

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 26 • Issue 5

TREES IN THE DESERT

Let your roots grow
deep

Keys to Happier Living

Where to find strength
and hope

The Traveling Professor

A new kind of healing



PERSONALLY SPEAKING A CHANGE OF PLANS

We were on our way to visit a dear friend in the hospital. It was going to be a long ride by bus and subway, and we wanted to get there before the end of visiting hours. Before entering the subway, we stopped to order some coffee to take with us. Nearby was a man begging for coins. We had talked to him on many occasions. I asked him if he would also like a cup of coffee. He beamed his characteristic grin (missing a few teeth) and happily accepted. That was when I realized that he thought we were inviting him to sit and have coffee together with us. Okay. Change of plans.

As we sat at a small table, he began to tell us his story. Years earlier, he had suffered a head injury at work that not only left him disabled, but with a diagnosis of schizophrenia that resulted in instability and eventually a life on the street. We could feel that this conversation was important to him so we never mentioned that we were in a hurry. Time seemed to stop for him as he enjoyed a moment to share a cup of coffee with friends.

We arrived quite late at the hospital. All of our friend's visitors had left and she had dozed off to sleep. As we sat quietly by her bed, wondering what to do next, she opened her eyes and was so happy to see us there. We had a lovely, peaceful time visiting, without the distraction of the parade of people who had come to see her earlier. It was the Lord's timing. We were so grateful that we had been flexible regarding our plans that day.

Do you sometimes feel that your life has slipped into a never-ending to-do list of responsibilities—most of them urgent and vying for the top of your to-do list? This month's magazine has several articles about priorities. Marie Alvero's article gives interesting and practical insights on sorting through life's demands.

Then, how should we react when our plans are unexpectedly put on hold? That can happen suddenly to any of us. Do we switch gears? Joyce Suttin shares her personal experience the day her to-do list got cancelled. The feature article, *Keys to Happier Living*, addresses challenges we all face, and the answers that are found in God's Word for our guidance and strength. And there's more!—Including several thought-provoking articles on forgiveness.

Enjoy this month's variety issue in which contributors from around the world share personal experiences and reflections. God bless you!

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Activated Editorial Team

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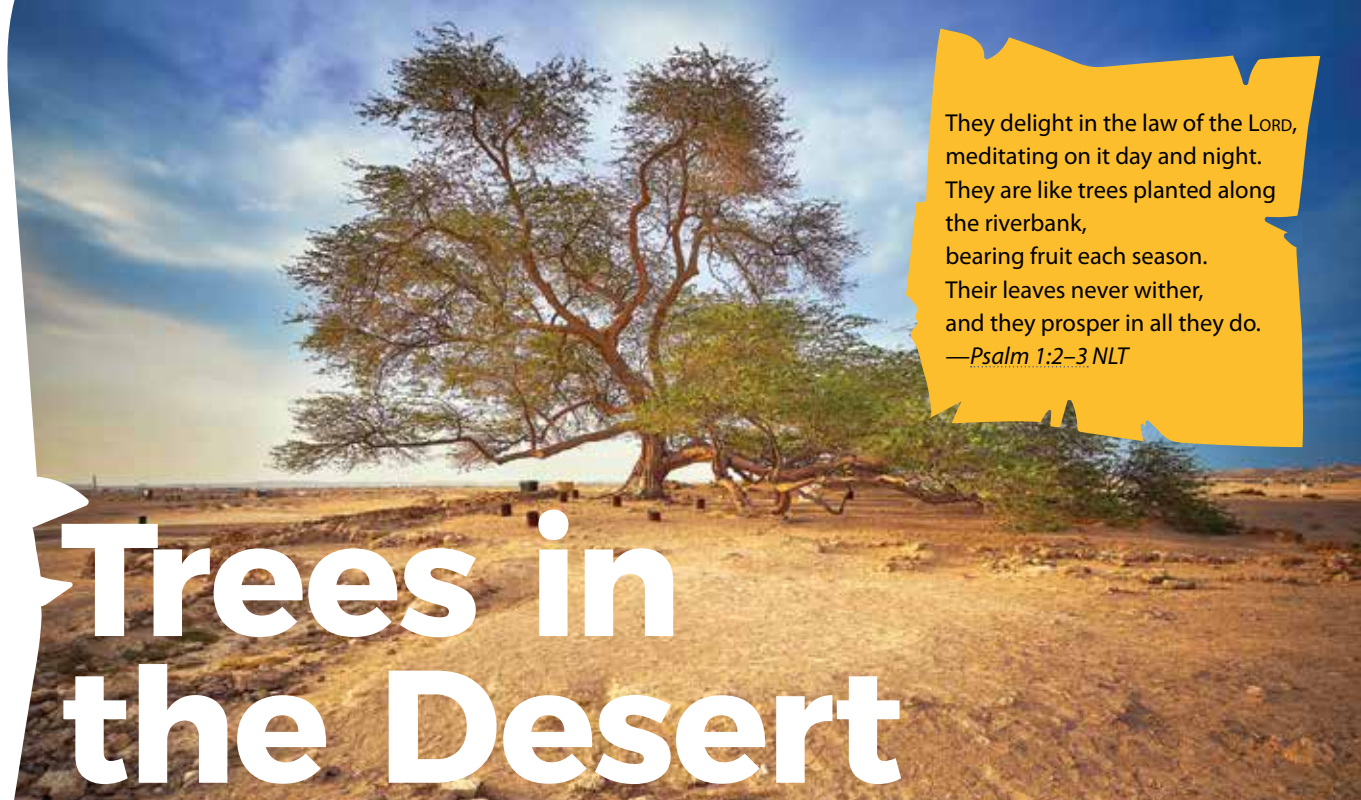
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They delight in the law of the LORD,
meditating on it day and night.
They are like trees planted along
the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.
Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do.
—Psalm 1:2–3 NLT

Trees in the Desert

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

COMING FROM THE LUSH TROPICAL GREENERY OF THE RAIN FOREST WHERE I ONCE LIVED IN UGANDA, AFRICA, I WAS OVERWHELMED BY THE CONTRAST OF THE ROCKY TERRAIN OF THE MIDDLE EAST. In any direction, rocks with subtle variations of the same earthy nuance greeted my eyes. I was told that a few space movies had been filmed here, as the terrain is pretty close to what Mars looks like. Yet, despite its desolation, this land possesses its own unique beauty.

One thing the desert does is make you appreciate anything that is green. In this area, gardeners often leave weeds growing if they are not hindering other plants, as anything green is appreciated as a relief from all the brown that fills one's eyes.

A few weeks after we arrived, we were invited to a Bedouin camp to distribute aid packages. After meeting these hospitable and resourceful people, we had the opportunity to amble through the hilly surroundings. One feature of the landscape that drew my attention was the occasional oak tree that grew at crazy angles out of outcroppings in the rocky soil.

Despite the harsh environment where rain falls only a few days a year, these oaks flourish. How do they do it?—Their secret is their far-reaching roots. And what is the use of these islands of green in an ocean of rock? I found out later that the flowers and fruit of the oak trees provide sustenance for many kinds of wildlife. They also serve as a welcome source of shade, windbreak, or a hedge. And, of course, they also help reforest areas and prevent erosion.

These trees demonstrate a high degree of resilience as they are tolerant of harsh conditions such as drought. They regenerate quickly after fires. They also sprout again after being cut to the ground or grazed upon by animals. Surprising as it seems, they flourish in the poor ground of dry limestone.

Perhaps it was a whisper in the wind that spoke to my heart, saying: “Be like the oak tree, and give some green to this desert world you live in. To do so, you must let your roots grow deep.”

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. ■



KEYS TO HAPPIER LIVING

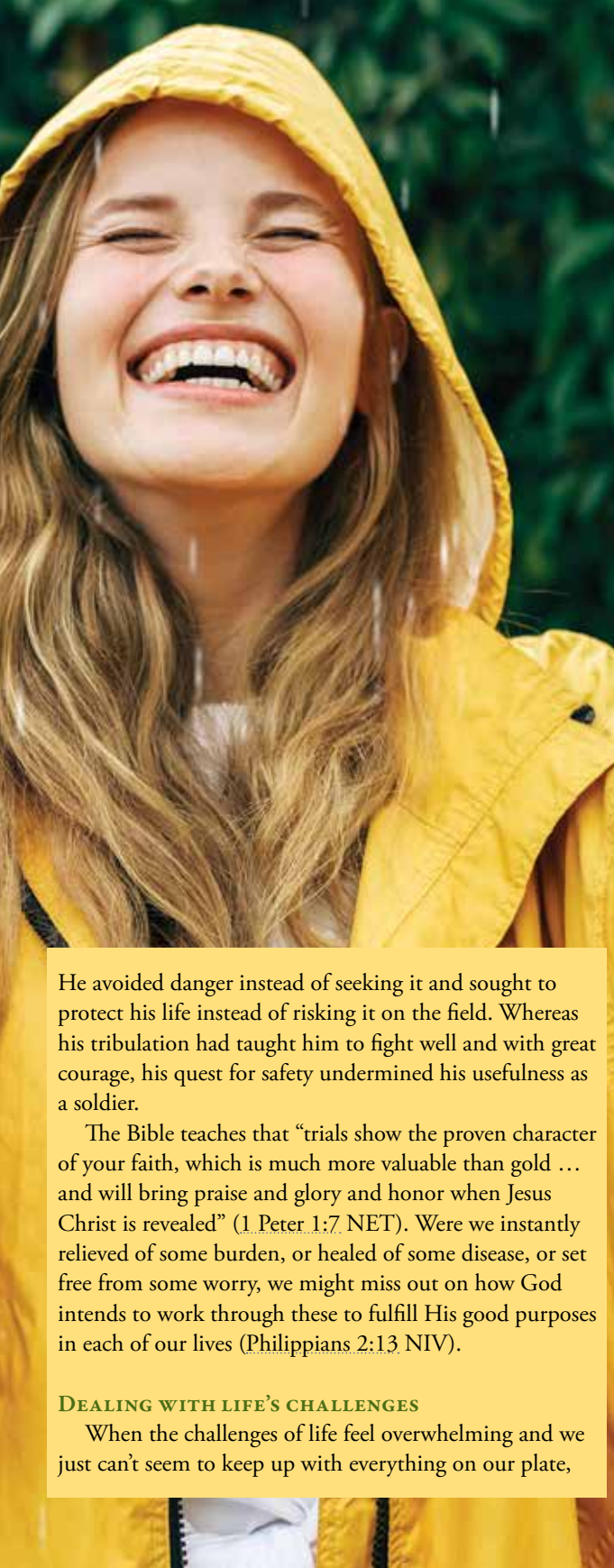
AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES, AND THE DIFFICULTIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE, AND THE STRESS THESE CAN PRODUCE. The difference, however, is that we have the Christian hope, grounded in our personal relationship with God, our salvation through faith in Christ, and the promise of an eternal future in heaven. We know how the story ends, even when we are in the middle of a difficult chapter (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). We also know that God has a purpose in everything we experience, and He has promised to work all things together for our good (Romans 8:28).

In John's Gospel, we read within the same verse that Jesus told His disciples—and His followers of all time—that in Him they would have peace and that “in this world you will have trouble.” He then went on to encourage them to take heart because He has overcome

the world (John 16:33 NIV). History shows that times of hardship, calamity or adversity have often resulted in great courage, sacrifice, and progress. As English author Caleb Colton (1777–1832) wrote, “The purest ore is produced from the hottest furnace, and the brightest thunderbolt comes from the darkest storm.”

An ancient Greek story is told of a soldier under Antigonus (382–301 BC) who had a painful disease that was likely at any time to end his life. In every campaign, he fought at the forefront of the hottest battle. His expectation of death at any time made him fearless and led him to court death on the martial field and do heroic deeds.

His general, Antigonus, so admired the bravery of the man that he had him seen by a renowned physician, who cured him of his malady. From that moment on, the valiant soldier was no longer seen at the front lines.



He avoided danger instead of seeking it and sought to protect his life instead of risking it on the field. Whereas his tribulation had taught him to fight well and with great courage, his quest for safety undermined his usefulness as a soldier.

The Bible teaches that “trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold ... and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:7 NET). Were we instantly relieved of some burden, or healed of some disease, or set free from some worry, we might miss out on how God intends to work through these to fulfill His good purposes in each of our lives (Philippians 2:13 NIV).

DEALING WITH LIFE'S CHALLENGES

When the challenges of life feel overwhelming and we just can't seem to keep up with everything on our plate,

where do we look to find the strength and hope we need? The answer is found in our relationship with Jesus, who promises us not only eternal life in heaven, but that He will be with us every hour of every day until we get there. He has promised us a future of hope, joy, peace, freedom, and everlasting love. The Bible tells us to “think on these things”—the noble, just, true, praiseworthy and excellent things (Philippians 4:8 NIV).

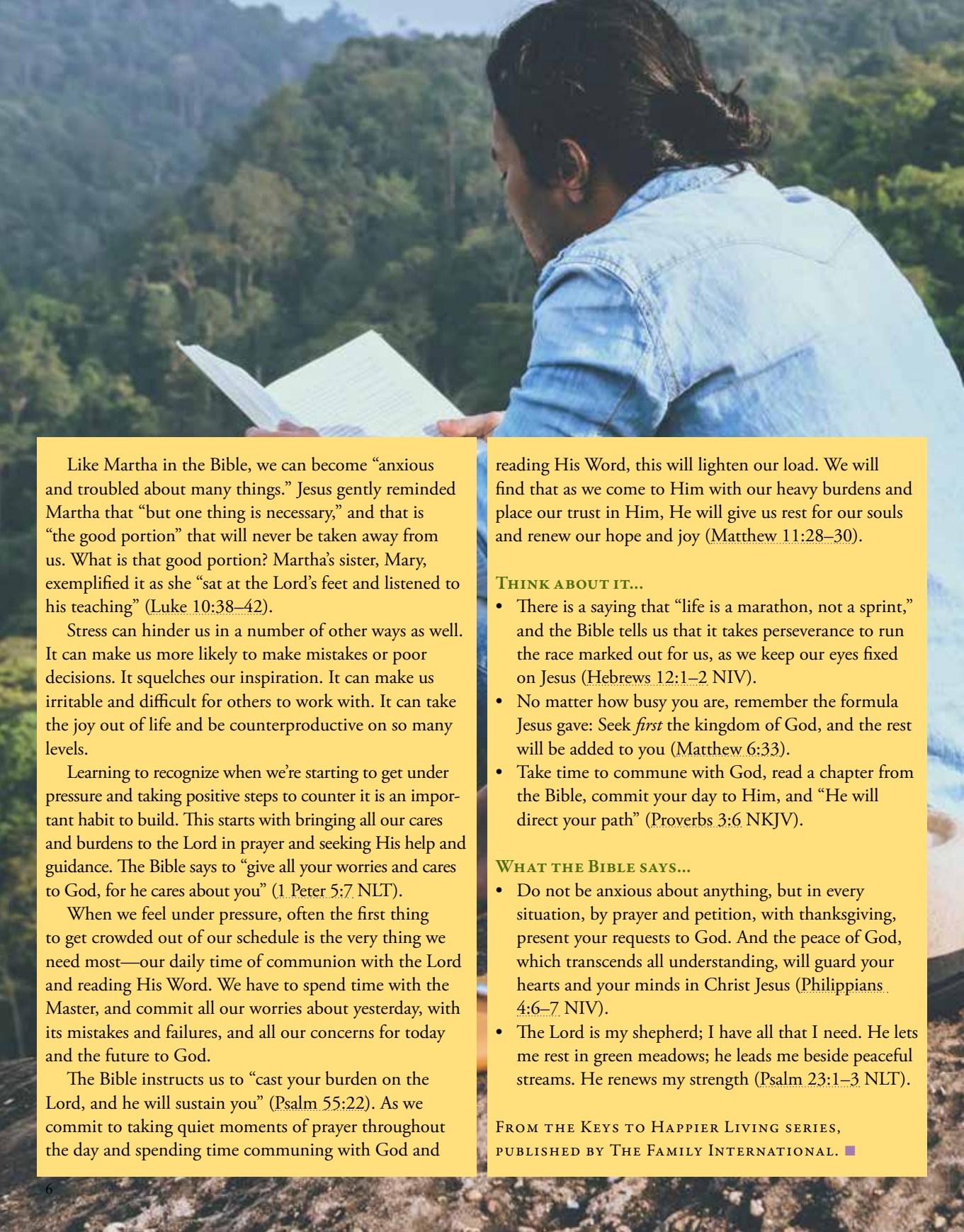
God is for us, He is with us, and best of all, God is in us and will never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5)! Jesus' sacrifice on the cross delivered us from the weight of sin and qualified us to “share in the inheritance of the saints in light.” God “transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption,” and Christ is now in us, “the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:12–14, 27). God loves us and cares for us and is with us through everything we face in life.

During a time of great uncertainty, while facing the prospect of war in 1939, in his Christmas address King George VI of England quoted the preamble to the poem *God Knows*, written by Minnie Louise Haskins, that continues to speak to us today. “And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown. And he replied: Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”

Jesus is the light of the world, and He promised that if we follow Him, we will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life to guide us (John 8:12).

TAKING TIME WITH THE MASTER

When it seems like there is much more to be done than there is time to do it, it is easy to get under pressure. At such times, we can find ourselves putting aside spending time in God's Word and prayer and communion with Him.



Like Martha in the Bible, we can become “anxious and troubled about many things.” Jesus gently reminded Martha that “but one thing is necessary,” and that is “the good portion” that will never be taken away from us. What is that good portion? Martha’s sister, Mary, exemplified it as she “sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching” (Luke 10:38–42).

Stress can hinder us in a number of other ways as well. It can make us more likely to make mistakes or poor decisions. It squelches our inspiration. It can make us irritable and difficult for others to work with. It can take the joy out of life and be counterproductive on so many levels.

Learning to recognize when we’re starting to get under pressure and taking positive steps to counter it is an important habit to build. This starts with bringing all our cares and burdens to the Lord in prayer and seeking His help and guidance. The Bible says to “give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you” (1 Peter 5:7 NLT).

When we feel under pressure, often the first thing to get crowded out of our schedule is the very thing we need most—our daily time of communion with the Lord and reading His Word. We have to spend time with the Master, and commit all our worries about yesterday, with its mistakes and failures, and all our concerns for today and the future to God.

The Bible instructs us to “cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you” (Psalm 55:22). As we commit to taking quiet moments of prayer throughout the day and spending time communing with God and

reading His Word, this will lighten our load. We will find that as we come to Him with our heavy burdens and place our trust in Him, He will give us rest for our souls and renew our hope and joy (Matthew 11:28–30).

THINK ABOUT IT...

- There is a saying that “life is a marathon, not a sprint,” and the Bible tells us that it takes perseverance to run the race marked out for us, as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1–2 NIV).
- No matter how busy you are, remember the formula Jesus gave: Seek *first* the kingdom of God, and the rest will be added to you (Matthew 6:33).
- Take time to commune with God, read a chapter from the Bible, commit your day to Him, and “He will direct your path” (Proverbs 3:6 NKJV).

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS...

- 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).
- The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength (Psalm 23:1–3 NLT).

FROM THE KEYS TO HAPPIER LIVING SERIES,
PUBLISHED BY THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

THE TRAVELING PROFESSOR

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

I WAS LISTENING TO A PODCAST WHEN THIS QUOTE STOOD OUT TO ME: “Pain is a traveling professor. Pain knocks and the wise say: ‘Come in—sit with me. Teach me what I must know.’”¹

I was fretting about the upcoming week. I didn’t know how I was going to get everything done on my need-to-do and want-to-do lists. I hurried into the laundry room and noticed some papers on the floor. I bent down to pick them up, but I misjudged my distance from a cabinet, and as I jerked upwards, I cracked my head on the corner of the cabinet.

As the pain erupted, I put my hand on my head and felt the wetness and saw the blood. I grabbed some paper towels and ice to attend to the growing “goose egg.” All I could do was lie back, apply ice, and try to figure out what was going on. Was God rearranging my schedule, so everything was canceled except the most important thing? And if so, *what* was that most important thing?

I called the chiropractor, and at my appointment later that morning, he told me that I had given myself a mini whiplash. If I ignored it, it could take a long time to heal. But if I stopped everything and took care of it, I would feel better soon.

So, my plans for the week changed. No more exercise classes. No more early morning walks. No more errands. No more accomplishments. No more preparations. No

1. Glennon Doyle



more good deeds. My need-to-do and want-to-do lists were suddenly cleared. I could barely tackle the most essential tasks. Mostly, I just had to be still.

Gradually, I felt thankful I hadn’t hurt myself worse and began to hear the lessons in the quietness. Much of the discomfort I felt wasn’t from having hit my head. It was from having to explain my sudden absence to others, from feeling like I was missing out on things I wanted to do or felt I should be doing, or from berating myself for my clumsiness.

When I allowed myself to be quiet and rest, I felt a new kind of healing enter my soul. I realized that it was just what I needed. I had felt pressured and had been unable to say no to tasks on my lists that were overwhelming me. I realized that this new, imposed stillness should have been the most important thing on my list from the start.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A RETIRED TEACHER AND WRITER AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, USA. CHECK OUT HER BLOG AT JOY4DAILYDEVOTIONALS.BLOGSPOT.COM. ■

BALANCE IS NOT THE RIGHT WORD FOR IT

BY MARIE ALVERO

I READ AN ARTICLE FROM A LIFE COACH ABOUT THE MYTH OF A “BALANCED LIFE.” He was saying that the expectation that we are able to juggle exactly the right amount of sleep, work, play, exercise, education, intimacy, quality time with our children, and whatever else each day brings is ridiculous and impossible. When I read that, it was like a light went on in my soul, and I understood why I could never achieve, let alone maintain this elusive “balanced life.” It is indeed a ridiculous and impossible pursuit!

Balance is not dividing your 24-hour days with exactly the right amount of time for each category. Balance is much more dynamic and intentional, adding in a little more of this, taking out some of that, so that needs are met and conditions do not become toxic. It looks different for each person, and different in each season of life.

I have come to realize that the wisdom to know what and when is something that will always keep me needing Jesus. I will never have my life so streamlined and organized that I don't need His insight to decide on the priorities. I'm not saying no structure. I work at set times, we don't get to choose if we pay our bills or not, and there is a certain hierarchy to my priorities and non-negotiables, which are:

- Faith: time with Jesus, letting God's Word steer my life
- Family: marriage and kids
- Finances: work, keeping the operation afloat

- Fitness: sleep and exercise, eating quality food
- Friends: the community around us, from church, friends, and neighbors, and being mindful of the needs of our community
- Fun: this can be big or small things, and really should show up in all the other things, but it should get some actual time dedicated to it, too.¹

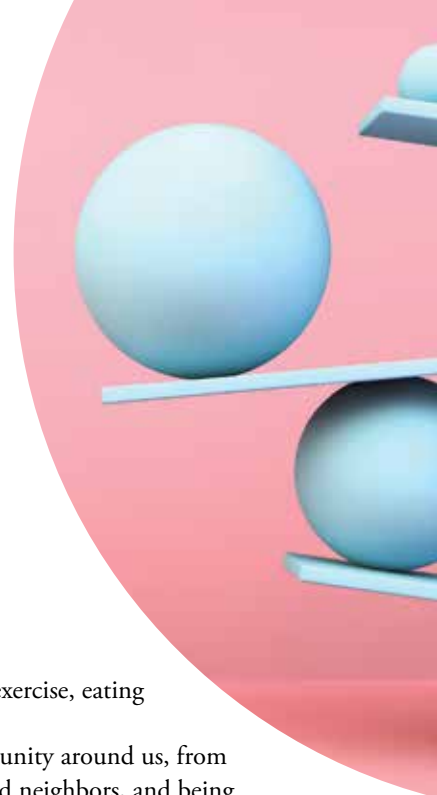
Ever since my kids were tiny, I've always asked myself the questions: What are the big things? And what does it look like when we're getting it right?

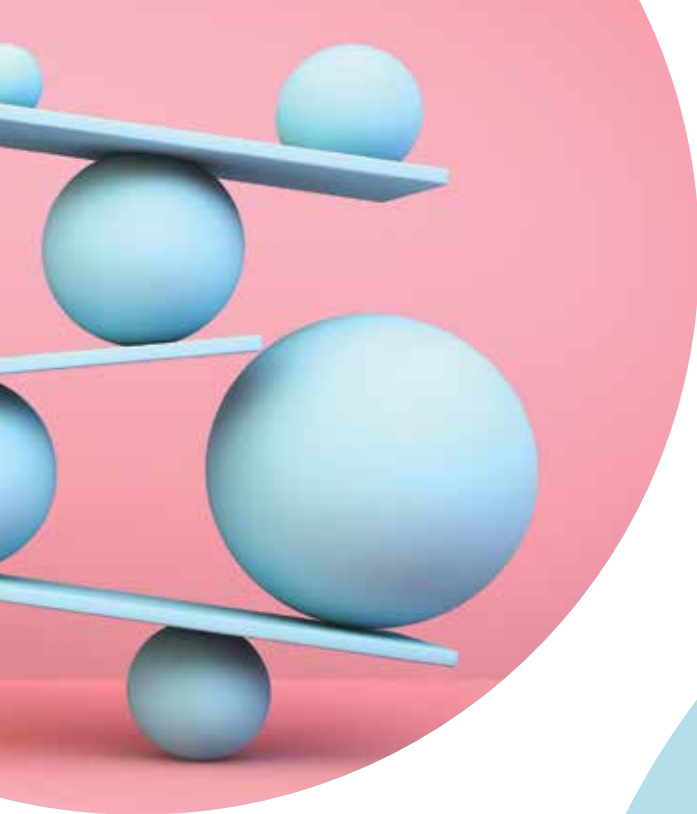
For example, when we were super busy and focusing on a move or our work and the kids weren't getting as much attention as usual, I would frequently ask myself, “Are they happy? Do they still seem secure and settled?” And if the answer was *yes*, then I knew we were okay. And if it was *no*, then we had to shift our priorities.

If my husband and I were exceptionally busy and not spending as much time together as usual, I would ask myself if we were still sweet and happy with each other. If the answer was *yes*, then we were okay. If it was *no*, we had to make an adjustment.

If I was able to calm my spirit and God's Word was still speaking to my heart, I knew my connection with Jesus was okay. If I wasn't calm and the voice of my stressors was louder than His promised peace, I knew I needed to switch my priorities.

1. For more, see *What Really Works: Blending the Seven Fs for the Life You Imagine* by Paul Batz and Tim Schmidt.





I'm not trying to write a whole book here. My point is simply that “balance” is not really the goal. The goal is doing the right thing at the right time, which takes a much deeper centering and sense of priorities.

Jesus is an amazingly good example of this. If you look over the Gospels you will see that He didn't focus on the same things every day. Sometimes His focus was on preaching and healing the multitudes. Then He went off alone to pray. At other times one person was the center of His attention. Sometimes He did menial things. Sometimes He did glorious things. Wherever He was, that situation got His attention. He wasn't a multitasker with a spreadsheet and a checklist. He met the needs that came His way, focused on the task at hand, and trusted His Father for what He needed day by day.

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. ■

BEAT STRESS

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.—*1 Peter 5:7 NLT*

Our anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but only empties today of its strength.

—*Charles Haddon Spurgeon*

For fast-acting relief, try slowing down.—*Lily Tomlin*

Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop.

—*Ovid (43 BC–17/18 AD)*

Stress is not what happens to us. It's our response to what happens. And our response is something we can choose.—*Maureen Killoran*

Stress believes that everything is an emergency.

—*Natalie Goldberg*

The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.—*William James*

If you focus on the negative in any situation, you can expect high stress levels. However, if you try to see the good in the situation, your stress levels will greatly diminish.—*Catherine Pulsifer*

I will cast all my cares on God. They cannot burden Him.

—*Joseph Hall*

FORGIVENESS

BY RAFAEL HOLDING



“IF MY BROTHER OFFENDS ME, HOW MANY TIMES SHALL I FORGIVE HIM?” someone once asked Jesus, before offering a hopeful guess. “Seven times?” “No, seventy times seven!” was Jesus’ reply ([Matthew 18:21–22](#)). In other words, we should never stop forgiving.

Now that’s love! And Jesus wasn’t just talking about lovingly and patiently forgiving our siblings, spouses, or close friends, but also overbearing bosses and coworkers, wayward subordinates, and cantankerous neighbors—anyone and everyone, in fact. This is so contrary to human nature that such loving patience could only come from God Himself.

Hasn’t God forgiven you “seventy times seven”? Doesn’t that make you want to extend that same love and mercy and forgiveness to others, so they can also come to know Him and experience His forgiveness?

“Love suffers long, and is [still] kind” ([1 Corinthians 13:4 NKJV](#)). “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition” ([2 Timothy 2:24–25 NKJV](#)). ■

Many people are afraid to forgive because they feel they must remember the wrong or they will not learn from it. The opposite is true. Through forgiveness, the wrong is released from its emotional stranglehold on us so that we *can* learn from it. Through the power and intelligence of the heart, the release of forgiveness brings expanded intelligence to work with the situation more effectively.
—David and Bruce McArthur, *The Intelligent Heart*, 1997

When I forgive, I am not to carry any bullets forward on the journey. I am to empty out all my explosives, all my ammunition of anger and revenge. I am not to “bear any grudge” ([Leviticus 19:17–18](#)).

I cannot meet this demand. It is altogether beyond me. I might utter words of forgiveness, but I cannot reveal a clear, bright, blue sky without a touch of storm brewing anywhere.

But the Lord of grace can do it for me. He can change my weather. He can create a new climate. He can “renew a right spirit within me” ([Psalm 51:10 KJV](#)) and in that new atmosphere nothing shall live which seeks to poison and destroy. Grudges shall die and revenge shall give place to goodwill, the strong genial presence which makes its home in the new heart.

—John Henry Jowett (1864–1923)

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE?

Q: WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE OTHERS WHO HAVE DONE THINGS THAT HURT ME? WOULDN'T THAT ABSOLVE THEM FROM GUILT? WHY SHOULD I LET THEM OFF THE HOOK LIKE THAT?

A: No matter how hard it may be to forgive, your situation can't improve until you take that all-important step.

It begins with understanding that forgiveness isn't entirely or even primarily for the sake of the other party. You also need to forgive the person who hurt you for the sake of your own emotional and spiritual well-being; it's a necessary part of the healing process. Here are three reasons why that is so:

First, it helps you to avoid the poisoning effect that an unforgiving attitude invariably has on those who hold on to it. If you refuse to forgive those who have wronged you, your mind and spirit can become fertile ground for negative and destructive attitudes, such as hatred, bitterness, anger, and a desire for revenge. You will never be happy in that state of mind. Forgiveness is the antidote, an agent of positive change that can, over time, reverse the hurt that you feel.

Second, even though those feelings may seem justifiable considering the circumstances, if you act on or even entertain them, you become guilty along with the one who wronged you. Two wrongs never make a right.

Third, in what has become known as the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to both seek and extend forgiveness. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ... For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:12,14–15).

Forgiveness doesn't change the past, but it does make for a much brighter future. ■

SELF-INFLICTED DAMAGE

If a rattlesnake is cornered, it can become so frenzied that it will accidentally bite itself with its deadly fangs. In the same way, when a person harbors hatred and resentment in his heart, he is often hurt by the poison of his own malice. He thinks he is injuring his enemies by displaying his wrath, but the real harm is inflicted deep within his own soul. Nothing is ever gained by giving way to the dark passion of bitterness and anger.

When someone wrongs us, we must learn to forgive and ask God to let His love fill our heart. It's the only way to keep from being hurt by bitterness, wrath, and anger.—*Henry G. Bosch*



A photograph of a man and a woman painting a wall green. The man, in the foreground, is wearing a striped t-shirt and jeans, and is using a roller to paint the wall. The woman, in the background, is wearing a light-colored top and a yellow skirt, and is also using a roller to paint the wall. The wall is a vibrant green color. The title 'Striving for Peace' is written in a large, yellow, handwritten font on the left side of the image.

Striving for Peace

By SIMON BISHOP

I VISITED A FRIEND WHO ASKED FOR ADVICE ABOUT A PROBLEM HE WAS HAVING. A former colleague had moved on and started his own business in direct competition. He had taken some of my friend's clientele with him. My friend was concerned about the loss of business, but more than that, he was asking about the anger and negative emotions he experienced whenever he passed by his former colleague's business, or even thought about the situation.

It reminded me of something I experienced years ago, when a team of missionaries from another country wrote to us and asked to join our mission here in the Philippines. After much consideration we decided to invite them, but this meant looking for bigger accommodations, as we would need to have a place for them to live as well. I found a large house, but it needed extensive repairs. We ended up having to replace all the floors because of termite damage, all the water pipes, all the screens, and more. Our mission's entire savings were invested in this house. Then when they arrived, it

quickly became apparent that we had different visions and ideas for the type of mission work we each felt called to do.

I felt that, since they were new in the country, the right thing to do would be to allow them to stay in the house we had recently renovated and moved to, which had cost us everything. We did this, and God did a miracle for us. While it had taken months to find that house, and then months to repair, clean, and prepare it, when I again started house hunting, within one week we found a fantastic house in good condition and in a good location, with everything we needed.

When I initially realized that we weren't going to be able to work together with the team that had arrived, I experienced turbulence in my thoughts and emotions, ranging from sadness to frustration to worry about how we would have to start again from scratch.

While reading my Bible I came upon this story in [Genesis 26](#) about the Patriarch Isaac (Abraham's son). You



“For I know what I have planned for you,” says the Lord. “I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope.”—*Jeremiah 29:11 NET*

God is in control. He may not take away trials or make detours for us, but He strengthens us through them.—*Billy Graham*

Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.
—*Corrie ten Boom*

If the Lord be with us, we have no cause of fear. His eye is upon us, His arm over us, His ear open to our prayer, His grace sufficient, His promise unchangeable.—*John Newton*

Each of us may be sure that if God sends us on stony paths He will provide us with strong shoes, and He will not send us out on any journey for which He does not equip us well.—*Alexander Maclaren*

might find the whole chapter interesting, but here is a summary:

Isaac's tribe had no land of their own; they lived as tenants or guests of different kings and rulers in Canaan. Water is scarce in that part of the world, but the Lord blessed Isaac so that wherever he dug wells he found abundant water. Often, though, the people living around him became jealous and started fighting over the water source. In order to avoid conflict, Isaac moved on again and again, and each time the Lord blessed his efforts to find water and provided for him. Finally, one of the kings who had initially evicted Isaac from his territory came to him to make a pact of peace with him, as he could see that Isaac had God with him and was always blessed, and the king wanted to share in those blessings.

This story helped me to have faith that I was doing the right thing in striving for peace even if it meant significant personal loss. It also motivated me to not give in to feelings of bitterness or anger about the situation, but instead to focus on making sure that I was doing my

best to serve and obey God. And the blessings followed. It was amazing!

In these times when it seems that everyone wants to fight for what they think is fair, to not get pushed around, or to seek retribution for wrongs, I think it's important to remember that Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” And later in the same sermon He said, “If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well” (*Matthew 5:9, 40 NIV*).

While I don't think it's wrong to stand up for our rights or to look out for our interests, as Christians we have to remember that God is in control. Even if we seem like the loser at times while we stand by our Christian faith and principles, God is more than able to make up for any loss, and it does us no good to harbor anger or bitterness towards others. It's all in God's hands anyway!

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



LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

BY ROSANE CORDOBA

IT WAS THE END OF 1974. I was 18 and had made the trip overland from London to India with a few friends via the so-called “hippie trail.” We traveled through Istanbul, Tehran, Kabul, Kashmir, Hyderabad, and finally arrived in Goa, where we settled for a few weeks, living in a hut by the beach. I was a very insecure young adult, afraid of the future and desperately searching for meaning in my life.

I have always loved children, so I made friends with a young girl who was staying with her hippie parents and other young French people in a house about 400 meters up the path that led from the beach to our small villa. With her mother’s consent, I would pick her up every afternoon to play at the peaceful beach and then take her back home before sundown. I always made sure to take my little friend home before nighttime. There was no electricity in that remote area, and I was very afraid of the dark.

Winter was approaching and the days were getting shorter. One day, I lost track of time, and when we started back up the trail, the sun was already down. All I could see was a small candle in the distance that led me to her home. Upon entering by the back door, the house was completely silent, but I could see her mom and friends

sitting in a circle around that one small candle, gazing at its light and meditating. A peaceful feeling permeated the whole house, and even my lively young friend tiptoed her way in out of respect for the moment.

I lingered for a few minutes savoring the atmosphere, and then started back home by myself. Despite the thick black in front of me, this time I was not afraid. The vision of that dancing candle permeated my mind, and I knew everything was going to be okay.

A few weeks later, I met a group of Christian young people that helped me find the path of righteousness and joy that only Jesus can give. I was free from confusion and fear. I now had a purpose for my life. It was like a candle had been lit in my soul and I would never again be left alone in the dark.

The Bible has a lot to say about light. Here are just a few of the many verses on this topic:

“Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12).

“Those who look to [the Lord] are radiant [full of light]; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor

Are you feeling afraid, lost, lonely, or without hope? Jesus loves you and wants to be your constant companion. He said: "Behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). Jesus has promised to come into your life and to fill you with His joy, peace, and love.

If you have not yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can do so by praying this prayer:
Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died for me and rose from the dead. Please forgive me for all my sins. I invite You to come into my heart and life. Please fill me with Your love and Holy Spirit, and grant me Your gift of eternal life. Amen.



man called, and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34:5–6).

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

"You are my lamp, O Lord, and my God lightens my darkness" (2 Samuel 22:29).

"You have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life" (Psalm 56:13).

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Do you feel lost and without hope? Are you afraid of the darkness around you and all the troubles that life seems to throw at you? Look for the light that will guide you to where you need to go. Jesus is light, and in Him there is no darkness!

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

CASTING ALL YOUR CARES

Come to Me with all your burdens, worries and concerns and find My promised rest for your soul (Matthew 11:28–29). Your burdens may be too heavy for you to bear, but they are not too heavy for Me. My shoulders are broad enough to carry any load that you bring to Me.

My Word teaches you to cast all your cares and anxieties on Me, knowing that I care for you (1 Peter 5:7). But you may wonder, “Practically speaking, *how* do I cast my cares on You, Lord?” Start by taking a few minutes to reflect on your situation. What are the burdens that you are carrying? What is causing you to be anxious and stressed?

Then take time to commit these burdens to Me one by one, asking Me to take care of everything that concerns you. Remember My promise that I will sustain you and will not allow you to be shaken or moved (Psalm 55:22). Once you have made your requests known to Me in prayer and thanksgiving, trust that My peace will guard your heart and mind (Philippians 4:6–7).

No matter what the source of your concerns, casting your cares on Me will make your load lighter. So come to Me with all your burdens and trust that in times of stress or trouble, I am always with you. My joy will give you strength and My peace that surpasses your human understanding will sustain you (Nehemiah 8:10).

