

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 24 • Issue 9

RAINBOWS FROM RAIN

Look for the silver lining

Overcoming Fears

You're not alone

Caught in a Tempest

Adventure on the Sea of Galilee



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

GROWTH AND PROGRESS

For many people, the pace of life has accelerated into an unrelenting and punishing race. Unnecessary and harmful stress can take a toll on us, but at the same time, activities such as parenting and caring for our family and our jobs are the ways that we make a difference in the world and find joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction. It's natural to want to not just fulfill your obligations, but to *get better* at them. As Christians, it's also important to grow and mature in our walk with Christ.

Second Peter 1:5–7¹ is an interesting Bible passage that gives a blueprint for how to not just live well, but how to continuously improve: “Do your best to add goodness to your faith; to your goodness add knowledge; to your knowledge add self-control; to your self-control add endurance; to your endurance add godliness; to your godliness add Christian affection; and to your Christian affection add love.”

Shortly after the Hebrews began their journey to the Promised Land, they turned from God and made a golden calf to worship. Most people have heard that story, but many aren't familiar with what happens next: God tells Moses that He's forgiven them, and that He's sending an angel to guide them to the Promised Land, but that He won't be going with them, because He might be tempted to destroy them along the way.

The Hebrews ask God to reconsider, and on their behalf, Moses pleads with God, “If you aren't going with us, please don't make us leave this place.”² God is moved and relents: “I will do what you have asked, because I am your friend and I am pleased with you.”³

The amazing thing is that Moses and the people saw no value in going to their promised homeland, a place proposed to be flowing with milk and honey, if God wasn't with them. Progress—even the ultimate fulfillment of all their dreams and hopes—was meaningless without God's presence.

The apostle Peter's plan isn't an easy 1-2-3 checklist, and keeping up with it will be an ongoing, lifelong, challenge, that's for sure. But as we keep our relationship with God in first place and do what we can practically, we can expect to grow and to find His blessings in our lives.

1. GNT

2. Exodus 33:15 CEV

3. v.17

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DAY AT A TIME

BY AMY JOY MIZRANY



I LIKE TO SAY THAT I DON'T GET STRESSED. It's true that I'm not a very stressful or stressed-out person. But the truth is that while I don't often get stressed over events, I do get overwhelmed by my own thoughts and plans and to-dos. I'm affected by failure. I get annoyed when I fail to do something I thought I could or should have done. I get angry when I feel like I won't be able to deliver on people's requests. I've got a lot of expectations and goals and ideals that I will never attain, and this can make me very irritable and disappointed.

One Sunday, I was singing along to the gospel song "One Day at a Time." I felt a surge of the frustration that had been smoldering for the whole week and I was inspired to really speak these words to Jesus, picturing Him in front of me.

"One day at a time, sweet Jesus,"

As I sang the first line, I sang it straight to Jesus and put all my feelings of overwhelmed anger and ineptitude into each word. But before I could carry on with the despondent warble, I heard His voice in my head, and He was singing the next line to me:

"That's all I'm asking of you."

I literally went silent in the middle of everyone singing around me, because He had just flipped the entire song on its head. I'd always read that song as the singer petitioning God to stay with her. She just wants one day with Him, just enough strength and vision to do what she needs to, and just enough of Jesus to make it through a day.

But I suddenly realized that it hadn't been *God* asking me for all those changes, long-term plans, and personal improvements. It had been *me*. I had been requiring more than a day from myself, I had been requiring all of these alterations and long-term improvements from myself, but God was just asking me for one day. All He asked was for me to be faithful one day at a time.

Now, when I remind myself of what He sang to me that day, I definitely feel less like a failure for what I didn't manage to do yesterday and what I won't be able to do tomorrow. Because living right now, one day at a time, is the only thing I can do.

AMY JOY MIZRANY WAS BORN AND LIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA, WHERE SHE IS A FULL-TIME MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. IN HER SPARE TIME, SHE PLAYS THE VIOLIN. ■

A vibrant landscape photograph of a green field with a dirt road leading to a large tree under a blue sky with a rainbow. The title 'RAINBOWS FROM RAIN' is overlaid in large, yellow, 3D-style letters. The author's name 'BY MARIA FONTAINE' is in smaller, white, sans-serif letters below the title.

RAINBOWS FROM RAIN

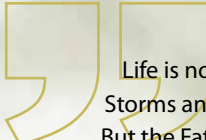
BY MARIA FONTAINE

MANY NORMAL NATURAL THINGS IN LIFE ARE SEEN POSITIVELY BY SOME PEOPLE BUT RESENTED BY OTHERS. Take a rainy day, for example. Some might complain about it, while others might consider it a blessing because it waters their crops or grass. Sometimes something that one person would jump at the chance to do and be thankful for, such as moving to a new location, another person could hate and resent having to do. Anything can become a source of bitterness, even things that aren't actually bad in themselves or that someone else might even consider good. It often depends on how you take events or circumstances.

On the other hand, there are some things which we would all agree are not good or desirable in the natural

sense: an illness, a car accident, a house burning down, etc. If you have a physical disability, that is something that may well have caused you a lot of pain or distress. It's not your imagination, and it'd be very natural to feel negatively about it. Yet even our physical limitations can be turned into steppingstones to a better life; like rungs of a ladder, they can help us climb higher than we would otherwise.

Each of us has something in our life that could seriously hinder us if we allowed it to get us down. But the wonderful thing is that God has made a way for us to overcome those things. In fact, He intends for us to do so. Because His help is always available, circumstances do not have to dictate our behavior.



Life is not a cloudless journey,
Storms and darkness oft oppress,
But the Father's changeless mercy
Comes to cheer the heart's distress;
Heavy clouds may darkly hover,
Hiding all faith's view above,
But across the thickest darkness
Shines the rainbow of His love.

—Flora Kirkland

Look at all the men and women throughout history who rose above seemingly insurmountable odds to do great things. They had to fight harder to overcome those obstacles, but in so doing they became stronger. Instead of lamenting that life had given them a “lemon,” a bad deal, they made lemonade out of their lemons. Because of their supposed handicaps, they rose to greater heights than they would have otherwise.

Beethoven was stone deaf when he composed some of the most beautiful music ever written, and Thomas Edison was deaf when he invented the phonograph. Alexander the Great is said to have had a neck or back deformity. The Greek poet Homer was blind. Renoir painted some of his finest masterpieces when his fingers were so twisted by rheumatism that his artist's brush had to be strapped to his hand. Handel's right side was paralyzed when he composed his greatest work, “The Hallelujah Chorus!”

Often people who have overcome difficulties are in turn able to help others to have the courage and faith to overcome theirs. Their personal examples demonstrate that it is possible to rise above seemingly impossible situations.

If Helen Keller hadn't been blind and deaf from infancy, she never would have had the opportunity to become the inspiration that she was and continues to be to millions, and she never could have said, “I thank God for my handicaps, for through them I have found myself, my work, and my God.”

Booker T. Washington was born a slave and worked in a salt factory and as a house boy for a coal mine owner to support his family before becoming an educator, a spokesman for African American causes, and founder of a college for young African Americans.

There are advantages to be discovered in our problems and difficulties! If we didn't have any, we might grow complacent and meander along casually, not building the strength of character that comes from overcoming adversity. The beauty that often results from suffering might not have a chance to blossom in our lives. We might not appreciate our loved ones as much, or find true friends in those who come to our side in times of need. We might not have as much understanding or compassion on others who are going through the same things, or know how to help them.

Sometimes troubles are the way God chooses to use to get us to turn to Him for help or teach us to put our trust in Him. He also uses our trials and difficulties to teach us patience and mercy, and to help us not be judgmental of others, among other things. If we never had any trials, we wouldn't need to look for strength in God. We also wouldn't experience the thrill of discovering that He will always come through for us!

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



THE HEADACHE THAT STOPPED MY WORRYING

BY CHRIS MIZRANY

NOT LONG AGO, I had a large project to work on from home. It was my responsibility and there was an urgent deadline. Just a couple hours in, however, I began feeling a dull pain in my head. Within minutes, it had swollen to a massive, pounding headache like nothing I'd ever felt. I leaned my head on the desk and then found I couldn't lift it back up. My vision began blurring, and so did my thoughts. I somehow stumbled to my room and collapsed on the bed. With my heart thundering in my ears, and both eyes feeling ready to burst out of their sockets, I cried out loud, "Lord, help me!" Minutes later, I fell asleep.

Upon waking up later, and feeling much better, I went back to work, rapidly forgetting about the whole ordeal. For a while. Because the next morning, it hit again. And the next day, and the day after. I found myself making little progress, taking pain meds, and still unable to quell the continual ache. Even when it would slightly subside, I'd worry about when it would return. Although I continued to pray for healing, I also stressed about the deadline and how I would complete my work in time.

I suddenly realized I'd been approaching my work all wrong. Sure, I prayed before starting, but only out of habit. Then I pushed in my own strength, the whole time promising myself "I will, I will, I will!" In fact, worry and stress have been a part of my workflow for a long time.

So I took a few minutes to sit back and connect with Jesus through prayer before starting again. Amazingly, my work began flowing, problems got solved, and progress was made. And after several hours, I noticed something. There was no pain. My headache was gone.

Within a few days, my project was successfully completed, ahead of schedule. My headache hasn't returned, and my whole attitude has shifted. That headache was too much for me, but not too much for Jesus. Now, when a task looms large, I'm changing my "I will" to a confident "He will," letting Him do the heavy lifting for me.¹

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1. See 1 Peter 5:7.



11 STEPS TO STRENGTHENING YOUR FAITH

1. Spend quality time in God's Word.¹ Read it, listen to it, memorize it, meditate on it. "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."²

2. Read accounts of divine intervention. Accounts of answered prayer, both in the Bible and in modern-day settings, put "skin" on God's promised help. What He has done for others, He can do for you.

3. Trust in God's promises. As you study the Word, make a list of verses that contain promises from God concerning certain circumstances; trust in God to fulfill His promises according to His will when you pray.

4. Stay positive. Look at difficulties, obstacles, and challenges as opportunities to stretch your faith.

1. See Romans 10:17.

2. 1 Peter 2:2 NIV

3. Jeremiah 33:3

5. Take your problems and questions to God in prayer. God says, "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."³ As you learn to work more closely with God to find solutions and answers, you will become more aware of His ever-present love and help.

6. Embrace change. Major changes of circumstance can be unsettling and uncomfortable, but they also create a great environment for faith to blossom as we are compelled to seek God and trust Him for the outcome. Each time you do so, you learn to trust Him to get you through the next time of change.

7. Pray in faith, trusting God for the outcome. When you thank God for working in the situation even before you see the answers to your prayers, it takes the focus off of the need at hand and puts it on God's care for your every need.

8. Keep a prayer log detailing what you prayed for and when, and then make a note of how your prayers were answered.

9. Commit every care and decision to God. As we acknowledge God in all our ways and ask that His will be done in the situation or difficulty we are facing, we can trust in Him for the outcome, even when it is different from what we had prayed for.

10. Make Word-based decisions. As you learn to operate according to the principles and promises of God's Word, your faith will be increased and your trust in Him will grow as you take other needs to Him in prayer.

11. Testify of God's power to others. Telling others about how God has helped you will strengthen your faith and theirs. ■

CAUGHT IN A TEMPEST

A RETELLING OF MATTHEW 8:23–27, AS TOLD BY A DISCIPLE.
BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER



NO ONE COULD TELL STORIES LIKE THE **MASTER**—stories of soil and sheep, a lost coin and a lost son, wise and foolish servants, watchmen, and virgins, just to mention a few.

As dusk began to fall, we were exhausted from trying to keep a bit of order. The crowd had been there for several hours, and they kept pressing us towards the shoreline as they jostled to get closer to Jesus to get a better view or touch His garment for a blessing. Jesus had to tell His stories from one of the fishing boats just to be heard. As it was getting late, we told everyone to go home. The show was over for the day.

Jesus told us to go to the other side of Lake Galilee, as He knew another adventure awaited us there—as if we needed more excitement! We were all hoping for a bit of well-deserved rest and relaxation.

We shoved off in calm waters, feeling satisfied that we had made a good day of it. Jesus was just as exhausted as we were. In fact, not long after we launched out, He went to the stern where he soon fell asleep on a pillow. We lived rough, so we appreciated small comforts. He used to say that the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but that He had nowhere to lay His head—true, but a soft pillow can sure help you get some good sleep.

Unexpectedly, a storm started to blow when we were in the middle of the lake. Being a seasoned fisherman, I knew that sudden storms could hit, especially in the evening. I'm told it's because of the cool air from the high surrounding mountains hitting the warm air from the low-lying lake.

My initial reaction was that it wasn't a good idea to venture out that late, but the sky didn't look too bad, and



after all, we were with the Master. Surely, He wouldn't have told us to sail if He didn't know we would make it—but I soon found out that His ways are not necessarily the same as our ways.

The wind began to shriek and howl like a raging banshee. The waves started to crash over the side of the boat. I'd seen squalls before, but nothing like this. Our small crowded craft was starting to fill up fast and we all started to frantically bail water with whatever we could find. All of us, that is, except the Master. I couldn't believe it! He was fast asleep as if He were dozing in a sheep's fleece couch.

We were up to our ankles in water and the boat was heaving up and down like we were riding on the back of

a dragon. We were riding low in the water and soon we would be swamped. It was all we could do just to stay in the boat. Not everyone could swim, and even if you could swim, the waves were so rough that you wouldn't last long in the cold water.

I and another disciple shook Jesus and pleaded with Him to do something. He didn't respond right away, so we tried a little stronger persuasion, hoping He'd feel guilty for not helping us in our disaster. "Master, don't You care that we're going to drown! Save us!"

Then He got up and with His hand on the mast spoke to the storm! "Quiet, be still!"

And it was! Soon the water was like glass. We paused a minute to appreciate the moment. I thought to myself that we should have asked for His help a lot earlier.

Jesus looked at us and said, "Why were you so afraid? Where is your faith?" I was too ashamed to answer.

We had questions of our own, of course: "Who is this man, that even the wind and sea obey him?" It began to dawn on us that we weren't just following a wise rabbi but were in the presence of the glory of God.

We soon reached the other side safely and I was reminded of the following passages: "You faithfully answer our prayers with awesome deeds, O God our savior. You are the hope of everyone on earth, even those who sail on distant seas. You quieted the raging oceans with their pounding waves. [You] calmed the storm to a whisper and stilled the waves [and] brought them safely into harbor."¹

When later in my life other storms unexpectedly hit, I trusted that He who was with us in the boat that day would be with me always, even until the end of my days.

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND MIME ARTIST² WHO SPENT 47 YEARS DOING MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN 10 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. HE AND HIS WIFE PAULINE CURRENTLY LIVE IN GERMANY. ■

1. Psalm 65:5,7 NLT; Psalm 107:29–30 NLT

2. <http://elixirmime.com>

BECOMING YOUR BEST YOU

BY ALEX PETERSON

OUR DAILY LIFE IS MADE UP OF HABITS AND ROUTINE, which can greatly help us to accomplish our life's goals, provided those habits are good ones. Positive habits are a great asset. Negative habits, however, are like black holes sucking up productive, innovative, and beneficial possibilities in our lives. Someone once said, "People don't decide their future; they decide their *habits*, and their *habits* decide their future."

THE PROGRESS FORMULA

When dealing with a mathematical problem, you simply follow the formula. Although overcoming bad habits is not exactly a mathematical operation, here's a helpful formula for making forward progress: Desire. Believe you can. Examine your surroundings. Expose your excuses. Create a plan. Monitor your progress.

DESIRE

How much do you want the change? Enough that you are willing to change your life to reach your goal? Enough to ditch your negative habits and replace them with positive ones? Enough to sacrifice whatever is working against the particular change and progress that you desire?


Many people want to change their bad habits, but they don't want the change *enough* to do what's necessary to get there; thus, their efforts are superficial and ineffective.

1. Proverbs 23:7
2. Proverbs 18:14 MSG

BELIEVE YOU CAN

You might desire a change and feel that you are willing to pay the price for that change, but deep down, you might be wondering if you can actually do it.

Belief is an amazing thing, as the Bible says, "As he thinks in his heart, so is he."¹ Another verse reads, "A healthy spirit conquers adversity."² What these verses show is that the human will is



a very powerful force, especially when accompanied by faith in God's capacity.

If you're having a hard time believing you can change, adopt a positive, full-of-faith attitude, even if you don't feel it. Start saying positive, change-reinforcing statements such as, "By the grace of God, I *can* change. I *will* change."

EXAMINE YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Often, having a desire to change isn't enough to complete the process. We have to honestly and practically look at our surroundings and identify the things we're doing on a day-to-day basis that are working against our progress or reinforcing our negative habits.

We may find that with every habit we're trying to create or break, there are certain physical things that work for or against us. We need to find out what those are and change them as needed.

EXPOSE YOUR EXCUSES

We need to take an honest look at ourselves and recognize the excuses we've been using. Write them down and formulate a counterattack, a superior reason that will motivate you to not give in to the excuse.

CREATE A PLAN

It's helpful to document our goals and how we're going to get there. A goal isn't a plan unless it's written down. And a plan isn't an *effective* plan unless it's reviewed often.

When making your plan, remember to be realistic. If your plan is unrealistic, you'll get discouraged, and perhaps quit before you ever reach your goal. It's better to

be realistic and to reach your goal gradually than to never get there at all.

And last of all, don't get discouraged. We all have times when we slip up or have a bad day. We should expect that there will be some setbacks and anticipate them, so that we're not overwhelmed when they happen.

MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS

Last but not least, monitor your progress. Regularly evaluate your plan to see if it's working for you; if not, change it! Your plan is a tool for progress. If your original plan was unrealistic, adjust it. If it was too lenient, tighten it.

With every plan we make, it's helpful to have it broken down into three categories:

- Long-term goals (to be reached within two to five years)
- Short-term goals (to be reached within six months to a year)
- Immediate goals (to be reached within 30 days)

Having our plans broken down into long-term, short-term, and immediate goals gives them structure, along with a yardstick by which we can measure progress. Then, when we revisit our plans every month, for example, we can measure our progress according to last month's immediate goals, adjust our plan, create new immediate goals, and then keep going.

If we take the time to apply this progress formula to our lives, we'll know what to do each time we go through a nonproductive patch. We'll know how to fill it and what to fill it with!

God wants you to make progress, but most of all, He wants you to have a relationship with His Son, Jesus. You can get started by praying this simple prayer:

Dear Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You died for my sins. I open the door of my heart and invite You to come into my life. Please fill me with Your Spirit and help me grow in my knowledge and understanding of You through reading Your Word. Amen. ■



SHATTERED!

BY NATALIA NAZAROVA

WHEN MY HUSBAND WENT ON AN EXTENDED BUSINESS TRIP FOR NEARLY THREE MONTHS, I found out what challenges single parents face. It was a big adjustment to have to keep up with the house and care for the children on my own, in addition to my job. Other circumstances also took a toll on my emotions, and I found it increasingly difficult to cope. Each day's outlook seemed bleaker than the last. The struggle exhausted me physically and mentally. Then came the last straw.

Dinner was almost ready, and it would be ten minutes before the children finished their homework and came to eat. I had been using my laptop to listen to music while I cooked and decided to use those ten minutes to check my email. I scooped the laptop from the kitchen counter and headed for the living room, but in my frazzled state I forgot to unplug the power cord. When I had gone only a few steps, sudden resistance tore the laptop from my grip. I can still see the scene unfolding, as though in slow motion—my computer falling, flipping, bouncing, the screen going blank.

I was in shock the rest of the evening and couldn't fall asleep that night. When my mind finally stopped racing, I began to consider how stressed I had been and consequently how unhappy I was. I believed that God wanted to help me get out of the mess I was in, and He did.

In my desperate, “shattered” state, He was able to get through to me about areas where I had been falling short—my relationships with my older children and my attitude toward some of my coworkers, for example. In that time of quiet reflection, I sought and found God's forgiveness, and faith and hope were restored.

Then I remembered my shattered laptop. But instead of the despair I had felt all evening, I had the distinct feeling that all was not lost. If God could put me back together, I reasoned, surely there was hope for my laptop.

The next morning, I switched on the laptop, and it rebooted. Only a small portion of the screen lit up, but the computer was still functioning. Only the screen had been damaged, and that was relatively inexpensive to replace.

Now each time I open my laptop and the screen lights up, I am reminded of God's unfailing love and forgiveness, the peace He has to offer, and the inner change He brings when we take our problems to Him.

NATALIA NAZAROVA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER FROM UKRAINE WHO DEVOTED TEN YEARS TO NON-PROFIT WORK THROUGHOUT EASTERN EUROPE AND SOUTH AMERICA. ■



FREEDOM FROM FEAR

FEEDING READING
BY RONAN KEANE

GOD IS OUR BEST DEFENSE AGAINST FEAR—AND AGAINST THE THINGS WE FEAR.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.—*Psalms 46:1–2*

Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.—*Psalms 91:14–15*

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.—*Proverbs 18:10*

I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, “Fear not, I will help you.”—*Isaiah 41:13*

Do not fear. ... When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.—*Isaiah 43:1–2 NIV*

GOD WILL REPLACE FEAR WITH PEACE.

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

When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet.

—*Proverbs 3:24*

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.

—*Philippians 4:6–7 NIV*

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.—*2 Timothy 1:7*

WITH GOD BESIDE US, WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?—*Psalms 27:1*

Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?

—*Psalms 56:3–4*

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.—*Psalms 23:4 NIV*

Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid.—*Isaiah 12:2* ■



Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.—*Isaiah 41:10*

Love casts out fear, for when we know we are loved, we are not afraid. Whoever has God's perfect love, fear is gone out of the universe for him.—*A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)*



OVERCOMING FEARS

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

LIKE LIFE ITSELF, the Bible is full of triumphs that could just as easily have ended in disaster. If the heroes in those stories had turned and run the other way, who could have blamed them? Moses defied the world power of his day to lead his people to the Promised Land. Gideon led a band of 300 against an army too large to number.¹ Samson, armed only with the jawbone of a donkey, took on an army single-handedly.² Teenaged David, with only a slingshot, denounced and trounced the giant Goliath, who had the entire army of Israel shaking in their sandals.³

Most of us can be thankful that we don't face whole armies or heavily armed giants, but we all have fears of one type or another, what-ifs that sometimes descend in legions or loom over us like Goliaths. Like our shoe size, they start

small and grow with us. What if I fall off my bike? What if my teacher doesn't like me? What if I don't make the team? What if I try to kiss her? What if I don't get accepted at that school? What if I lose my job? What if this turns out to be cancer? What if I lose the love of my life?

We first learn to deal with childhood fears by running to our parents for security and reassurance. We crawl into bed with them during a thunderstorm. We ask to be carried in the dark. We take hold of a strong hand when a strange dog approaches. Little by little, our parents help us learn to differentiate between real and imaginary dangers, and how to confront the real ones. God wants to do the same with our adult fears. "You aren't in this alone," He assures us. "Take My hand. We'll make it through this together."

1. See Judges 7.

2. See Judges 15:9–15.

3. See 1 Samuel 17:2–11, 32–51.

KEITH PHILLIPS WAS *ACTIVATED*'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FOR 14 YEARS FROM 1999 TO 2013. HE AND HIS WIFE CARYN NOW WORK WITH THE HOMELESS IN THE USA. ■



FEAR NOT

BY MARIE ALVERO

ONE SUNDAY, our family set out to hike to a waterfall. The trail took us to a spot where we had to cross the creek, and there was the choice of leaping a few feet over a narrow but deeper part of the river, or wading across a wider but shallower part, where you could step on wobbly rocks that—if you were very sure-footed—would keep you from getting wet at all. My husband took two seconds to assess and leaped the distance. Two of our girls and myself opted for the wider crossing, took off our shoes and hopped the rocks. We got across in varying degrees of dryness, but with no major mishaps.

But our youngest daughter stood on the edge of the river. She didn't want to get her feet wet, but she also didn't want to leap across. All of us on the other side tried to coax her into choosing an option, but she wasn't having it. Eventually, my husband gently convinced her to hold his arm and jump across, and she made it without incident. We had a great morning hiking together as another little family memory was made. I was so proud of our girl for pushing past her comfort level! I know it wasn't a huge decision, but it was one step on the path of not letting her fear hold her back from enjoying life.

In our society where anxiety has been given so much space, it sometimes seems like the defining word of our

time. It's interesting because the Bible tells us simply and repeatedly to "fear not." A two-word solution to fear and anxiety. But how does this work?

I find it helpful to break my challenge into parts and then take the first step. For example, I recently had to prepare for an interview at work. I was nervous about it, and fear of failing was front and center in my mind, so I broke it down. I compiled the questions I thought I'd be asked and prepared answers to them, then I asked coworkers for feedback on my answers, and I applied the feedback. Each of these steps was uncomfortable, but I was able to accomplish them one at a time. And each time, I was rewarded with one step further in the direction I wanted to go.

Whether you're looking to change a mindset or habit or reach a goal, the approach is the same: take the one step that you can. And trust God for the next one. When you are afraid, trust in God, who says, "Fear not, let's do this together."

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

TROUBLED, YET NOT DISTRESSED

If you think you have troubles, consider My apostle Paul: He was whipped on five occasions and beaten with rods on another. He was stoned and left for dead. He was shipwrecked three times and spent a night and a day in the deep. He went through perils at sea, perils in the wilderness, and perils in cities. He suffered at the hands of robbers, his own countrymen, and strangers, and was wrongfully accused and persecuted for My name's sake. He was imprisoned and deprived of basic needs many times.¹

Yet through all that, Paul kept trusting Me and pointing others to Me with such declarations of faith as: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed,” and “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”²

Paul had great faith, but don't forget that he was as human as you. Millions have revered how he was able to carry the gospel to so many and reach the world of his day, but what many people fail to realize is that his commitment and faith were *strengthened* by the troubles that befell him. He learned to trust in Me and put his faith in My Word in his time of need—and you can too.

Will you allow yourself to be distressed by present or future troubles? Or will you hold on to Me for dear life, as Paul did? I will always be there for you, as I was always there for him.

1. See 2 Corinthians 11:24–28; Acts 16:23.

2. 2 Corinthians 4:8 KJV; Romans 8:37.

