

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 25 • Issue 10

GOD NEVER FAILS

You can trust Him

I Am Not Alone

Upheld in God's
hands

Level Up Your Faith

Find answers in
God's Word

The Shoeless Missionaries

Faith is the winning
hand



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

ALWAYS REMEMBER THE GOD FACTOR

We all face times in our lives when we feel overwhelmed by hardships. We are beset by difficulties, economic worries, or health problems. As we confront one obstacle after another, life can seem to be conspiring against us. We can become befuddled and confused to the point that we begin to doubt

God's good design for our lives. But it's important to remember that though our challenges may seem insurmountable, they do not have the final word. The key to overcoming adversity is within our reach. It is trusting in the "God factor"—God's intervention in our lives.

"With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God," Jesus told His disciples ([Mark 10:27](#)). God's divine authority and omnipotence can alter any circumstance or give us the grace to meet the challenge at hand! With God, the impossible becomes possible. Faith in God and His promises turns the tide.

Let's say we are at wit's end. We haven't a clue where to even begin to work on a complicated issue. We feel trapped in a corner and incapable of what is expected of us. That's where the God factor comes in. Though we are not usually aware of His constant presence, suddenly He intervenes, and we begin to see the way out. Things begin moving in the right direction, we find solutions, and the problem is eventually resolved.

Have you ever experienced a difficult situation only to realize later that the problem had become a blessing in disguise? If your answer is yes, then you have witnessed the God factor.

Remember that God is sovereign over every situation. He is the God of miracles, the God of extraordinary circumstances, the God of the impossible. He is the God who walks with us through every dark valley. This isn't wishful thinking, it is about applying faith to our reality and watching the Almighty work all things together for good for us ([Romans 8:28](#)).

This issue of *Activated* contains several accounts of the marvelous way God can work in our lives. Let's dive into this fascinating subject and explore its many facets. Our hope is that as you journey through life you will always remember the God factor.

Gabriel and Sally García
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THE FAITH

BY AMY JOY MIZRANY

JUMP



“LOOK, AUNTIE AMY, LOOK!”

My niece had climbed to the top of a platform at the playground, and she stood waving at me excitedly.

“Wow! Good for you!” I came closer until she was within arm’s reach. “Here, jump to me!”

She giggled and leaped from the waist-high platform into my waiting arms. I spun her around as we laughed together. Then I put her down and she immediately ran off to the sprinklers in another area of the park.

A couple of minutes later, I watched her and her friends climbing up the ladder of a little slide. She hesitated. She was a little scared about going down, so I reached out to her again.

“Here, come to me!”

“But, Auntie Amy! What if you drop me?!” She leaned a little closer and said softly, “What if I fall down in front of everyone?!”

I laughed. “But, sweetie, you trusted me to catch you before, you know I won’t drop you!”

She jumped. I caught her.

I chuckled as they all ran away to play. “That was an odd mix of reactions—unafraid and trusting one minute and afraid the next,” I thought.

But then the Lord spoke to my heart, “Aren’t you like that with Me sometimes? How many times have I caught

you? How many times have you trusted Me and leaped into the unknown, and I’ve brought you to a safe and better place? And yet, sometimes you still doubt. Sometimes you beg Me to not let you fall. Have I ever?”

Bible verses then came to my mind about the Lord’s continued faithfulness in spite of our mistrust or fear, such as: “If we are faithless, He remains faithful [true to His word and His righteous character], for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Timothy 2:13 AMP). “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27 NIV). “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 NKJV).

My lack of trust has never caused God to be unfaithful. My fears won’t ever weaken His hands. He has asked me to take many steps of faith for Him, and no matter how nervous I felt, when I jumped, He always caught me.

Take the jump! He’ll catch you.

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. ■



GOD NEVER FAILS

EACH OF US, at some point in our lives, has experienced deep disappointments when things just didn't work out as we had hoped or expected, and perhaps we were tempted to wonder what went wrong or why our prayers seemed to go unanswered. There may have been times when we were committed to something that we were personally convinced was God's will and trusted that He would bless our efforts. We prayed sincerely for His guidance and support, but then for some reason, our plans failed, and things just didn't work out as we had hoped.

Even when we can see the obvious reasons and adverse circumstances that explain why something didn't work out, as Christians the question this can give rise to is, "But, Lord, I thought this was *Your* will! So why didn't You intervene miraculously and make everything work out anyway? Why did this fail when I committed it to You in prayer?" It's easy at such times to become discouraged or to second-guess ourselves or even to question God.

Such feelings of disappointment and discouragement are very real, and it can be difficult to understand why things happened and what went wrong. Why did God allow it to fail? The answer for those who have put their trust in the Lord and His Word is that God *never* fails. If things go awry or don't turn out as we had hoped, we have to trust that either we missed the mark in some way or God has a different plan. But even if this is the case, as we continue to follow and obey the Lord, we can trust that all things will *still* work together for good for us ([Romans 8:28](#)).

Good purposes and projects sometimes fail—even when we are doing them for the right motives and are committing them to God and seeking His will and guidance. At times when it seems like the Lord isn't answering our prayers, it's important to remember that God knows what will ultimately bring about the best results in our lives and those of others. His Word says: "For as the

heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Even when everything seems to be going according to plan and leading toward what we had been praying for, we still have to walk by faith and be faithful to do our part and trust Him for the outcome. This is often the case when sharing the good news of the gospel with others. The Lord may bring a person our way who is searching for God and place a strong compulsion in our heart to speak to them about Jesus. But it is in our court to be faithful to act so that we can give them the opportunity to know Him, and then trust in God to work in that person’s life.

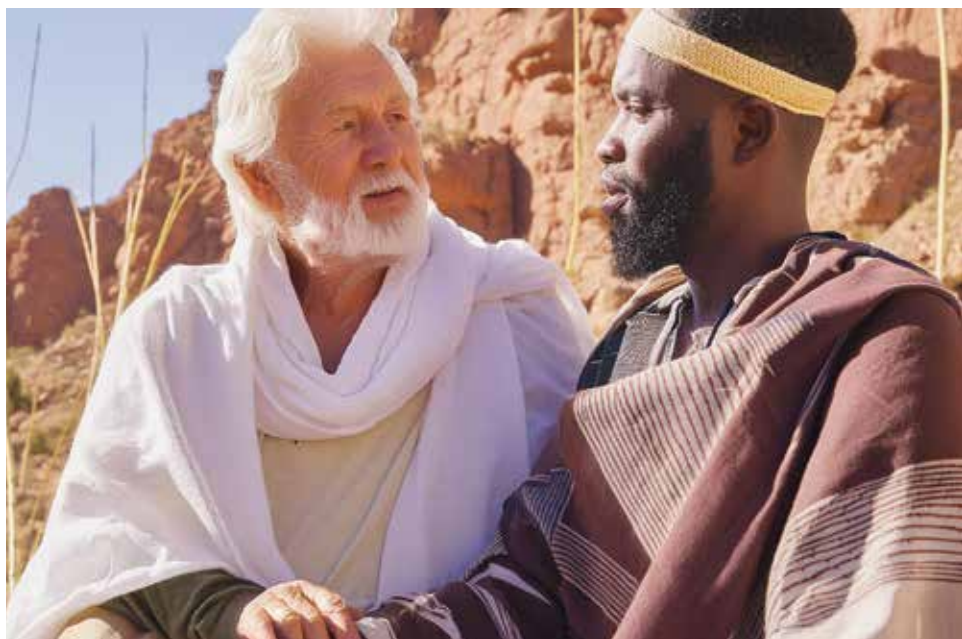
An example of the importance of faithfulness to do our part to accomplish God’s will is found in the New Testament in the book of Acts. Philip the evangelist had been preaching God’s Word in Samaria (Northern Israel) when “an angel of the Lord said to him, ‘Rise, and go toward the south, to the highway that goes from Jerusalem to the desert country of Gaza’” (Acts 8:26). God was planning to do something of tremendous importance, and His plan was to use Philip to do it. The Bible says Philip responded in obedience. “And he arose and went.”

When he arrived at the highway, there was “a man of great authority, the chief treasurer of Queen Candace of Ethiopia” (Acts 8:27). This Ethiopian dignitary believed in God, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, and

was now returning to Ethiopia. As he rode in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah 53, the prophetic chapter written 500 years before Jesus was born, which predicted His life and death with amazing accuracy. This was God’s perfect setup, but Philip had a role to play in the fulfillment of God’s plan.

“Then the Holy Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over and join his chariot!’” (Acts 8:29). Philip could have responded by saying, “Wait a minute, I’d better think this over. He’s an important foreign official, and look at all those armed guards around him. If I go up to the official’s chariot, I could get in real trouble. I might even get killed!” But instead, the Bible says, “So Philip *ran* to him.” He ran straight up to the chariot and asked the chief treasurer, “Do you understand what you are reading” (Acts 8:30)?

The Ethiopian confessed that he didn’t, and asked Philip to explain it to him, which Philip gladly did. As a result, he was converted and became a Christian (Acts





8:35–39). And because he was a man of great authority and influence, he was instrumental in converting the nation of Ethiopia to Christianity, all of which was made possible by Philip’s faithfulness to follow God’s plan.

At times when our prayers don’t seem to be answered or things seemingly fail, it can be a test of our faith to trust in God and that He is working in the situation. That’s when the “God factor” comes into play. When making plans, we have to remember that God is sovereign, and His plans and purposes will be fulfilled. He is able to work in seemingly impossible situations and make things happen that are far beyond our abilities. That’s the God factor in the equation.

We may believe that God is going to do something and follow the general direction that He leads us, but when it comes down to the crunch, we have to trust in Him. If we walk by faith, the Bible says that all things are possible with God (Matthew 19:26), and He can act on our behalf in answer to our prayers to accomplish His will and plan. But without faith, we can’t accomplish His good purposes, because “without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Of course, sometimes circumstances may not appear to be “just right.”—New factors may have entered the equation, and the outlook for accomplishing what we had hoped to achieve may look uncertain. At such times, our faith can get tested, and in the process we learn to trust that “God is faithful” (1 Corinthians 10:13), and He will guide us to His good, acceptable and perfect will (Romans 12:2). We learn to pray as Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

No matter how things look in the present, we know that God never fails. He is with us and He is the one who “works in us to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13 NIV). He is the one who has promised to work all things together for good in the lives of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). For God has “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE IN TREASURES, PUBLISHED BY THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN 1987. ■



If you have not yet experienced God’s love and faithfulness in your life, you can begin now by praying this simple prayer:

Dear Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died for me. Thank You! Please come into my heart, forgive my sins, and give me eternal life. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I want to learn to trust You and know that You are faithful and will cause all things to work together for good for me because I love You. In Your Name I pray. Amen.



I AM NOT ALONE

BY SALLY GARCÍA

WHEN I STARTED COLLEGE, I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life; it was just the next logical step. At the time I was dabbling in the hippy lifestyle and drugs. My life resembled a little boat adrift at sea without a rudder or anchor.

Then I called out to Jesus: “If you are there, do something in my life! I don’t know what to do.” A week later, I had a vision that I was standing on God’s hand. My first impression was, “I’m not alone.” I was the same person—small, frail, and still a bit confused—but I was not alone!

I have often reflected on that pivotal moment and thought about the difference in facing the challenges of life alone or facing them under God’s loving care.

Pastor Kenny Rader commented: “The God factor is that element of dependence on God that we usually leave out until we are sinking, and the only way out is God.” Self-reliance seems to be a part of human nature. As kids we liked our independence, and we raced out the door to play with our friends. But as soon as we fell and busted our knees, we called out: “Daddy, help! I’m bleeding! Come quick!” How good it felt to know that our loved one was always close and quick to respond when we needed help.

My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

—[Psalm 63:8](#)

The Lord answers ... “I can never forget you. I have written your name on the palms of my hands.”

—[Isaiah 49:15–16 GNT](#)

But the God factor in our lives can be so much more. Most of our days are a succession of little occurrences, such as when God reminds us to call on a lonely neighbor, or leads us to take the subway instead of the bus and we meet an old friend we’d lost touch with, or we receive a bonus at work that covers an unexpected expense.

My favorite demonstrations of the God factor are when something special happens—a little blessing comes my way or a secret prayer is answered, something that is just between me and Him. At such times I can almost sense Him smiling and we laugh together. With God, there is no such thing as a “coincidence.” Rather, it is His hand upon our lives.

Whether we are facing a crisis or walking easily through our day, the Lord wants to be a part of our lives. He loves us! We are standing in His hand.

SALLY GARCÍA IS AN EDUCATOR, WRITER, TRANSLATOR, MISSIONARY, AND MENTOR. SHE LIVES IN CHILE WITH HER HUSBAND, GABRIEL, AND IS AFFILIATED WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

GOD IS ON EVERY PAGE

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

I LOVE QUIRKY NEWS STORIES, especially the ones that can be a springboard to dive deep into spiritual realities. They can kind of jolt us out of our complacency and help us realize that life is full of surprises. It's easy to just rock along as one day blurs into the next, but sometimes there is an interruption. Here is one such story:

A whale swallowed Michael Packard for 40 seconds, while he was diving in deep waters off Cape Cod in search of lobsters.

"All of a sudden, I felt this huge shove and the next thing I knew it was completely black," Michael relates. Confused at first, he then realized he was in a humpback whale's mouth and that it was trying to swallow him. "I thought to myself, 'there's no way I'm getting out of here. I'm done, I'm dead.' All I could think of was my boys—they're 12 and 15 years old." Then the whale surfaced, shook its head, and

spat the ill-tasting morsel out into the

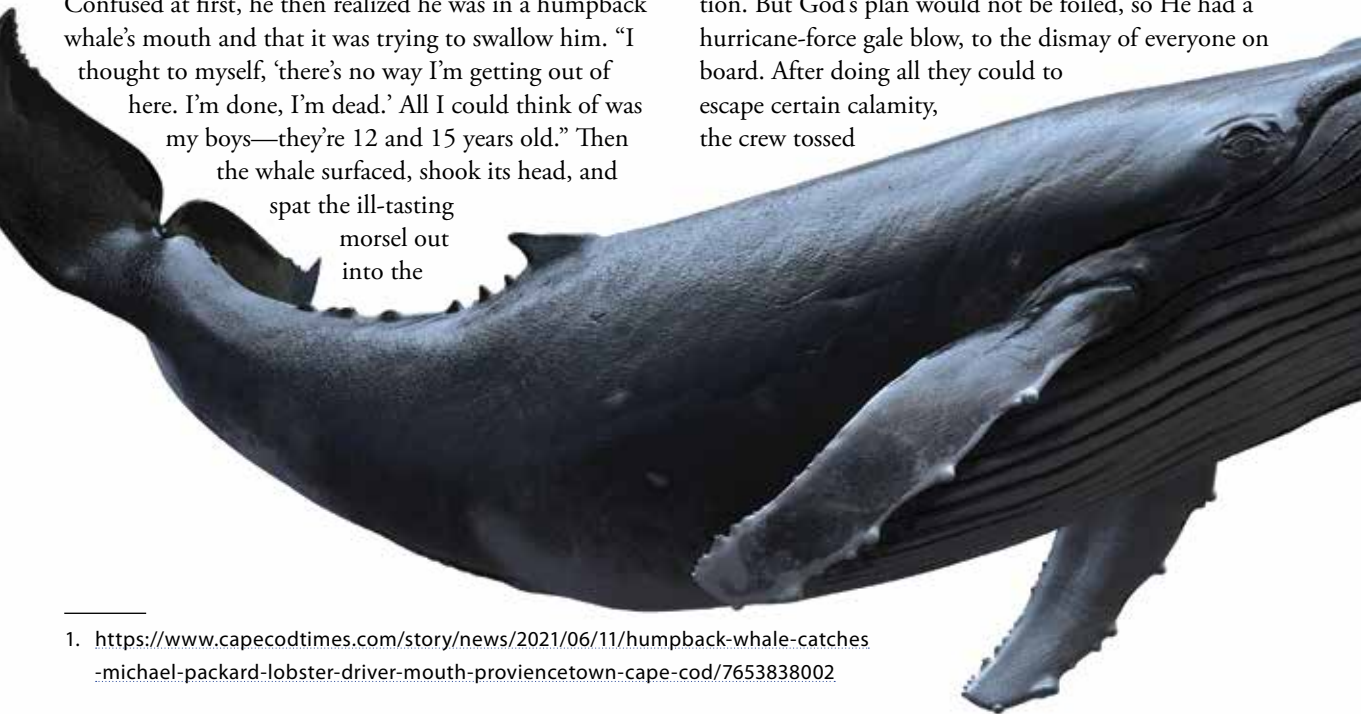
ocean, where Michael was rescued by his first mate, who was looking for him in their boat.¹

For many of us this news piece will bring to mind the Old Testament story of the prophet Jonah.

Jonah was commanded by God to go to Nineveh, the flourishing capital city of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. It had been the largest city in the world for 50 years. God's purpose was to warn the people to repent of their wicked deeds, of which Nineveh had plenty.

Well, instead of obeying God and going to Nineveh, Jonah ships off to Spain, which was in the *opposite* direction. But God's plan would not be foiled, so He had a hurricane-force gale blow, to the dismay of everyone on board. After doing all they could to escape certain calamity, the crew tossed

1. <https://www.capecodtimes.com/story/news/2021/06/11/humpback-whale-catches-michael-packard-lobster-driver-mouth-proviencetown-cape-cod/7653838002>





God is always with you,
 even in the darkest night
 or in the deepest pit.
 You just need to hold
 on. Never doubt His
 presence and His power,
 He will see you through.
 —Gift Gugu Mona

Jonah overboard thinking to appease God. It seemed to work, because the ocean became calm.

Jonah was then swallowed by a whale (or a “great fish”). He spent three days and nights in the belly of the whale, and he finally cried out desperately to God, pleading for deliverance. God answered his prayers and had the whale spit him out on dry land.

Guess what happened next? That’s right! Jonah went where God had told him to go, to Nineveh. There he preached God’s warning: “Forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4). In one translation of this verse, instead of overthrown, the word “overturned” is used, which can also mean completely transformed, which is what happened.

The people of Nineveh repented and God spared them. But was Jonah happy to see the Ninevites have a change of heart? No! He was angry at God for having had mercy; he complained that the Ninevites didn’t get what he felt they deserved.

Jonah left the city to sulk. It was extremely hot, but God had a broad-leaved plant grow up to provide shade. Jonah was starting to feel better. But at dawn the next day a worm attacked the plant and it shriveled up and died. Then a vehement east wind came blowing and heating

up Jonah some more until he said he was ready to die to escape.

God ended the story by saying to Jonah, “You were upset about this little plant, something for which you have not worked nor did you do anything to make it grow. It grew up overnight and died the next day. Should I not be even more concerned about Nineveh, this enormous city? There are more than one hundred twenty thousand people in it who do not know right from wrong, as well as many animals!” (Jonah 4:10–11 NET).

This is more than just a story about a disobedient prophet. It is a story about God working, about His constant presence. He is the God of Jonah, even when he was running in the wrong direction. He is also the God of the ship’s crew, even though they were from a different culture and beliefs. He is also the God of the whale, the God of the Ninevites, who rebelled but repented, the God of the plant, the God of the worm, and the God of the east wind. Where is God *not* in this story? He is everywhere! He never sleeps or turns a blind eye!

He’s on every page of our life’s story as well, and it behooves us to open our eyes and take to heart what He says to us in the Bible. And the next time you face challenges, disappointment, or hardship, remember *who* is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2 NKJV) and trust Him for the outcome.

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



GOD'S HAND IN OUR LIVES

BY SIMON BISHOP

WHAT PROOF DO WE NEED BEFORE WE WILL BELIEVE THAT GOD EXISTS? For the person determined *not* to believe, almost anything, no matter how amazing or extraordinary, will eventually be explained away. On the other hand, we can look at nature, at situations occurring around us, and at the accounts we hear of amazing happenings or circumstances coming together at just the right time and see God's hand in them.

While thinking about this I remembered a story that my parents told me when they had just dedicated their lives to serving God.

My father had recently had an accident that had left him paralyzed; he was in rehabilitation for months. During that time, my mom, sister, and I lived in a trailer in the parking lot of the medical center. Money was extremely tight, and one day, during our visit to the rehab center, my mom told my dad that although she was expecting some finances at the end of the week, we only had two dollars to buy formula, diapers, and food.

My father prayed and claimed the Bible verse that says: "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Then, he said, "Well, we have two dollars. Let's go get the kids some ice cream."

And so, we left, my father in a wheelchair and my mother pushing me in a stroller while my sister toddled alongside. While walking through the parking lot, they happened to look down and there, as if pasted to the ground, was a brand-new 20-dollar bill! No one was around, it was a windy day, and yet there it was, as if it had been waiting for them.

This was enough money for my mom to buy our needs for the following days until more finances came in. Miracle? Coincidence? Chance? They couldn't *prove* it, but for my parents, who had just come to know Jesus and were growing in faith, this was a miraculous answer to their prayers.

Maybe instead of trying so hard to find logical explanations for everything that happens in our lives, we should allow our faith to grow by looking for God's hand in everything and realizing that God loves and cares for us. We may never be able to prove that something miraculous occurred, but our faith will be strengthened, and we will be able to move forward in that assurance and faith.

SIMON BISHOP DOES FULL-TIME MISSION AND HUMANITARIAN WORK IN THE PHILIPPINES. ■

Level Up Your Faith

BY MARIE ALVERO

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, today's culture challenges faith. Judeo-Christian values may have provided the foundation for modern morality in many countries, but culture today is pushing back on these basic principles.

I work in corporate America. My company promotes many ideologies I don't agree with. My kids go to secular school and are regularly confronted with teachings that are not in line with the Bible. Most of the media actively tears down our Christian beliefs, whether subtly or in terribly obvious ways. And sometimes this all sits heavy on my heart.

I wish it didn't feel so countercultural to follow Jesus, and that it didn't make me feel so vulnerable. Not that Jesus didn't warn us when He said, "They hated Me before they hated you," right? (See [John 15:18](#).)

Some years ago, I realized that I had to level up my faith. I couldn't just respond to some challenges with a Bible verse, because the question isn't so much what does the Bible say about this, but rather, is the Bible actually true? Is Jesus really who He said He is? And even if there is a God, is He worthy of my loyalty?

I realized I needed to know more. So I dug a lot deeper. I familiarized myself with harder questions and deeper biblical answers. I realized that as a follower of Jesus it is my responsibility to be able to articulate, even to myself initially, the reason *why* I believe the truths of the Bible. I realized it is my responsibility to protect and strengthen my faith.

[First Peter 3:15](#) tells us: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (NKJV).

As followers of Jesus, there are lots of things we need to do to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. (See [John 17:14-16](#).) It all comes down to really knowing and loving Jesus and growing in understanding His Word.



How Christians are to respond to today's culture is always a hot topic. It can be confusing. But I don't want my faith to slip away, so I let the questions asked push me to find the answers in God's Word. I wrestle with things and hack away at issues bit by bit. This helps me be able to give an answer to whomever asks of me, and many times, that answer is first to myself.

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

Have Faith in GOD

BY ROSANE CORDOBA

A CENTRAL PART OF OUR FAITH IN GOD IS TRUSTING THAT HE KNOWS BEST, putting matters into His hands, and waiting for Him to work. Here are a couple of situations where I was blessed when I walked by faith.

As a young adult, I prayed for a good husband. Then I met Carlos, and we shared a friendship during the activities of our Christian work in São Paulo, Brazil. After a few months, I decided to go north, and he decided to go south to help in missionary work in different states. A few weeks later, though, I realized I had made a mistake and I went back to São Paulo. I stayed at our Christian mission center and spent a whole day praying and asking God for direction, but I felt like I was talking to a blank wall. I was puzzled. The next morning, Carlos arrived and said he had felt the same. We realized it was God's will for us to be together and we got married not long after.

About 20 years ago, I received some money through an inheritance and I decided to buy a plot of land to build a house for my family. We searched for two months, until we found the perfect plot for a fair price. It was Friday and on Monday we were going to sign the paperwork. But during the weekend, the real estate agency, which had advertised the lot for the last three months with no buyers, sold the land. The owner apologized to us, but said there was nothing he could do.

We were very disappointed, but we prayed and put the matter into the Lord's hands. Only one week later, this man called us saying a friend of his was selling a similar plot on the same street for a good price. We bought that plot, and it turned out to be a much better and quieter spot than the first option.

Brazilian people have a remarkable resiliency and positivity about life. A missionary friend who came from Europe said that what had impressed her the most upon arriving here is how many times we mention God throughout the day. "God bless you" is often in our daily conversations. The translation of our goodbyes are: "to God," "stay with God," and "go with God." We often say "God willing" when talking about future plans. It is so faith-affirming to hear these expressions of faith!

Neuroscience is discovering that people who have faith and hope for the future enjoy better mental and physical health and usually live longer. The Bible says: "A joyful heart is good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22). "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Faith in God is what makes all the difference!

ROSANE CORDOBA LIVES IN BRAZIL. SHE IS A FREELANCE WRITER, TRANSLATOR, AND PRODUCER OF FAITH-BASED AND CHARACTER-BUILDING CHILDREN'S MATERIAL. ■



SOLAR ECLIPSE INSIGHTS

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

ON APRIL 8, 2024, a total solar eclipse swept across North America. The shadow of the moon sailed from Mexico to the United States to Canada. The website science.nasa.gov states: “A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.” It was a truly spectacular moment for those who had the opportunity to sit in the shadow of the moon and behold the sun’s spectacular corona. This was a rare astronomical event as in some locations the darkness created by the total eclipse lasted for up to four and a half minutes in the middle of the day!

It is understandable that ancient civilizations developed colorful mythology to explain a disappearing sun. Their fables included frogs, wolves, or fire dogs eating the sun. Some accused the moon of trying to steal the sun. Some people in Togo believed the sun and the moon were fighting and the only way to get them to stop was

to make peace with their enemies. Some accused the sun of trying to steal people’s eyes, or felt it was a bad omen for a pregnant woman to go out of the house during an eclipse. The Navajo Native American people believed that an eclipse was part of the natural order and stayed inside fasting and singing.

We now understand what is happening during an eclipse, but we can still feel uneasy about darkness replacing the light. As we face times of spiritual and social darkness in the world today, it may seem impossible to see God’s hand at work. But as surely as we know that the sun remains the same and the eclipse will pass, we can know that our God never changes and He remains in control of our lives.

During an eclipse, the sun and the moon appear to be the same size. In fact, the sun is 400 times the size of the moon, and 400 times further away from us, which explains how the moon can completely block the view of the greater celestial orb. Similarly, the things that often impede our view of God are the things that are closest to us. If we remember that and keep it in perspective, we can continue to trust in God, even when we cannot see Him.

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

THE SHOELESS MISSIONARIES

BY EMILY THOMPSON



LATELY, I've caught myself worrying at times about the future—particularly about financial issues. For decades I had tended to put all my focus and passion into the present, leaving the challenges of the future for when they became the challenges of today. But I began to recognize the need to plan and prepare for the future the best I could, while trusting in God for all that only He can do. It became a bit of a struggle between trusting in the God factor, which has always been the trump card in the deck for the past 30+ years of my life, or trying to come up with new strategies to win the hand.

Then I had the opportunity to attend a conference in the downtown area of Baltimore, Maryland. I could see how hard the recession had hit, as so many people were

wandering the streets homeless. Others were caught up in drugs and a hopeless life, and when we later drove through the city, we saw its many tenements. The cycle of poverty and despair in the midst of a first world nation was heartbreaking.

The driver of the taxi that took us to the airport after the conference was from Ethiopia. He had only been in the US for a short time, and was evidently eager to please and earn his wages. His face lit up when we explained that we had served as missionaries in several countries. He was also a Christian, and we had a wonderful time sharing our faith and experiences in living our faith.

He explained that his church supported five missionaries in Ethiopia, which enabled them to preach the gospel. They had had great success, he said, in planting churches,



even among their Muslim countrymen. I was curious about the secret of their successful church-planting.

He told us the story of the missionaries in Ethiopia who in years past had walked hundreds of kilometers throughout the country, carrying the message of salvation and faith to villages and towns. These missionaries went shoeless once their shoes wore out, walking barefoot from village to village, so determined were they to bring the good news, so great was their love for their fellow countrymen. They chose to be content and passionate about their calling, even while lacking some of their basic “food and clothing” needs (1 Timothy 6:8).

The Lord has promised to supply our needs according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19), and He didn’t fail to supply theirs either, and they continued faithful to

their calling. They have seen the reward for their labors in their many countrymen who have been brought to the Lord through this undeniable testimony of love, of people who were willing to sacrifice their own basic comfort to share God’s love with others. “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation” (Isaiah 52:7, NIV).

Needless to say, that was food for thought. My worries seemed puny in comparison with the challenges of these African missionaries. I felt a keen awareness that the Lord had chosen to speak to me through this fellow Christian as a reminder to me of His care and unfailing presence in my life.

Afterwards I pondered on how excellent His loving kindness has been throughout my life and continues to be today. He has never failed to care for me and my loved ones, in sickness and in health, in the good times and the not-so-good times, when we’ve abased and abounded, in life and in death. God has been true to His word, and His promises are just as trustworthy and true as they ever were. As the Psalm says, “How precious is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light” (Psalm 36:7–9, NIV).

The future continues to loom large at times, and I occasionally wonder how it will all fit together. But I’ve found His peace in the knowledge that “I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him”—my life and future, and that of my loved ones—“until that day” (2 Timothy 1:12, NKJV). He’s never failed to hold my present, my future, and my well-being in His hands. Why would He fail me now or in the days to come?

Faith in God is still the winning hand, even when new strategies are needed for the future. It’s a relief to know that He’s always looking out for us and we can dwell in safety under the shadow of His wings—the shelter of His unfailing promises. The God factor is still the trump card in the deck.

EMILY THOMPSON WORKS WITH NONPROFITS AND WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT. ■

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

GOD'S GREAT FAITHFULNESS

My steadfast love for you never ceases and My mercies never come to an end. They are renewed every morning in My faithfulness to you ([Lamentations 3:22–23](#)). So give thanks in all things and rest in the hope of the glorious future I have promised you. When you face earthly trials, grief or disappointments, you can find shelter in My grace, and joy in the promise that I have prepared a place for you where you will be with Me forever ([John 14:1–3](#)).

The challenges and tests of this life are steppingstones to My grace and the passageway to glory. Problems and disappointments help to draw you closer to Me, where you can experience My power and unfailing love, and My glory can rest upon you.

Everything that you face in life—the gains and losses and everything in between—is meant to bring you into closer communion with Me. I will give you treasures from the darkness and reveal to you hidden riches from the secret places so that you may know that I am the Lord your God who calls you by your name ([Isaiah 45:3](#)).

Your disappointments become My holy appointments as you draw close to Me and glorify Me in all things. Remember that I do all things well toward you in My faithfulness and everlasting love for you. In the day when righteousness will be poured down and My glory will cover the earth, you will rejoice forevermore and dwell in My eternal joy ([Habakkuk 2:14](#)).

