times when it turns out that the funkiness and the good are

in partnership. It could be a “blue watermelon event.”

Every night, when that nonsensical thought I've come to love pops into my head, it reminds me that it is more than a theoretical possibility that the weird leads to the lovely. It happens to me just about every night. And now, I have even more reason to smile about it.

JESSIE RICHARDS HAD A ROLE IN THE PRODUCTION OF *ACTIVATED* FROM 2001 TO 2012, AND HAS WRITTEN A NUMBER OF ARTICLES AS AN *ACTIVATED* STAFF WRITER. SHE HAS ALSO WRITTEN AND EDITED MATERIAL FOR OTHER CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS AND WEBSITES. ■

# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

BY MARIE STORY

this guy. He's just a carpenter—it's not possible that He could be doing something great. It's not like He's the son of God or anything.”

Just as these people didn't believe in Jesus and His power, we can also lack belief in ourselves and in how Jesus can work through us. We hold ourselves back through negative self-talk. Because we don't believe we're capable of doing certain things, we often don't even try.

I have a pug whose sole goal in life is to be the center of attention. She'll do just about anything to get someone to pet her. She's absolutely determined and extremely stubborn, and rarely lets anything stop her from reaching her goal of undivided attention. If I'm sitting on the couch with my laptop, she'll crawl under my arm and try to nudge the laptop out of the way—or climb right on top of it if she can. If I'm cooking or cleaning, she'll walk round and round my feet,

waiting for me to look at her. And if I'm out of reach, she'll paw frantically at the air until someone notices and pets her. She gives “attention starved” a whole new meaning.

The one place she never tried to reach is my bed. It's more than twice her height, and even standing on her hind legs, she can barely see over the top. So she'd sit and look pathetic, waiting for someone to come down and pay attention to her. She'd never tried to make the jump because it was just too high.

That is, until she realized she could.

One evening she made a desperate leap, and amazingly enough, she was able to hop right up onto the bed. Now she thinks she can hop right up any time she pleases.

**THE BIBLE** tells of a time Jesus went back to His hometown. I think it's one of the saddest stories in the Bible, pretty much summed up in the final verse of the chapter: “He did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”<sup>1</sup>

These people knew Jesus. They had watched Him grow up, and I guess they didn't expect much from Him. So when He came around after He'd been doing miracles, they just couldn't believe it. “Isn't this the carpenter's son?”<sup>2</sup> they asked. It seems to me they were saying, “We know

1. Matthew 13:58

2. Matthew 13:55 NIV

3. 1 Corinthians 9:24 NLT



dabbled in, but only knew very little about. Now, while he's had a lot to learn and catch up on, this guy has achieved far more than he ever expected he could—simply because he was willing to take that first leap.

How about you? Are you possibly hindering Jesus' ability to do something special—or even something you wish to do but aren't sure you can—in your life because of your unbelief in His power to work through you? Have you told yourself “I can't” so many times that you've stopped believing that maybe you can?

Some folks figure it's being “humble” to have a low opinion of themselves and their capabilities. They tell themselves all kinds of excuses, like “I'm just not that smart,” or “That's a job for talented people.” Our own negative self-talk and unbelief can end up defeating us.

God has plans for each one of us. That's not something in question.

Maybe the things He has planned for you are different than what you'd expect; but if you let Him, He'll use you. An Olympic runner doesn't go into a race thinking that maybe he can win. He certainly doesn't go into it thinking that he can't win. He sets his mind to win, and runs as if the medal is already his. “Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win!”<sup>3</sup>

If you know that God has great expectations for you, you can start expecting more of yourself. Take that first scary step, and then keep on running.

MARIE STORY LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, USA, WHERE SHE WORKS AS A FREELANCE ILLUSTRATOR AND VOLUNTEERS AS A COUNSELOR AT A LOCAL HOMELESS SHELTER. ■



Annoying, to be sure, but it got me thinking about how often we hold ourselves back “because of our unbelief.” We just figure we “can't” do this or that, so we don't even try.

I've heard a lot of stories recently about people who were able to get good jobs they weren't technically qualified for simply because they were willing to try.

One person I know got a job as an engineer, working with highly technical plumbing products. This wasn't something he had formal training in; it wasn't even a field he had ever really considered. But the opportunity arose for him to enter that field and receive training in it, and now he's become quite successful.

Another friend got a job as a web developer. This was an area he had





ONE OR TWO THINGS going wrong in my week aren't the end of the world. I can handle a few bad things. I know that every week has its allotment of issues, and I'm used to dealing with that. I can generally stay quite cheerful and look on the bright side.

But last week was an exception. It seemed like something went wrong every day. I'm not talking about little nuisances, but some pretty big things. Every day held a surprise, and they weren't happy ones.

We had a couple of accidents—not major ones, thank God, but the kind that are hassles and result in extra expenses. We had some health issues, extra doctor's appointments and concerns. We worried, as storm after storm lashed different parts of the world where we have friends and loved ones.

Every day, something new came up. It made me wonder if God was going to get tired of me calling out to Him yet again about some new challenge. Does He run out of sympathy after a while and decide not to answer the phone when He sees it's me, yet again, on caller ID?

What I realized from this difficult week of calling out to God is that He hears. He never gets tired of listening. He never stops picking up the phone when I call. He's always there to listen, to offer advice and direction. He's there to calm my heart rate and pick me up when I don't feel like moving forward. He's there to comfort me and restore the joy of the Lord. And He works things out.

If I had any doubt about God's care and protection, I saw it in person last week. I saw His hand move and heal us when we needed healing. I saw Him protect us when

scary things happened. I saw Him take care of loved ones and help them through potentially dangerous situations. I saw Him work a few quiet miracles. I saw Him stop and listen every time I called out to Him, and answer every time I cried.

The result of my very bad week is that I'm reminded that with God's help I can handle anything that comes my way. At the end of the week, my faith is secure, and I'm confident that whatever problems or challenges I face, He will work them out. There may be storms or accidents or mistakes or problems, but ultimately, I can trust God to help me through. And with Him, I can look forward to next week and whatever it brings.

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

# ANOTHER KIND OF

# HERO

By ELSA SICHROVSKY

**WHEN I WAS AN IDEALISTIC FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD,** I read a biography of David Brainerd. I loved reading about missionaries like David Livingstone, C. T. Studd, and Amy Carmichael. They seemed to have no trouble inspiring devoted converts who made every sacrifice visibly worthwhile. But Brainerd's story got off to a tragic start. The reason I remember so clearly how old I was when I read about him is because by the time he was my age, he was an orphan. I still had both of my parents, with many happy years left to enjoy both of them.

As I read on, I was staggered by the depth of his suffering. Yet his journals and prayers were characterized by a determination and passion to glorify God and devote his whole self entirely to His service. Reading

his thoughts on the hardships of imparting the Christian faith to Native American communities that were troubled with alcoholism and destructive pagan practices caused me to marvel at how easy my life was in comparison and challenged me to aspire to greater spiritual devotion. The rugged path he chose to tread drew him to pursue intimacy with Christ, and he didn't let the pain harden his soul.

In addition to spiritual struggles, his body was wracked with intense pain due to severe tuberculosis, which was badly aggravated by his poverty and strenuous lifestyle. His initial evangelistic efforts failed to make much of an impression, and the lack of success caused deep despair to cloud his earnest heart. Nevertheless, through his frequent bouts of the disease that would take his life, and the depression that at times drove him to the brink of suicide, Brainerd persevered.

By the time I finished Brainerd's biography, I found that while my previously favored illustrious-hero-style

biography was inspiring in its own way, Brainerd's story had a finer beauty. Years have passed since I first discovered Brainerd's courageous spirit and undivided devotion to Christ, but I'm still encouraged by his dedication when my own Christian walk looks more routine and common than fruitful and successful.

Brainerd was a missionary at a time and place drastically different from my own, and I may never face the incredible amount of adversity that he did, yet I have the same mission—to reflect God to a world in need of His love and light—and the same God who can help me overcome whatever obstacles I face.

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

# SIX DREAMS AND THE MAKING OF A MAN

BY SAMUEL KEATING

**TWO DREAMS WERE THE START OF JOSEPH'S TROUBLES.**

"Listen to this dream," Joseph told his 11 brothers. "We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"

In Joseph's second dream, the sun, the moon, and 11 stars had bowed to him.

The meanings of the dreams were obvious. Even his father, Jacob, who loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, took offense and rebuked him publicly.

Jacob may have forgiven Joseph, but Joseph's brothers didn't. When the opportunity presented itself, they sold him as a slave to some foreign traders making their way to Egypt.

After many years as a trusted steward in the household of Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard, Joseph found himself unjustly locked away in the king's dungeons. Potiphar's wife had tried unsuccessfully to seduce him, and then falsely accused him of trying to rape her. God was with Joseph, though, and soon the warden entrusted Joseph with the daily running of the prison.

More years passed before Joseph's life was once again shaped by dreams.

For offenses not explained in the Bible, Pharaoh had his butler and baker cast into the same prison.

One morning, the butler and baker were both clearly troubled. Joseph asked why, and they told him: “We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean.”

“Interpreting dreams is God’s business,” Joseph replied. “Go ahead and tell me your dreams.”

The butler told Joseph his dream first: “In my dream, I saw a grapevine in front of me. The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. I was holding Pharaoh’s wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.”

“This is what the dream means,” Joseph said. “The three branches represent three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position. Please remember me when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place.”

When the baker saw that the interpretation of the butler’s dream was good, he told his own dream to Joseph. “I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. The top basket contained all

kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket.”

The interpretation of the baker’s dream wasn’t good, so one can imagine Joseph’s inward struggle as he explained what God had shown him: “The three baskets also represent three days. Within three days, Pharaoh will have you put to death.”

Three days later, which happened to be Pharaoh’s birthday, the butler was restored to his position and the baker was put to death, exactly as Joseph had predicted. Unfortunately, the butler quickly forgot about Joseph, who continued to languish in prison.

Two years later, Pharaoh had two dreams the same night. In the first, seven healthy cows were devoured by seven ugly, gaunt cows. In the second, seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good. Then seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up and devoured the seven full heads.

When Pharaoh awoke, he called for his magicians and wise men to interpret the dreams for him, but none of them could. Finally, the butler came forward and told Pharaoh about Joseph and his ability to interpret dreams. Pharaoh summoned him from prison.

As Pharaoh related his dreams, God showed Joseph that He was giving Pharaoh a glimpse into the region’s future. There would be seven

years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine. His message to Pharaoh was that he should prepare for the years of famine by stockpiling provisions during the years of abundance.

Joseph’s counsel pleased Pharaoh, and he chose Joseph for the job of overseeing the collection and storage of the surpluses during the seven good years. He also elevated Joseph to second-in-command over all the land of Egypt.

But what about Joseph’s dreams of his brothers and parents paying homage to him?

A few years later when the famine reached Joseph’s native land of Canaan, Jacob sent Joseph’s older brothers to Egypt to buy grain, and they bowed before Pharaoh’s deputy, who unbeknownst to them was their younger brother. Joseph then concocted a complex scheme to find out whether they were repentant, and when he was convinced they were, he revealed himself to them.

As we read Joseph’s story in Genesis chapters 37 through 50, we can’t help but be struck by how his character was molded by his reversals of fortune. From spoiled boy to lowly slave, to dependable servant, to condemned man, to trusted prisoner, and finally to Pharaoh’s right-hand man, each twist and turn played a part in the making of God’s man and the working of God’s plan. Perhaps Joseph summed it up best when, referring to his being sold into slavery, he told his repentant brothers, “God meant it for good.” ■

BY STEVE HEARTS



# BETTER THAN A LIGHT

**THIS EARTH LIFE** is commonly seen as one big highway, winding its way through plains, hills, mountains, valleys, and tunnels. I've encountered all of the above plenty of times, and I can confidently say that I like the tunnels least of all.

Those are the moments where the future is uncertain and the road ahead can only be known one step at a time. My situation over the past few months has involved a lot of waiting to see how things would turn out and a lot of cautious step-by-step moves.

Yesterday, the uncertainty of it all enveloped me, quickly becoming a cloud of worry and spiritual darkness.

I prayed, "Lord, bring Your light into this," and He brought to mind the wise, reassuring words from the poem, "The Gate of the Year." I had heard them plenty of times before,

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1. Minnie Louise Haskins (1875–1957)

but this time they spoke directly to me:

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied,  
"Go into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the hand of God,  
Trode gladly into the night.<sup>1</sup>

As a blind man, I can relate to needing assistance when on unfamiliar territory. The message this imparted to me was that I have to take God's hand with the same confidence as when I hold the elbow of someone guiding me in the physical, and allow Him to guide me

through this tunnel. As long as I'm holding onto Him, I don't need to be concerned about the length of the tunnel or what awaits me at its end. I can walk with Him step by step, trusting that I will reach the other side safe and sound.

I may not have any idea what's on the road ahead of me. But the one I'm walking with and who is guiding me sees and knows the road I'm on. I can trust Him to get me through the tunnels of this life, and so can you. When things get dark, don't give in to panic or be overwhelmed by uncertainty. Simply take the hand of the one who has promised to be better than a light for us all, and you will make it safely through whatever your tunnel may be.

STEVE HEARTS HAS BEEN BLIND SINCE BIRTH. HE IS A WRITER, MUSICIAN, AND MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN NORTH AMERICA. ■



# TRUST

BY MARIE ALVERO

**CHRISTIANS OFTEN SAY THINGS LIKE** “You need to have faith,” or “Faith means knowing that God will do it,” or “Trusting means you’re not afraid” or other such phrases that attempt to summarize and define faith. Between us, I can’t relate to any of these statements.

Recently, over a cup of coffee, a dear friend shared with me her admiration for my faith, and how she was struggling with trusting God over certain situations in her life. I had to tell her that every question and doubt she voiced had been mine.

I’ve often agonized over questions like “How do I know that I have faith?” or “How can I say I’m trusting when I’m actually scared to death?” Like the father of a boy Jesus healed said, “I do believe, but help

me overcome my unbelief!”<sup>1</sup> I want to trust, but I don’t always know what that looks like.

Trusting God through failing careers, financial loss, losing friends, transcontinental moves, a miscarriage, and all the everyday challenges of life isn’t my first nature. I’ve wrestled with a lot of doubt and resistance in my heart, saying to God *I know You’re good, but are You good to me? Do You want what’s good for me?*

This is an ongoing journey, but at least it’s a journey. I don’t need faith for the rest of my life and trust for every and any possible events. I only need to trust minute by minute. I’ve learned that it’s okay to not have it all figured out, or to feel inadequate in my faith. God meets me exactly there.

What I shared with my friend was that I’ve never regretted trusting God. Even when I’ve been pretty shaky in

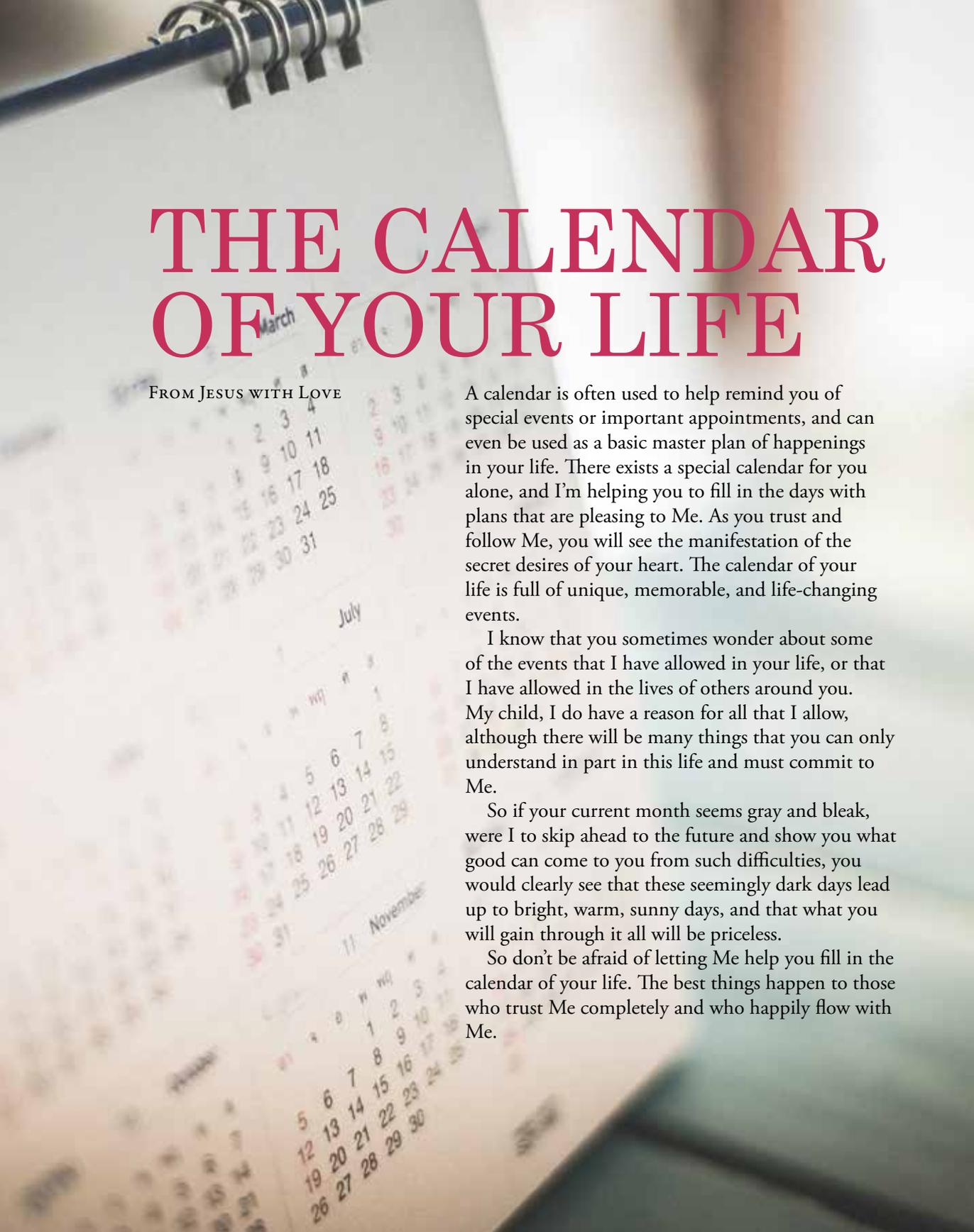
my faith, He’s still been faithful. And because God is faithful, He can be trusted fully to completely carry out His commitments to us in Christ.

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Have you been plagued with fear, and are you longing for peace? Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He gave His life so you and I can have His peace. All we have to do is to accept Him by saying this simple prayer:

*Jesus, please come into my heart and give me Your peace, hope, and love. Amen.*

1. Mark 9:24 NLT



# THE CALENDAR OF YOUR LIFE

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

A calendar is often used to help remind you of special events or important appointments, and can even be used as a basic master plan of happenings in your life. There exists a special calendar for you alone, and I'm helping you to fill in the days with plans that are pleasing to Me. As you trust and follow Me, you will see the manifestation of the secret desires of your heart. The calendar of your life is full of unique, memorable, and life-changing events.

I know that you sometimes wonder about some of the events that I have allowed in your life, or that I have allowed in the lives of others around you. My child, I do have a reason for all that I allow, although there will be many things that you can only understand in part in this life and must commit to Me.

So if your current month seems gray and bleak, were I to skip ahead to the future and show you what good can come to you from such difficulties, you would clearly see that these seemingly dark days lead up to bright, warm, sunny days, and that what you will gain through it all will be priceless.

So don't be afraid of letting Me help you fill in the calendar of your life. The best things happen to those who trust Me completely and who happily flow with Me.