

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# activated

Vol 23 • Issue 6

## ROUGH SEAS

The special  
passenger

### Peace Plan

10 keys to inner  
calm

### My flight foible

A victory in three  
acts

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

### PERFECT PEACE

At an art contest on the theme of peace, most of the competitors contributed tranquil scenes of lazy days in the countryside, where all was stillness and harmony.

To be sure, that's a form of peace—but the picture that won the award illustrated the hardest kind of peace to achieve. It depicted the roaring, raging, foaming rapids of a storm-swollen waterfall, and—barely visible on a little tree branch overhanging the torrent—there was a nest where a tiny bird sat peacefully singing in spite of the turmoil below.

The Bible promises that we can have a peace that transcends all understanding.<sup>1</sup> But that kind of peace comes only through the Prince of Peace—Jesus—and the knowledge that whatever happens, He'll take care of us! Like an airline captain, He knows when we will enter a period of turbulence, and He remains in control, even as the plane may rock and drop.

That reminds me of this piece of insight: “God can solve your problems in one little glimpse. He can refresh your spirit with one deep breath. He can clarify your thoughts with just one sweet strain of heavenly music. He can wipe away your fears and tears with just one little restful moment in that perfect peace He gives when your mind is fixed on Him and Him alone.”<sup>2</sup>

May you experience His perfect peace throughout this day, this month, and this year.

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1. See Philippians 4:7.

2. See Isaiah 26:3.

BY CHRIS MIZRANY

# WHY WE MATTER

**WHEN I SEE A SUNRISE**, feel the sun on my face, revel in the ocean's spray, or behold the splendor of nature's vistas, I often think what a special place earth is. Recently I read some very interesting facts that confirm just how special our planet is!

For example, when astronomers announce the discovery of an "earth-like planet," they're usually talking about planets with roughly earth-like gravity that are close enough to their star to be warm—but not too hot—and that may (or may not) have liquid water. But there's a whole lot beyond those three "must-have" ingredients that makes our home planet special. Here's an incomplete list of why, out of all the many celestial bodies, earth matters.

The moon: The earth has a slight tilt and teeters like a top as it spins, which could cause drastic shifts in climate. But because of the moon's stabilizing effect on our orbit, our climate is a lot more stable.

- **Stable rotation:** The regularity and frequency of day and night on this planet play a significant role in preventing extreme temperatures and encouraging life.
- **Long-lived sun:** Our sun is a yellow dwarf, a relatively rare type of star that is both small and stable. It also has a long life. Larger stars generally burn hotter and die sooner, while smaller stars tend to produce enormous plumes of radiation.
- **Gas-giant neighbors:** The sun and moon are essential to us, but there's another thing that helps make earth

habitable: Jupiter. In general, gas giants tend to clump near their home stars. But because the ones in our solar system are beyond our planet, their intense gravity conveniently catches wayward asteroids and comets.

- **A magnetic field:** Earth is blessed with a strong, stable magnetic field, which staves off the cosmic rays and solar flares that would otherwise fry the planet every now and then.
- **Atmosphere:** That high-altitude layer of gas shields us from much lethal radiation.

These are just a few of the items on the long list of features that make earth uniquely habitable in comparison to every other planet we know of. The fact that the list of essential features is so long could suggest that life is incredibly rare, and ours may be the only planet that satisfies all the necessary conditions.

Of course, we can't know either way for sure. But the fact that the many conditions for life as we know it are all present on earth in perfect form points me toward a wonderful Creator who knew just what He was doing.

He laid out the stars and set the planets in their orbits. He caused water and snow, light and dark, laughter and love to exist for a purpose.<sup>1</sup> Each of us is unique and created by a loving Creator who provided a beautiful and intricately designed planet for us to live on and enjoy.

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1. See Psalm 8:3; 33:6.

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

# FEEELING UNSETT



IN PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7, the apostle Paul instructs the believers: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>

Attaining relief from anxiety, worry, stress, and pressure is a high priority for most people today. We live in a world with an increasingly rapid pace of change, and change brings uncertainty. Uncertainty tends to bring worry, stress, and a general feeling of being unsettled. A friend of mine expressed it like this: “When I feel unsettled, I feel uneasy, like something is going to go wrong, or like I’m missing something important. It often involves an unknown, a risk, and it brings in an overall unsettled, in-flux feeling.”

Sometimes you just wake up feeling unsettled, or you feel uneasy but you can’t pinpoint why. Other

times you know or have an inkling why you’re feeling that way, what circumstance or decision it’s connected to. It could be that you’re putting off making an important but difficult decision. Perhaps you’re experiencing conflict in a relationship and amends need to be made. Maybe it’s time for a change in your life—of career, location, parenting, priorities, or within your circle of friends—and while you know the change is needed, it will cost you personally to make the change, so you feel reluctant or afraid, and as a result, you avoid doing whatever it is you feel you need to do. Or maybe you *are* taking steps toward a change in your life and you feel unsettled because you don’t know how things are going to play out.

Feeling unsettled, uneasy, and anxious tends to sap your joy and faith. Those feelings of dread or “not knowing” can throw a wet blanket on your outlook or hope for the future, and can inhibit you from making

1. NIV
2. Psalm 55:22 ESV
3. 1 Peter 5:7 NLT
4. Isaiah 26:3
5. John 14:27 ESV
6. Philipians 4:6
7. See Philipians 4:8.



# LED?



solid progress in your life. That gnawing feeling of too many loose ends, lingering decisions that need to be made, things you might be forgetting or just can't get to can leave you feeling frazzled, nervous, distracted, and emotionally exhausted.

There are several wonderful promises in the Bible on this topic which give both spiritual and practical advice. For example:

- Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.<sup>2</sup>
- Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.<sup>3</sup>
- You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.<sup>4</sup>
- Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.<sup>5</sup>

Learning to “give all our worries and cares to God” and to be “anxious

for nothing”<sup>6</sup> is a process that requires practical steps on our part. We need to make a conscious effort to give our burdens to God. We must commit to spending regular time with Jesus. We need to learn to surrender our fears and worries to Him. We need to meditate on God's Word and intentionally focus our thoughts on things that are praiseworthy, noble, good, true, honorable, and right.<sup>7</sup> We have to make a conscious effort to replace bad habits with good ones that lead us to a healthy lifestyle.

Some people assume that once you become a Christian, God automatically protects you from bad things. That's not how it works.

Trusting in God doesn't eliminate problems, stress, or difficulties that might arise, but it does provide us a firm foundation for our confidence and an outlet for our anxiety: God Himself.

I find it helpful to review God's promises to remind myself of His unconditional love for me. He cares. He wants to help me. He has promised to take care of me. When we put ourselves and our loved ones in His hands, we can know that it is the best place possible.

There are also some helpful practical tips, and I'll include a few below.

**Write down your concerns and anxieties.** This is especially helpful



## PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Jesus, when I feel weak, tired, or out of sorts, You're right there to put Your arms around me, to comfort me, and tell me that everything is going to be okay. You reach out and soothe my ruffled nerves, melt away my worries and fears, and lift the confusion that surrounds me.

Thank You that I can find relief from the pressure of a busy schedule by turning to You. When I stop what I'm doing and take a few minutes to think about You and Your love, my spirit is refreshed and I find the strength to continue on with my day.

Thank You for the peace You pour into me when I'm stressed or down. And thank You, too, that when I feel good, You make me feel even better.



if you have a lot on your mind. Just listing it all can bring some clarity and relief. Write down your worries and give them to Jesus.

Once you have written down everything that is weighing on you, that list can become a list for both prayer and planning. If you can take action on a few items, even if they're smaller points, it will whittle down the list and give you a sense of progress.

◆  
**Talk with someone—your spouse, a friend, counselor, mentor.** It can help to talk through your situation and seek good advice.

8. John Ortberg, *All the Places to Go ... How Will You Know?* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2015), 17.
9. Matthew 11:30
10. Proverbs 18:10

◆  
**Beware of the “god of options.”**

This term represents the overwhelming number of choices available today. Too much information can result in decision paralysis, not to mention wasted time.

Be mindful and disciplined; seek out the information you need to make a decision, without getting caught up in the never-ending flow of new information and options.

◆  
**Take one step at a time.** If you are facing a number of issues that need resolving, don't try to tackle them all at once. Pick one to think and pray through. Consider the pros and cons, with the end goal being to make a decision.

◆  
**Decide. Do. Trust. Repeat.** Once you make a prayerful decision, don't keep doing comparison research or second-guessing your choice. Trust that you made a decision that is good enough.

I read a quote on the topic of open doors and the struggle that we, as Christians, often face when

making life choices as we seek God's will. The author wrote, “God can use even what looks like the ‘wrong door’ if I go through it with the right heart.”<sup>8</sup> I believe that is true, and it is deeply comforting, because we will never get every decision 100% right. That's part of the life experience.

If we can keep a more heavenly perspective, we'll enjoy life's journey more. Granted, the problems we face in life are not “easy.” But Jesus promises to give us strength to enable us to carry those problems. He says, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”<sup>9</sup> When we draw on His strength, we can have peace in the midst of a storm and deep joy even in trying circumstances.

Jesus is our source of peace. His name “is a strong tower,” which we can “run into and be safe.”<sup>10</sup>

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# REST ASSURED

**STRESS IS NO FUN.** Whether as a student cramming before an important exam, a parent juggling the demands of work and family, someone facing a serious health problem, a professional struggling to stay current, or trying to stay on your feet in a shaky economy, everyone has experienced the debilitating effects of stress.

Some of the primary causes of stress may have changed since the Bible was written, but the Bible's instruction and promises on the subject are as valid now as they were thousands of years ago.

## **GOD PROMISES PEACE TO THOSE WHO TURN TO HIM.**

The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.—*Psalm 29:11*

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—*Matthew 11:28*

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you.—*John 14:27*

## **COUNTER WORRY WITH PRAYER.**

Be anxious for nothing, but let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds.—*Philippians 4:6–7*

Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you.—*Psalm 55:22*

Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.—*1 Peter 5:7*

## **STAY CLOSE TO GOD.**

Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace.—*Job 22:21*

My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.—*Exodus 33:14*

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.—*Isaiah 26:3*

I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.—*Psalm 16:8*

## **TRUST IN GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE AND CARE.**

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.—*Matthew 10:29, 31*

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?—*Romans 8:32*

I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Romans 8:38–39* ■



BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

# MY FLIGHT FOIBLE

WHEN I WAS IN THE DARKNESS OF MY STRUGGLE, I didn't want to talk about it, but now that the light is on, I can.

To make a long story short: no show, no go.

And now the full version:



## ACT I: A REVELATION OF TIME

My wife and I had an early flight to catch from Berlin, which is about a two-hour bus ride from my home city of Dresden. We planned

1. *Oh, the Places You'll Go* (1990),

Dr. Seuss' last book before he passed away. See <http://benavidez5thgrade.weebly.com/uploads/8/6/7/3/86734958/oh-the-places-youll-go-by-dr-seuss.pdf>.

everything meticulously and went to sleep knowing that we were in complete control of the situation. Surely, all would be well.

When we got to the bus stop to catch our 4:50 a.m. ride, which was the first leg of our journey, we wondered why it hadn't come yet. Checking the time, we discovered that we had *missed* the first bus, which meant we would *miss* our train, which meant we would *miss* our flight! How could this have possibly happened?!

Tracing our steps back, we realized that the previous evening the battery in our clock had come loose, and when it was put back in place, the clock was running 30 minutes late! We had trusted in that clock and hadn't bothered to double-check it with other timepieces.



## ACT II: THE UNRAVELING

Sorry to say, it was then that I felt like shaking my fist at the heavens and crying out in my despair: *My God, my God, why have You forsaken us? We prayed and prayed for everything to go smoothly, and then a stupid mistake causes all of our plans to crumble into dust...!*

It's funny how at times like these we sometimes gloss over *our* mistakes and start blaming God or others for dealing us bad cards.

After the despair, my cool-thinking mode kicked in and I tried to salvage the situation. It was soon apparent that it would not be a walk in the park.

When you fail and fall like this,



### ACT III: DELIVERANCE

Trying to communicate with a behemoth airline in the midst of a global pandemic is like trying to give a speech in the middle of Mumbai rush-hour traffic. Our flight’s scheduled departure time came and went, and after trying every key at the lock and failing, my last resort was to try to call their help line one last time. I was put on hold yet again, and I feared I was headed back toward a most useless place—“the waiting place.” But after waiting more than half an hour, someone answered. Glory!

After explaining our situation, we were hit with another blow: we found out that their policy is that if you miss the outgoing flight, the return flight is also canceled. Meaning we would lose the whole ticket and would have to buy new ones in the middle of peak season to the tune of a loss of 2,000 euros. “Unless ... you have some proof that you tried to cancel your ticket before the flight.”

It just so happens that in the middle of all our attempts, I had sent a WhatsApp message that was dated a few hours before takeoff. We sent a screenshot, and it was approved. And after another half an hour of brainstorming with the service call

center representative, we had our new tickets for a later flight at no extra charge!

After all was said and done, I thought to look at my phone to see the balance of prepaid time: 69 cents remaining! Imagine if my prepaid balance had run out in the middle of that marathon call! I would have had to start the whole process over again. God is in the details, and I was reminded of how the Bible is full of stories of events hinging on little things and little people—multitudes are fed from a few loaves and fishes, a shepherd boy becomes a king, a giant is slain with one smooth stone, the Red Sea is parted using a lifted-up stick, the Savior of the world is born in a stable, for example.

This experience helped me to realize that even when we get it wrong and make serious blunders, our amazing God is always with us and He can even overwrite our human error to work things for good in our lives.

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it’s easy to just want to give up, but that was not an option, considering the consequences that would follow. One cannot lie face down in the mud for too long, or as Dr. Seuss so aptly put it:

I’m sorry to say so  
but, sadly, it’s true  
that Bang-ups  
and Hang-ups  
*can* happen to you.  
You can get all hung up  
in a prickly perch.  
And your gang will fly on.  
You’ll be left in a Lurch.  
You’ll come down from the Lurch  
with an unpleasant bump.  
And the chances are, then,  
that you’ll be in a Slump.  
And when you’re in a Slump,  
you’re not in for much fun.  
Un-slumping yourself  
is not easily done.<sup>1</sup>

# PEACE PLAN

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

PEACE IS A “FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT,”<sup>1</sup> one of the special blessings the Bible promises to those who strive to live close to God. The Hebrew word translated “peace” in most English versions of the Old Testament denoted completeness, soundness, and overall well-being. The New Testament connotation is inner tranquility—a combination of hope, trust, and quiet of mind and soul.<sup>2</sup> In this day and age, such peace can be elusive.

There’s no magic formula for attaining inner peace, but there are a few things we can do to nurture it.

1. See Galatians 5:22–23.
2. *Nelson’s Bible Dictionary*, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers
3. Psalm 84:11 CEV
4. Philippians 4:6–7 CEV
5. Romans 8:28
6. James 1:2–4
7. Isaiah 43:25 NLT
8. Romans 5:1
9. 1 Timothy 6:6

## TRUST GOD

Trust doesn’t just happen. As children, we learn to trust our parents because we feel their love and benefit from their care and mature understanding of life. We trust friends who have stuck with us through thick and thin. We trust businesspeople whom we find to be honest and reliable. We trust people, in short, because of our experience with them.

It’s the same with God. The more we open our hearts to Him, the more we understand and experience His love and concern. The more we study the Bible and Bible-based materials, the better we understand life and the more we appreciate God’s wisdom and goodness. The more we take our problems to Him in prayer, the more we learn to depend on Him to help us to work them out. The better we get to know Him, the more we trust Him; and the more we trust Him, the more inner peace we have.

## GO GOD’S WAY

When we think in terms of what will please God and do our best to act accordingly, we can expect His blessing. “You [God] treat us with kindness and with honor, never denying any good thing to those who live right.”<sup>3</sup> That doesn’t mean everything will come easily or go smoothly, because hard work and troubles are part of life. It does mean, though, that we can have peace of mind even in difficult times, because God has promised us good things in the end.

## TAKE PROBLEMS TO GOD IN PRAYER

Turning our problems over to God in prayer benefits us in two ways. First, we get His help, which makes all the difference in the world. But it also has the extra benefit of taking the pressure off of us to work things out. “Don’t worry about



anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then ...God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.”<sup>4</sup>

## GIVE TROUBLES TIME

Whatever may befall us and for whatever reason, we can rest assured that God can and wants to bring about some greater good through it. Eventually, “all things work together for good to those who love God.”<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, our faith is strengthened and we learn patience. Without either of those—faith and patience—it’s hard to be at peace. That’s why the Bible tells us to stay positive and hang in there: “Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”<sup>6</sup>

## LET GO OF THE PAST

It’s impossible to feel at peace with ourselves or God as long as we’re still carrying the burden of past mistakes. We can repent a thousand times and do penance until hell freezes over, but we won’t experience genuine peace until we fully accept the fact that God forgave us for every wrong the instant we asked Him to. We say, “I’m too bad.” God says, “I—yes, I alone—will blot out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again.”<sup>7</sup> “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

## VIEW ADVERSITY AS OPPORTUNITY

In her book *Gratitude: A Way of Life*, Louise L. Hay wrote: “No matter what is happening around us, we can choose to respond in a way that will help us learn and grow. When we look at our difficulties as

opportunities for growth, then we can be grateful for the lessons we are learning from these difficult experiences. There is always a gift in every experience. Expressing gratitude allows us to find it.”

When we adopt that mindset, we put problems in perspective, free ourselves from the negativity they conjure up, and find peace.

## CULTIVATE CONTENTMENT

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.”<sup>9</sup> Who doesn’t like the sound of “great gain”? It’s “godliness” and “contentment” that people tend to misinterpret and get hung up on.

“Godliness” isn’t a matter of piety or perfection. It isn’t a sinless state, but a lifelong process; it’s recognizing that we’re not nearly as much like Him as we should be and asking Him to make us better.

And “contentment” isn’t a matter of feigning happiness or resigning

Anything wonderful can happen in that little margin of time when you don't give up but keep on believing.—*Virginia Brandt Berg (1886–1968)*

Jesus didn't promise to change the circumstances around us, but He did promise great peace and pure joy to those who would learn to believe that God actually controls all things.—*Merlin Carothers (1924–2013)*



## DEEPEN YOUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

In Jesus' farewell to His disciples, knowing that He was about to be arrested and crucified, He told them, "These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."<sup>14</sup> The better you get to know Jesus by asking Him to come into your heart, reading His Word, especially the Gospels, and by interacting with Him through prayer and reflection, the more you will be convinced that He and His Father have everything under control, no matter how things may appear on the surface.

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ourselves to the way things are when they aren't as they should be; it's a matter of loving God and trusting Him for the outcome. It's "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."<sup>10</sup>

## TAKE TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION

"Give God time to reveal Himself to you. Give yourself time to be silent and quiet before Him, waiting to receive, through the Spirit, the

10. Philippians 1:6

11. Andrew Murray (1828–1917), South African writer and pastor

12. See Ephesians 4:23; 2 Corinthians 3:18.

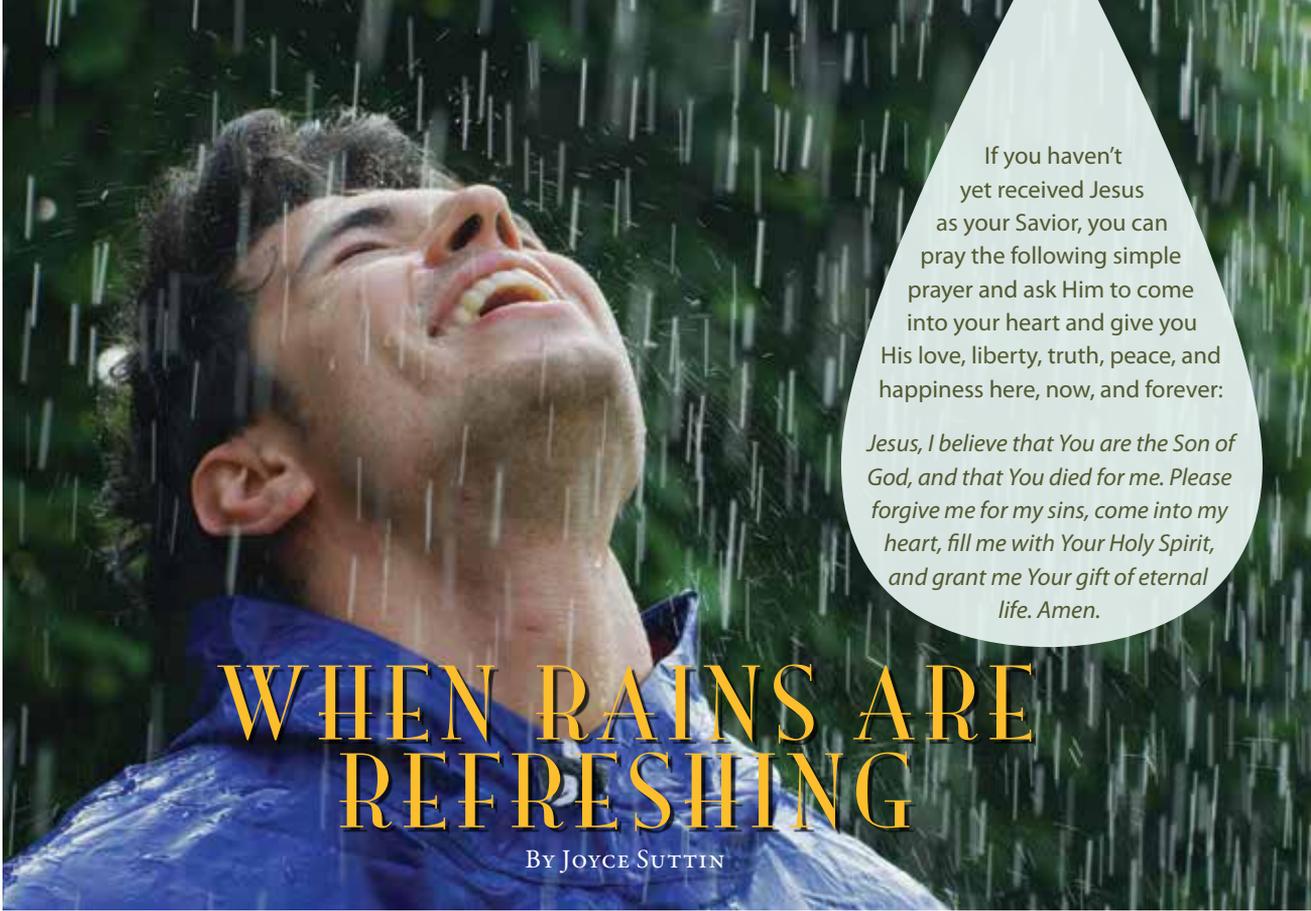
13. Philippians 4:8

14. John 16:33

assurance of His presence with you, His power working in you. Let [Him] create within you a holy atmosphere, a holy, heavenly light, in which your soul will be refreshed and strengthened for the work of daily life."<sup>11</sup> In those quiet moments, God is able to renew your spirit and also make you more like Himself.<sup>12</sup>

## BE GRATEFUL

Counting our blessings puts us on a positive channel. It doesn't solve all our problems, but it takes our focus off of the things that upset and unsettle us. "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."<sup>13</sup>



If you haven't yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can pray the following simple prayer and ask Him to come into your heart and give you His love, liberty, truth, peace, and happiness here, now, and forever:

*Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God, and that You died for me. Please forgive me for my sins, come into my heart, fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and grant me Your gift of eternal life. Amen.*

# WHEN RAINS ARE REFRESHING

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF DROUGHT WHERE I LIVE, we had a very rainy spring. It's made me think a lot about rain.

For the past few years, we've had very dry weather interspersed with heavy rainstorms. The dry weather turned the clay-like soil into rocks so that when the rains came with a vengeance, there were floods. We would vacillate between hot dry weather and too much rain coming at one time that would do little to eradicate the drought. The imbalance in nature led to wildfires, contaminated water, even deaths when people drove into low-lying areas and got caught in flash floods.

Now after some years, nature has restored its balance with regular rains this entire spring. We've had a little

too much rain, but instead of just running off, it has soaked deeply into the soil, replenishing it. Since it has come as regular rainfall instead of one sweeping storm, the earth has been able to absorb it, and it has made a difference.

This led me to reflect on the times of spiritual dearth in my life. In times of imbalance, I didn't take enough regular time with God, and the result was spiritual dryness. Then I spent entire days hiding away in prayer and immersing myself in His Word, and I came away from those times somewhat strengthened—but it didn't really do the same thing as daily times of refreshing.

These daily times of watering our soul are the goal for a flourishing spiritual life. When we have a

balance in our days and regularly take time for prayer and reading the Bible and daily devotionals, our ability to deeply absorb the Word and allow it to change us is enhanced. We are better prepared to stand in times of trial, and we develop deep roots of faith that help us to trust that God will see us through whatever storms come our way.

I've been thankful for the rainy weather this spring. I've enjoyed the glorious green grass and blooming flowers. I've seen the benefits of a rising aquifer. I've especially appreciated the lesson of a restored balance in nature and in my own life.

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BY TINA KAPP

# WHY I DON'T FEAR THE FUTURE

I'VE TALKED WITH LOTS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE AFRAID OF THE FUTURE. Even though the Bible teaches us from beginning to end about God's power and plan to protect His own no matter what they face, the mind has a way of forgetting such reassurances when it gets busy worrying. But something happened to me that changed that dynamic in my life.

The same month I discovered that I was pregnant, God called my husband and me to be missionaries to Africa. The latter was an even bigger surprise, because I had lived in Japan most of my life and was actively involved in a counseling program for university students and other charity work. I spoke Japanese, was happy and fulfilled, and felt I had settled into the place God had for me—but

then He told me He had some other things to teach me, and that a change of scenery would be just the thing!

After overcoming the initial shock and having a little time to adjust to the idea, I became excited about going somewhere completely different, and within a few months, we were on our way. We stopped in Europe to visit my husband's family, and we were advised to get everything we would need for the baby, as these things were either hard to find, poor quality, or prohibitively expensive in that part of Africa. But baby things weren't cheap in Europe, either—and it was winter, so summer baby clothes were hard to find.

I began scouring flea markets. One advertisement looked perfect: "Furniture and children's clothes." There, a man was selling his child's

complete set of clothes from newborn to one year old. All of it was in near-perfect condition, and most of it was for summer! There were also some toys and other baby items we would need.

What does that have to do with fears about the future?—Now, whenever I am faced with such fears, especially in regard to my daughter, I recall that experience. We're only human, so it's inevitable that we sometimes miss the mark or worry about the future, but God will never fail. We are safe in His arms forever!

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# ROUGH SEAS

BY MARIE ALVERO

THERE'S A PEACE I'VE COME TO  
KNOW  
THOUGH MY HEART AND FLESH  
MAY FAIL  
THERE'S AN ANCHOR FOR MY SOUL  
I CAN SAY "IT IS WELL"

I sang these words over and over, hoping that the repetition would procure me some peace. But I did not feel peace. My soul felt troubled, even terrified. *Where is God in this mess? Where is God in this uncertainty?*

I'm sure I sounded exactly like Jesus' disciples when they were caught in a storm at sea. Jesus, undisturbed by the gale, was asleep on a pillow. The disciples woke Him saying, "Master, don't you care if we perish?" Jesus got up and said to the sea, "Peace. Be still!" and the storm stopped and the sea was calm. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" Jesus didn't ask them

this because they were afraid of the storm; it was because they questioned whether or not Jesus cared.<sup>1</sup>

And here I was with the exact same fears: *Don't You care, God?* My peace, and sometimes even my faith, is so connected to whether or not things are going the way I want them to.

Here are some of my peace stealers:

- **Loss—the compounding monster.** I tend to live each new loss through the filter of all previous losses and feel past pain along with fresh pain.
- **Surrender.** Oh, the struggle when we know God's will is in conflict with our own!
- **Lack.** When there's something I need (or even want) that I don't have, it's hard to accept peace.

Maybe you can relate. In fact, I think it's pretty obvious that these types of situations are times when peace isn't expected, similar to how we would expect to be afraid in the middle of a big storm on a little boat

tossing about on the sea. God doesn't mind the scared response—He knows a storm is scary—but He says Jesus is in the boat with us, and we don't need to question whether or not He cares.

Back to my troubled soul. I'd just lost a family member, suddenly and painfully. One of my kids was facing some serious health issues. Another one was facing some very challenging crossroads. Sometimes it all feels like too much, my peace slips away from me and, like the apostles, I question if God cares.

But of course, Jesus is with me in my boat, and He *does* care. I read that story again. I sang the lines of that beautiful hymn over and over, calling peace back to my soul, and it came.

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1. See Mark 4:35–40.

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# PACING YOURSELF

The pilgrimage of the Christian life is a continual climb upward. There are small plateaus where you are able to pause, rest, and relax, and even places of prolonged respite where you can regain your strength before going ahead. Although climbing the mountain can be arduous and tiring, I do provide stopping points that you can enjoy and times of relaxation when you can recoup your strength. It is important to pause and rest at these times.

These lookout points are beautiful stopping places where you can look out over the valley and take in the awe-inspiring view, the breathtaking, majestic scenery of the mountain range, the sky, the forests, and all of creation. It will inspire you and encourage you and give you time to reflect on your purpose and goals.

But sometimes in the rush of everyday life, it is easy to feel like you can't stop to take advantage of the small plateaus and lookout points to rest and be refilled. It is important to remember that you need times to relax and not only enjoy the climb and the view, but also be refilled and rest before continuing on in the journey.

Times change, circumstances change, the weather changes, and even mountain conditions change as you continue to climb. Refer to the Mountain Climber's Manual and ask Me to guide you in the changing conditions you face.

