

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 21 • Issue 3

MY SOUL THIRSTS

Finding the living water

The Golden Staircase

A point in the right
direction

The Power of One

You are unique and
valuable





ACTIVATED

VOL 21, ISSUE 3

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE UNUSUAL CEO

Many Christians who want to uphold Christ and do His work in their daily lives tend to see Him as their boss—a friendly fatherly boss, to be sure, but a boss nonetheless. He leaves instructions for them, He watches over them, He encourages and supports them, but He has an office on the top floor, and He doesn't "get His hands dirty" in the morass of daily life.

But that's not the picture presented in God's Word: "We are God's coworkers,"¹ Paul wrote. As George MacDonald put it, "When our will goes hand in hand with God's, then are we fellow-workers with Him in the affairs of the universe—not mere discoverers of His ways, watching at the outskirts of things, but laborers with Him at the heart of them."

God doesn't just save us and infuse our lives with meaning and then sit back on His throne to observe. Rather than check in to receive instructions and then leave the building and report on our progress later, we meet up with Him and spend the day working alongside Him in constant and continuous partnership.

God has chosen to work with us because He wants us to participate in what He does and be agents of the change He wishes to bring forth. That means we need to become familiar with His nature, what He wants done, what He's like and how He works. We do this by studying the Bible and spending time with Him in prayer and reflection.

Learning to work cooperatively with God is a lifelong experience, but we don't have to wait to start.

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1. 2 Corinthians 6:1 GW

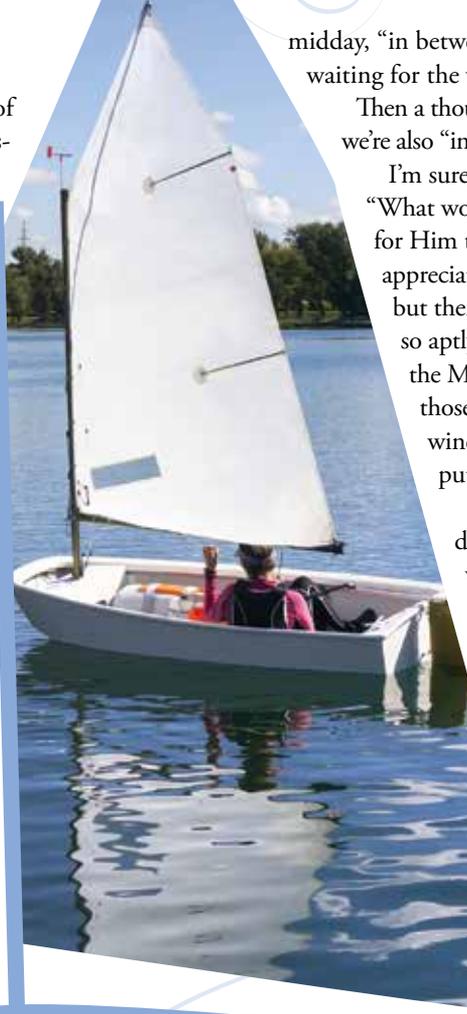
Wait on the Lord; be of good
courage, and He shall strengthen
your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!
—Psalm 27:14

BY PAUL VALOUR

IN BETWEEN WINDS

THE OTHER DAY MY WIFE AND I TOOK A STROLL ALONG THE WATERFRONT, enjoying the beauty of a large lake—the rugged mountains rising on both sides, the river that flows into the lake and supplies it with fresh water, the birds bobbing on the waves, the ever-changing hues of the lake, and the sun reflecting off the surface, transforming it into a stream of glittering gold. The big body of water and surrounding mountains provide a uniquely sheltered and pleasant climate.

I've always loved sailing, and I found myself explaining that the few sailboats on the lake were drifting or moving very slowly because of a phenomenon peculiar to that geographical location. In the morning a breeze usually comes down from the north, and in the afternoon it turns around and a stronger breeze comes up the lake from the south. At that time, it was



midday, “in between winds,” so the boats were still, waiting for the wind to turn.

Then a thought came to me: In life, sometimes we're also “in between winds.”

I'm sure God is pleased when we ask Him, “What would You have me do?” and pray for Him to show us His plans. I'm sure He appreciates our wanting to follow His ways, but there are times when we feel like a poem so aptly expresses, “I was longing to serve the Master, but alas, I was laid aside...”¹ In those times we just have to wait for the wind to pick up and fill our little sail to put the boat back in motion.

We can continue to aim high, dream big, and do the best we can with whatever tasks He entrusts to our care; however, when we're “in between winds,” it's no good trying to blow on our own sail. It's God's business to send the wind in His way and in His time. We can trust that He knows what is best for us.

PAUL VALOUR IS FROM DENMARK. HE HAS BEEN A CHRISTIAN VOLUNTEER MOST OF HIS LIFE AND NOW LIVES IN ITALY. ■

1. Virginia Brandt Berg (1886–1968).
Read more about her life and ministry here: <https://virginiabrandtberg.com/index.html>.

THE POWER OF ONE

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING ABOUT US AS INDIVIDUALS. He knows our frame. He knows what we're capable of. He knows our gifts, talents, weaknesses, and strengths. And despite whatever we might think of ourselves or our lacks, He picked us for His team!¹ He is certain that, with His power, we have what it takes to fulfill the role that He wants us to play.

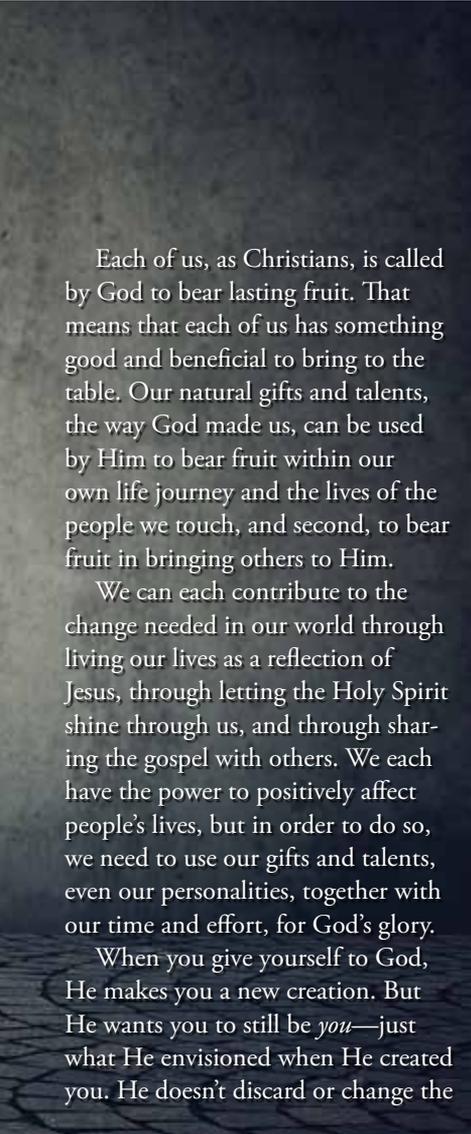
When we look at ourselves through God's perspective, it should cause us to have godly respect for ourselves. As God's children, we're valuable. As Christians, we are His representatives, the bearers of His truth and message. That makes us pretty important! Think about that. You're made in God's image. You're saved. God loves you so much that

He let His Son die for you, so you must be awfully important. You are completely and perfectly loved by God. You have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you. That's an awesome thing to have—the power of *the One* who created us, redeemed us, and now asks us to glorify Him with our lives.

God made each of us unique. There is no one else in the whole world that is just like you, with exactly the same experiences, knowledge, interests, or abilities as you. God intended for you to discover the natural talents and abilities that He gifted you with, to hone them, and to use them for your personal good and happiness, as well as to contribute to the good and happiness of others.



1. See John 15:16.



Each of us, as Christians, is called by God to bear lasting fruit. That means that each of us has something good and beneficial to bring to the table. Our natural gifts and talents, the way God made us, can be used by Him to bear fruit within our own life journey and the lives of the people we touch, and second, to bear fruit in bringing others to Him.

We can each contribute to the change needed in our world through living our lives as a reflection of Jesus, through letting the Holy Spirit shine through us, and through sharing the gospel with others. We each have the power to positively affect people's lives, but in order to do so, we need to use our gifts and talents, even our personalities, together with our time and effort, for God's glory.

When you give yourself to God, He makes you a new creation. But He wants you to still be *you*—just what He envisioned when He created you. He doesn't discard or change the

raw talent that He put within you when He created you. As C. S. Lewis said, "The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become—because He made us."

God made all types of people, and there isn't one "type" of person that is most effective in making a difference in the world in the way God calls them. Buckminster Fuller once said: "Never forget that you are one of a kind. Never forget that if there weren't any need for you in all your uniqueness to be on this earth, you wouldn't be here in the first place. And never forget, no matter how overwhelming life's challenges and problems seem to be, that one person can make a difference in the world. In fact, it is always because of one person that all the changes that matter in the world come about. So be that one person."

God has a part for every one of us to play in building His kingdom on earth. If you feel that there are few opportunities in your life today

for service, perhaps you are in a time of preparation in God's workshop, so to speak, where He is fashioning you with the tool of patience, as you exhibit faithfulness in the seemingly small, mundane things of life. If you feel that your life has little or no outlet for worthy service, be encouraged by this thought from A. B. Simpson: "God is preparing His heroes. And when the opportunity comes, He can fit them into their places in a moment. And the world will wonder where they came from."

God is calling you to be part of His grand plan to change the world one heart at a time. And that's something that each one of us can be part of.

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



THE GOLDEN STAIRCASE

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

MAKING DECISIONS IS RARELY EASY TO DO, and one of the most important times to get it right is when you are deciding on a new job offer. Some years ago, my wife and I were at a crossroads. I had just turned 50, and there is some indefinable thing that happens to our psyche each time our age rolls over to a new decade. The realization begins to dawn that we're not getting any younger and we don't have as many strong years left.

My wife and I were looking for new challenges—but where? We had several offers, but two stood out above the others. One was in California; the other was in the Middle East. We added up all of the advantages and disadvantages in neat columns, but the two options came out equal. We read God's Word and spent time daily trying to discern His plan, but it all seemed a bit foggy. There were just too many variables to know where each path would take us. We felt like what we needed was

some sort of direct leading from God.

One Bible verse that has always been helpful in times like this is Matthew 7:7: "Ask and it will be given you." The passage goes on to say that if we ask for bread, our heavenly Father won't give us a stone.

For weeks we didn't know which way to go, so we kept asking God for direction. We were like the importunate woman in a parable Jesus told who kept pestering the judge until he finally gave her what she wanted.¹

The answer we needed came in the form of a clear picture in my mind of a glowing golden staircase that ascended to the right. In our case this was significant, because of the two possible directions we could go. We were living in Texas at the time, so the Middle East was to the right of us as we looked at a map of the world, and California was to the

left. We believed that vision was the indication from God that we had been praying for, and we acted on it. Looking back now, I can definitely say that was the right choice.

God has a plan for each of our lives. His words in Jeremiah 29:11–13 confirm this: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A SCRIPTWRITER AND MIME ARTIST² NOW IN GERMANY. ■

1. See Luke 18:1–8.

2. <http://elixirmime.com>

BY ELSA SICHROVSKY

WAIT on HIM

AFTER GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE, I was glad to leave my books and assignments behind and was itching to jump into all the new experiences awaiting me in the workplace. I had been a good student during my college years and I was sure that my foreign language proficiency and good work ethic would land me a challenging job in the field that I was the most interested in. When I did not receive any substantial offers after sending out a first batch of resumes, however, I realized that my new and exciting job wasn't going to happen as soon as I'd expected.

Eventually, I was offered a job at a company with convenient hours and good working conditions. The commute would be time-consuming and expensive, and the salary wasn't very good, but I dreaded the thought of spending any more time waiting, so though my family advised against it, I sent off an email confirming with my new employer that I would show up the following Monday.

As I clicked "send," I realized that I was making a huge mistake. My parents' words came back to me: "There's a better job waiting for you somewhere. Working under these circumstances would just be a waste of your time and take you further away from your goals." After further discussion and thought, I ended up backing out of that job just a few days before I was due to begin work.



Eventually, another lead opened near my home, with a better salary and better working hours. While it wasn't my dream job, it was a good place to start gaining work experience. My parents had been right, and I saw the truth in the old adage, "Good things come to those who wait."

On further reflection, I saw that my fear of waiting stemmed from a deeper lack of trust in God's plan for my life and a desire to be in control. Greater confidence in God's love for me and His perfect timing would have helped me to hold out for the best. Instead of rushing to avoid a waiting period, I should have accepted it gladly, knowing that God has special insights to teach me at every stage of life. I have memorized a Bible verse to remind me of this lesson: "Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord."¹

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

1. Psalm 27:14 NLT

Greater Ends

BY ALEX PETERSON



IN *THE HORSE AND HIS BOY*, one of the seven novels in C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, a boy named Shasta

dreams of traveling to the unknown north, which turns out to include the magical land of Narnia. One night Shasta overhears the fisherman he has been led to believe is his father sell him to a noble from a neighboring kingdom. (We find out much later that Shasta had been shipwrecked as a baby and was found by the fisherman.) As Shasta awaits his new master in the stable, he is surprised to find out that the noble's stallion, Bree, is a talking horse from Narnia. Bree explains that he was kidnapped as a foal and sold as a warhorse, and suggests that they escape together. Their journey north is long and perilous, and they have several encounters with lions along the way.

During the first, Shasta and Bree meet two others who are trying to escape to Narnia—Aravis, a young aristocrat who is being pressured into marrying an unsavory character, and her talking mare, Hwin, who was also kidnapped from Narnia. The four decide to travel together.

After Shasta is separated from the others, he arrives first at their prearranged meeting place and



must spend the night alone among some spooky ancient tombs. He is awakened by a rustling in the brush, but it is only a cat, who settles in at Shasta's side. When he is awakened again by the cry of jackals, followed by the terrifying roar of a lion, he opens his eyes and is relieved to find only the cat.

After meeting up and learning of a plot by evildoers to invade Archenland, a small kingdom that borders Narnia, and then conquer Narnia itself, the four are off to warn Archenland's King Lune when another lion comes upon them. This causes the horses to run even faster, but the lion overtakes them and attacks Aravis. Shasta drives the lion away. The horses are exhausted, so Shasta leaves them and Aravis in the care of a kindly hermit and runs on foot to warn the king.

Shasta meets up with King Lune and his hunting party, delivers the message, and heads off with them on a borrowed horse, but gets separated in the fog. Lost and downcast, Shasta senses a presence walking beside him in the darkness. Eventually the two get into a conversation, and Shasta recounts what he sees as his many misfortunes, including his recent encounters with lions. The presence turns out to be Aslan, the

"Great Lion" from the other *Narnia* books, who reveals that he is the only lion Shasta has encountered on his journey:

"I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis," Aslan tells Shasta. "I was the cat who comforted you among the tombs. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept. I was the lion who gave the horses the new strength of fear for the last mile so that you should reach King Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed the [lifeboat] in which you lay, a child near death, so it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you."

A golden light breaks through the fog, and Shasta turns to see "pacing beside him, taller than the horse, a Lion. It was from the Lion that the light came. No one ever saw anything more terrible or beautiful."

Aslan vanishes, Shasta finds his way to Archenland, and King Lune then recognizes him as his own son Cor, the long-lost elder twin of Prince Corin and therefore heir to the throne. Cor and Aravis

eventually marry. "And after King Lune's death they made a good King and Queen of Archenland."

This children's fantasy contains some timeless truths: The difficulties we face in life are not left to chance. God allows each one for a specific purpose, all can ultimately work out for our good, and none are too great for us to overcome with God's help. The "lions" that we fear may actually be for our benefit, because without them we wouldn't reach our destination; we'd never become the people God wants us to be.

From our perspective, troubles hardly seem like good things, but God knows what He's doing. He knows where we should be in every sphere of our lives, and He will help us get there if we will do our part, which begins with trusting Him that whatever troubles we encounter on the way are within His benevolent control.

God often lets us get to a point where our own resources aren't enough, but He never brings us to a point where our only choice is to give up. We always have the choice to turn to Him, depend on Him, and draw on His resources to get us through. When we choose that, He never fails to come through for us one way or another. ■



BY JOYCE SUTTIN

UNDERSTANDING MIRACLES

TODAY I SAW A LEAF SUSPENDED IN THE AIR, dancing in the wind and twirling, but not falling. I stopped and watched it for a moment, amazed and a bit confused, until I looked closely and saw a tiny, nearly invisible thread of a spider's web that attached the leaf to the branch above. Then it all made sense and I could walk on, realizing that it was an amazing feat of nature that the tiny wisp of a thread could support a leaf while the wind wildly spun it around.

Many of the things in our lives have explanations. Someone is healed of a serious disease, and the doctors credit a new medical technique or medicine. Someone survives an avalanche and walks away unscathed, because they were prepared with the right equipment. We look for explanations to try to understand. Or

we look for God's divine intervention in the form of miracles.

Well, frankly, as I realized today, I do both. I believe and appreciate all the scientific explanations of everyday phenomena. I'm especially interested in meteorology and understanding how the weather works. But I also believe in miracles.

I believe in a God who hears and answers prayer. Maybe I won't pray for snow in South Texas, but watching the weather report, if I see a blizzard up north, I'll pray for the protection of loved ones there. If I hear of a tornado watch in our area, I'll pray for it to lift up and pass over us without causing severe damage or loss of life.

I think it's a wonder of God's creation that my jasmine blooms after a dry, harsh winter. I thought maybe the bush hadn't survived, but then,

after the first warm spring rains, with the rising temperature, I see tiny buds burst out and I'm sure it's part of God's miracle of creation. A horticulturist might explain about the plant species and zonal growing periods and be content with a scientific explanation. I believe we're both right; there is an explanation, but that doesn't hurt my sense of wonder. I enjoy hearing evidence about the world around me, and it only supports my amazement at the myriad signs of God's fingerprints that nature presents us with every day.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A RETIRED TEACHER AND WRITER AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, USA. CHECK OUT HER BLOG AT [HTTPS://JOY4DAILYDEVOTIONALS.BLOGSPOT.COM/](https://joy4dailydevotionals.blogspot.com/). ■

GOD and ME

BY STEVE HEARTS



I RECENTLY REFLECTED ON HOW MY PERSPECTIVE ON MIRACLES HAS EVOLVED THROUGHOUT MY LIFE. Although I've had faith in Jesus since childhood, I often compared myself with those who'd witnessed healings and other dramatic miracles—thinking I'd missed out. I then came across an eye-opening definition of the word miracle: “An event that is contrary to the established laws of nature and attributed to a supernatural cause.”¹ This caused me to reflect further on my past, and I realized that I've lived through several events that perfectly fit this definition. Starting with the very beginning.

I was born two months premature, weighing only three pounds at birth—added to which, it was in the middle of a typhoon. Because the power kept failing at the hospital, I was moved to the intensive care unit—the only area with working electricity. My parents were told that I'd most likely not survive the night. But when my dad prayed, he recalled the saying, “Little is much if God is in it.” Although I was very “little” and had to stay in the incubator for a month—and was given too much oxygen, which is apparently what caused my

blindness—I pulled through and am still alive and well today.

This event may never have appeared in the media and may not have been as attention-drawing as amazing healings. Nevertheless, it's a manifestation of the love, care, and omnipotence of a truly awesome God.

God certainly can work truly remarkable miracles that leave us speechless and amazed. Both the Bible and Christian history are full of such amazing stories. But I have come to learn that when we recognize and acknowledge the seemingly small—albeit obvious—ways God manifests Himself to us, He will often increase the visible expressions of His power so that He can be glorified even more.

Do you find yourself struggling to see God's hand in your life? Take a walk down memory lane, and let Him remind you of how He's never left you nor forsaken you. This will encourage your faith to believe that He does not intend to leave you nor forsake you today.

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 JUST1THING,² A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. ■

1. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/miracle>

2. www.just1thing.com



RECOUPING MY PRAYER LIFE

BY MICHAEL OWENS

OVER THE YEARS THAT I HAVE DEDICATED TO CHRISTIAN SERVICE, I've had the benefit of receiving very good input in how to maintain a vibrant prayer life—not all of which I have followed consistently, unfortunately. As a young Christian, the book *Streams That Never Run Dry*¹ had a profound effect on my view of prayer. Even though I didn't feel very talented in many areas of my life, I saw that I *could* pray. It's one form of Christian service that's open to anyone—no specialized training required! Two quotes I read that deeply inspired my prayer life are: “A praying life is never a wasted life,” and “Prayer is the beginning of every miracle.”

One habit I began was to make a list of people or situations that needed prayer. I would pray through that list daily, first thing in the morning. However, as my list got longer, I soon discovered that praying was much harder work than I'd first envisioned. After a while, I started to slack off and eventually abandoned my use of a prayer list and making prayer the first priority of my day. I still prayed, but not with the same diligence and intent as before.

1. Editor's note: This book is available for free here: <https://viriniabrandtberg.com/the-promises-of-god-are-streams-that-never-run-dry/index.html>.

2. Alex and Stephen Kendrick, 2015

Then my wife and I saw the movie *The War Room*,² about an elderly woman who helps a younger woman discover the power and beauty of an active prayer life. We were both deeply touched by the message of prayer being something that should be diligently pursued and we agreed, “We can do this!” I personally felt deeply that I should get back to praying with a list, as I once had, and as the elderly woman in the movie did.

Around this time, I read Mark Batterson's *The Circle Maker*, which tells the story of Honi, a prophet in Israel about a hundred years before the birth of Christ, who set about praying for God to end a devastating drought. He went outside the gates of his city, drew a circle in the dirt, sat inside the circle, and demanded that God send rain. He audaciously declared that he wasn't going to move until God sent rain. There are more details to the story, but the bottom line is that eventually it rained and the drought ended.

The War Room brought me back to using a prayer list and being diligent in prayer. *The Circle Maker* inspired me to be more emphatic and expectant in my prayers. As evangelist Virginia Brandt Berg used to say, “God is still on the throne, and prayer changes things!”

MICHAEL OWENS AND HIS WIFE, MARIA, ARE MISSIONARIES TO THEIR HOME FIELD OF SOUTH FLORIDA. ■

Rainy Day Remedy

BY VICTORIA OLIVETTA

AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, I didn't like cloudy days, especially in wintertime. They seem endless and hopeless, chilling both body and soul.

Still, they are a part of life, so I decided to *learn* to like them, and

goodies, and that creates a warm, satisfied feeling.

I've also learned that I can help brighten the day with what I wear, like a favorite brightly colored sweater or a little extra jewelry.

Not too long ago, I was out on one of those days. Although it was overcast, I didn't expect it to actually rain, so I was surprised to be caught in a down-pour 25 blocks from home. I took shelter and waited for an hour for the rain to stop, but I eventually decided to make my way home. By the time I got home, I was sure I had more water in my clothes and hair than was left in the clouds, but a hot shower and lunch put it all behind me. I felt wonderful.

When I was caught in the cold and rain, I prayed for all the people who are the victims of disasters. Not disasters like burning the chicken dinner or having their hair dye turn out the wrong color—I mean *real* disasters. Like being left homeless by a tornado, with no hot shower, dry clothes, or warm meal to set things right. Or just as bad, having everything they thought would make them happy, but still feeling empty, lonely, fragile.

When bad weather or some other circumstance has you down, praying for someone who is suffering, alone, or powerless to change some unfortunate circumstance not only sends divine help their way, it also lifts your own spirit and does your soul good.

now they don't seem so dreary. My secret? Actually I have several.

Sometimes I take advantage of those days to bake a cake, cookies, or something else special to enjoy with coffee. The entire house smells of freshly brewed coffee and homemade

Most of all, I've learned to thank God for those days. I'm still not crazy about them, but I'm healthy, in a house without leaks, and I have a nice warm bed, food on the table, and family and friends to enjoy my blessings with.

VICTORIA OLIVETTA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN ARGENTINA. ■





BY CHRIS MIZRANY

JESUS AND MY BAG

OVER THE YEARS, my backpack has taken a lot of abuse. I've taken it out in the blazing sun and in the pouring rain, around my neighborhood and on overseas trips. It's gone with me to humanitarian projects and on holidays. In fact, almost everywhere I've gone, so has my bag.

Still, I was caught off guard when my bag started to have trouble zipping up—either the mechanism would get stuck or the zipper would pop open behind it again, leaving me frustrated and unable to use the bag properly. But I struggled on, carrying the bag half-closed, or even holding it in one hand while squeezing the halves together to keep its contents from falling. The rest of the bag was in great shape, and I didn't see why this one problem should stop me from using it.

1. Matthew 11:28 NLT; John 15:5 CEV

2. See Lamentations 3:22–23;
Philippians 4:13.

One day, though, it was just too much, and I reacted angrily as an attempt to pick up my bag resulted in items spilling all over the floor. “Why don't you take that thing in for repair?” my wife suggested. It only took me a couple of seconds to realize that she was right, so off to the shop I went.

Before long, the bag was repaired, and better than ever! I'm continuing to use it constantly, and everything works perfectly. I feel pretty foolish for having waited so long for such a simple fix.

This caused me to reflect on my life, which is filled with situations—good, bad, easy, terrible—that all take a toll. Eventually, my own strength always fails. My running back and forth between horribles and happys wears me down. I come apart and can't function properly.

Yet I often refuse to acknowledge my need for help, so I try to push

aside the one problem that is stifling my spirit. I struggle on in a state of halves—half productive, half joyful, half fulfilled—when my soul could be entirely renewed. Jesus offered full repair when He said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit.”¹

So now I remember that wherever I go and in whatever situations I find myself, Jesus is with me. His strength bears any weight, and His mercies are constantly new.² If I keep Him at the center of my existence, then no matter what this life throws at me, He'll never fail to hold me together.

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



BY MARIE ALVERO

MY SOUL THIRSTS

“AS THE DEER LONGS FOR STREAMS OF WATER, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him?”¹

I love this prayer because it expresses a need for God on a primal level, like a deer searching for water. Thirst is an involuntary reaction, and a need that requires fulfillment.

It has taken me a long time to understand that the need for a relationship with God is embedded in my soul. It is not something I need to create, but something I need to recognize. For years I stressed over my relationship with God, trying to define what “close” looked like.

What I was really after was a formula, because I didn’t actually understand relationship. Does 15 minutes of prayer plus 30 minutes of Bible study produce a close relationship? What about a bonus 20 minutes of sharing spiritual insights

in a group? Does it only count if I try to hear God’s still small voice in my heart? But how do I know if the voice I hear is His? How can I be sure that He and I indeed are “in relationship”?

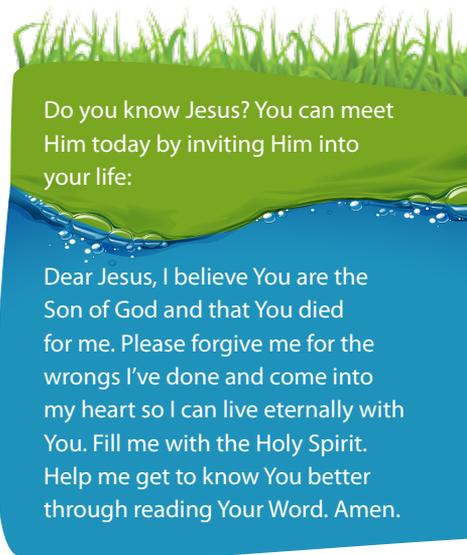
The Hebrew word “yada” means “to know.” But the word isn’t referring to knowledge, memorized facts, formulas, and definitions. It speaks of intimacy, discovery, and understanding. This word appears often in Scripture; for example: “In all your ways *yada* Him, and He shall direct your paths.”²

I think it’s saying that the deeper we know God, the more we will recognize His way, His truth, and His wonder. And the more we will find Him showing up in a beautiful sunrise, in shared laughter and conversation, in a delicious bite of food, in an embrace, in beautiful music, in a great cup of coffee, in an intense-but-respectful debate, a challenging workout, a humble apology, a problem solved, in good news and even in less-than-good news, in life’s beginnings and endings.

My heart, and yours, has the freedom to pursue God. His Word tells

us that “You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”³ His Word is true and living, reliable and unfailing. He simply wants us to seek Him, *yada* Him, so that He can direct our paths to the fullest life possible.

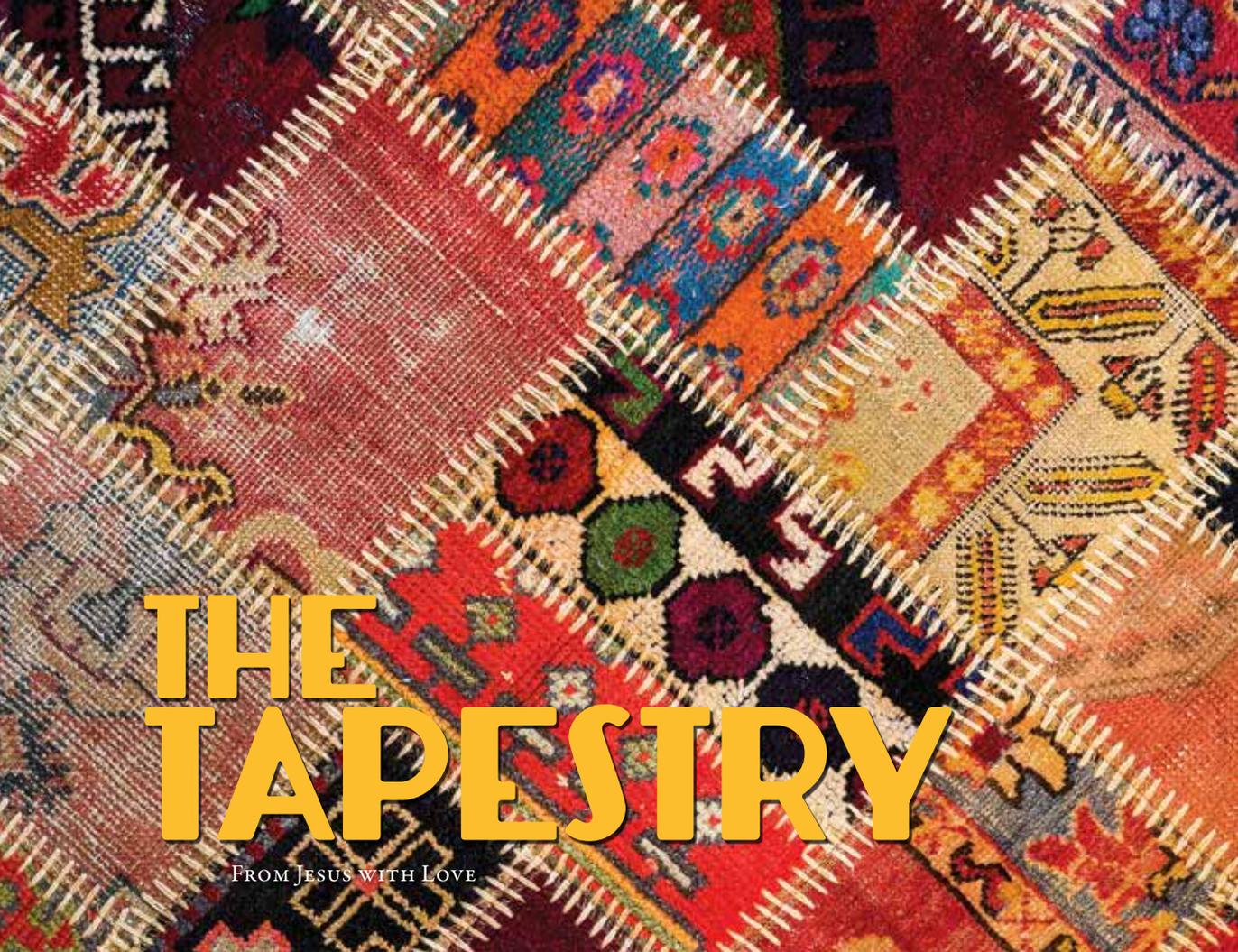
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Do you know Jesus? You can meet Him today by inviting Him into your life:

Dear Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You died for me. Please forgive me for the wrongs I’ve done and come into my heart so I can live eternally with You. Fill me with the Holy Spirit. Help me get to know You better through reading Your Word. Amen.

1. Psalm 42:1–2 NLT
2. Proverbs 3:6
3. Jeremiah 29:13



THE TAPESTRY

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Each event in your life, each thought, each decision, each bit of love, and each interaction with someone else is like a thread in a tapestry. Day after day, dark threads and bright threads are woven together, often, it seems, without rhyme or reason, but in the end they form a picture. When I look at the tapestry of your life, I see a beautiful work!

All the good things you have experienced throughout your life—the happiness and fulfillment, the love you gave and received, the lives that were better because of you—are bright threads.

The dark threads are the difficulties and disappointments, the trials and the tears. These are also necessary because they make the bright threads look all the brighter and help give your tapestry its rich, warm glow. There is a plan and a purpose—My plan—and that is to create something glorious with your life: a tapestry with deep colors, intricate detail, and beauty.