

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# ACTIVATED

Vol 27 • Issue 5

## OVERCOMING FEAR AND WORRY

Jesus is with you

## The Power of Our Thoughts

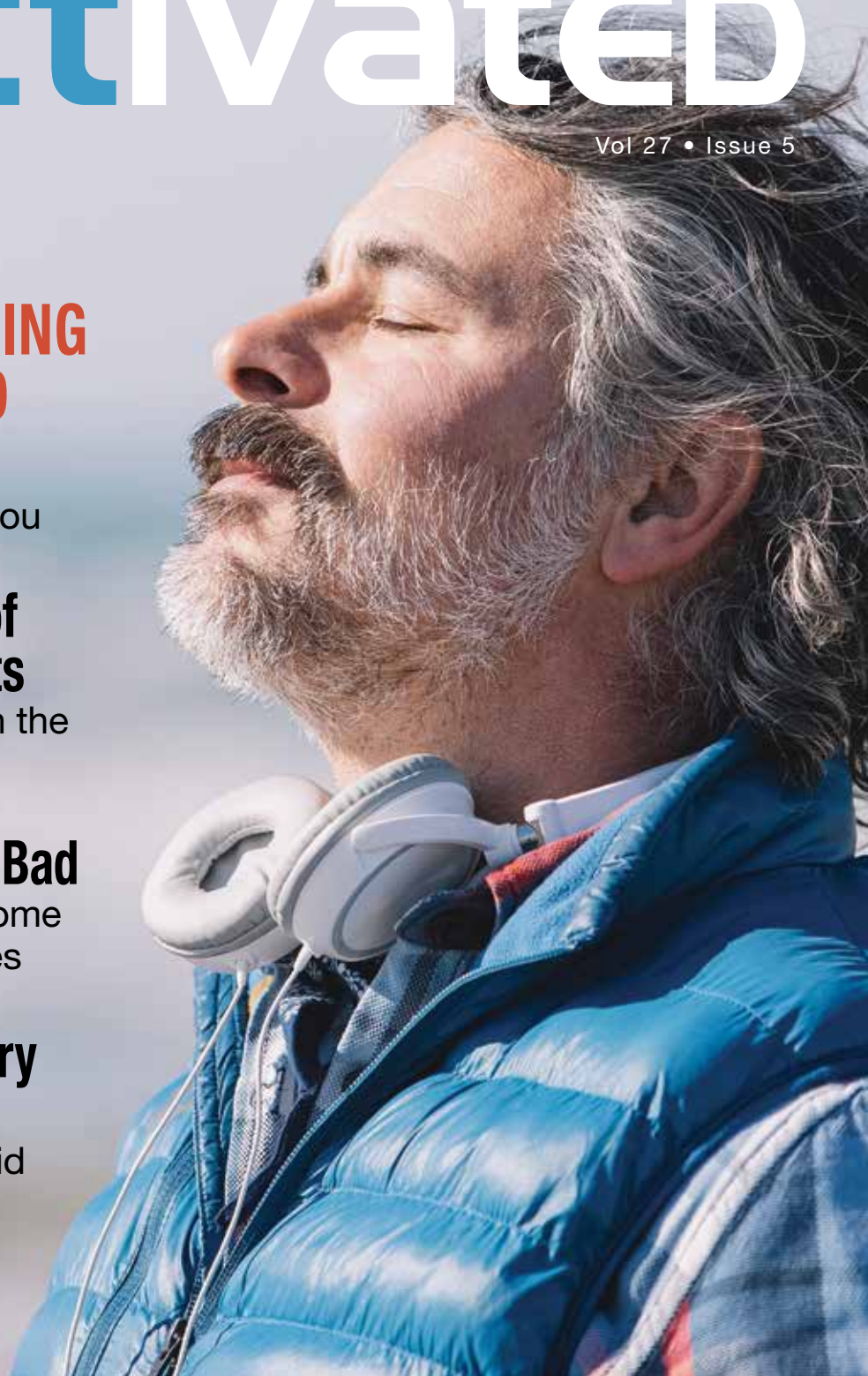
Protection with the  
armor of God

## Good Out of Bad

Problems become  
stepping stones

## He Sees Every Sparrow

Do not be afraid





## PERSONALLY SPEAKING FACING OUR FEARS

We often hear that we need to “face our fears.” I think the first step is to differentiate feelings of fear and anxiety from true threats. A professional surfer has to ask himself if he is anxious about an upcoming competition or about the real danger of the sharks that were spotted in the area.

When I was a kid I spent every summer riding horses, and I never lost my healthy respect for them. I knew that horses can sense a rider’s fear and that causes them to get nervous. So, I would control my initial feelings of apprehension and then mount the horse without hesitation. I learned to do the same when going through parts of town where thieves are common. Fear shows, and it’s safer to know exactly where you are going and to project strength and confidence as you walk

I read an interesting quote about our fears and worried thoughts: “Anxiety isn’t intuition, fear isn’t wisdom, worry isn’t preparation. Question them. Most will crumble under scrutiny.”<sup>1</sup>

Fear paralyzes, and therefore we should not make decisions based on fear. Also, many of our fears concern situations that we can do little about, such as the fate of the world or how we are going to spend our dying days.

So how should we face our fears? With faith. Not blind faith, but faith that is based on the fact that God loves and cares for us, as is written in His Word. When we put our faith in Him, He will help us sort through both the unfounded fears and the real dangers. He will guide us through all we face in life. The following poem illustrates this point.

Three men were walking on a wall, Feeling, Faith, and Fact,  
When Feeling got an awful fall, and Faith was taken back.  
So close was Faith to Feeling, he stumbled and fell too,  
But Fact remained, and pulled Faith back,  
And Faith brought Feeling too.<sup>2</sup>

The articles in this month’s issue are on the theme of overcoming fear and worry. It is a treasure chest of inspiration, practical tips, biblical examples, and personal testimonies that we’re sure you will enjoy.

May God bless you with a faith-filled life!

Gabriel and Sally Garcia  
*Activated* Editorial Team

1. Scott Clary
2. Attributed to Anna McGhie

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# HE SEES EVERY SPARROW

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

WHENEVER I SEE BIRDS, I'M REMINDED OF HOW JESUS USED SPARROWS AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF HOW MUCH GOD LOVES US.

He said: "Aren't two sparrows sold for only a penny? But your Father knows when any one of them falls to the ground. Even the hairs on your head are counted. So don't be afraid! You are worth much more than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29–31 CEV). If God takes such good care of the birdies, won't He do the same for little ol' me and you?

The other day a little sparrow hopped into my house through an open window. For some reason it couldn't fly, so it couldn't get out no matter how hard it flapped and flopped. I tried to help it, but it was too scared; it hid under the couch every time I approached. Eventually I gave up my rescue efforts. I prayed for it, gave it some water, and left it alone.

The next day I opened the window hoping that it would find its own way to freedom. This time, it almost made it out, but fell back down again and returned to its hiding place. The next day, after hearing a chorus of fellow birdies encouraging it, the bird got up the courage to try once more and made it out.

I have been surprised to hear how many people have similar stories. A friend of mine told me this one:

In South Africa, a pair of sunbirds built a nest outside our bedroom window. We watched as they wove a nest of straw. The daddy bird sang on top of the nest the day the eggs were laid. Then, he sang again when the eggs hatched. We played instrumental music, and he would sing along.

Then tragedy struck! The nest was gone! The gardener had accidentally knocked it down. I carefully rebuilt the nest and put the chicks back in it.

One day later, amazingly, the parents started feeding the babies again. Daily, they grew stronger and eventually left the nest. One afternoon, the daddy came to the window to say, "Goodbye and thank you." I replied, "Bye-bye, birdies!"

So, whenever you see a tiny bird, think about how much God loves *you*. If you have a broken wing and need help, rest in the arms of your Creator until you're strong enough to fly again. He will take care of you every day until you come home to roost. Then it won't be "Bye-bye, birdie" but rather "Hello, heaven!"

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND MIME ARTIST WHO HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN MISSIONS WORK IN 10 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES SINCE 1971. HE AND HIS WIFE PAULINE CURRENTLY LIVE IN GERMANY. ■



# OVERCOMING FEAR AND WORRY

HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE THE BURDENS, CARES, AND WORRIES OF LIFE ARE HEAVIER THAN YOU CAN BEAR? Has the loss of a loved one filled you with sorrow and worry about the future? Have financial difficulties and economic pressures brought uncertainty or despair? Do you find that current events in the world, such as wars, crises, or political strife, cause you fear and anxiety?

If you are going through a time of difficulty, hardship, or personal crisis of any kind, you can take comfort in knowing that the Bible promises that we can have His peace that transcends our understanding—no matter what our circumstances. The peace God promises us will guard our minds and hearts, and is grounded in the knowledge that whatever we face in this life, God has promised to be with us (Philippians 4:7).

“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you” (Isaiah 43:1–2 NLT).

The phrases “do not be afraid,” “do not fear,” and “fear not” appear over 70 times in the Bible. The frequency of these expressions gives us a heads-up that we can expect that life will present us with circumstances that can generate fear, anxiety, and worry. They also reassure us that God wants us to have faith and experience His peace. The word “faith” appears over 420 times in the Bible, while the word

“peace” is found more than 340 times. As Christians, we have been given many promises in the Bible to help us overcome fear and worry through our faith.

There are two types of fear referred to in the Bible. The first is *the fear of God*, which represents reverence and worship for God and His power and glory, and respect for His sovereignty. The Bible teaches us that “the fear of God



is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10 NKJV). A part of our love for God is a healthy respect for Him, like the respect of a child for their father.

The second type of fear the Bible refers to is a state of anxiety or dread or alarm. When the Bible tells us to not fear or be afraid, it is instructing and encouraging us

to not allow fear, anxiety, or fretfulness to rule our lives or take root in our hearts. God’s people are called to be people of faith and love. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV). “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18).

However, the reality is that we do at times experience fear and anxiety in this life. To overcome it, we have to put our trust in God and hold on to His promises to us in His Word. When we understand that our heavenly Father loves us so much that He gave His only Son for our redemption (John 3:16), we can rest in the sure knowledge that He will take care of us and everything that concerns us.

The Bible tells us to cast all our anxieties—our worries, our fears and our cares—on the Lord, because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). Bringing all our concerns to God in prayer is the first step we can take toward overcoming our anxieties and finding His promised peace in the midst of life’s storms. “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7 NLT).

### LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED

Throughout the Gospels, we read of many instances where Jesus tells His followers to not be fearful or afraid. In the Gospel of John, we read: “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me” (John 14:1). “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. ... Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27). God’s peace in the presence of fearful circumstances is rooted in our faith and trust in Him and His love for us.

No matter what we face in this life, no matter how distressing or alarming the circumstances may appear, Jesus has promised to always be with us (Matthew 28:20). God didn’t promise that we would never face trials, troubles, or afflictions, but He promised to deliver us out of them all (Psalm 34:19). In fact, Jesus told His followers, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 NIV).



Sometimes God may allow things to happen in our lives that try our faith and teach us patience, and these work to build our endurance and help us to grow spiritually. That's why we are to "count it all joy" when we face trials, knowing that the testing of our faith produces patience and endurance ([James 1:2–3](#)). But God is with us through everything we face. Jesus even said that every hair on our heads is numbered and not even a sparrow falls to the ground outside of God's care! "So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows" ([Matthew 10:29–31 NLT](#)).

### TRUSTING IN THE LORD

Our best protection and refuge in the storms of life is to place our trust in God and to stay "strong in the Lord and in His mighty power" ([Ephesians 6:10 NIV](#)). We can determine to be faithful to "fight the good fight of faith" and hold on tightly to our eternal calling ([1 Timothy 6:12](#)). We can put on "the full armor of God" to meet the challenges and to stand our ground, including the sword of God's Word, the helmet of salvation, and the shield of faith ([Ephesians 6:11–17](#)).

Prayer, worshipping the Lord, and claiming God's promises are time-tested ways to overcome fear and worry. "Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" ([1 Thessalonians 5:17–18](#)). We can also determine to intentionally focus our thoughts on God's love, His Word, and His many blessings in our lives. The Bible tells us that God will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are stayed on

Him, because they trust in Him ([Isaiah 26:3](#)).

God is sovereign over our lives and this world, and we know that He "causes everything to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose" ([Romans 8:28 NLT](#)). So no matter what you face, trust in the Lord and His promise to care for you. He never fails, no matter what the conditions, no matter how dire or desperate the situation, no matter how seemingly hopeless the circumstances. As His children, we can bring all our cares to the Lord in prayer and trust that He will answer us and surround us with His unfailing love ([Psalm 34:4](#)).

Dear Jesus, help us to not be afraid or worry about the future, but only to love and fear You. You said, "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence: and His children will have a place of refuge" ([Proverbs 14:26](#)). Help us to not worry about any of the waves and winds and billows that we face in life. May we keep our eyes fixed on You, Lord, the author and finisher of our faith, and place all our trust in You and Your love for us ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). Thank You for Your care for us, and for Your provision and presence every moment of our lives. Amen.

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

# LEARNING TO TRUST

BY JOYCE SUTTIN



I'VE ALWAYS LOVED CATS AND FELT THAT I HAD A WAY WITH THEM, BUT I MET A CHALLENGE WITH JJ AND FELIX. They were a gift from my daughter-in-law who had started feeding their mother, a feral cat, shortly before she succumbed to the perils of street life, leaving behind two kittens.

When JJ and Felix moved in with me, they stayed hidden under beds. Our relationship began with me lying on the floor and reaching out to them.

Initially my overtures were met with fear, but after days of feeding them, putting fresh water in their bowl, cleaning their litter box, and softly calling their names, they learned to trust. Eventually they began to come to me in the evenings, when the house was quiet, and they allowed me to pet them. I was greatly

rewarded when they would nuzzle up against me, purring. I assured them over and over that they were safe and that I would always care for them, and it seems they got the message.

In a way, they remind me of myself—the part of me that holds back and hides away, always a bit shy and wary of strangers, a little fearful of completely trusting anyone, even God. I recently did a Bible study from the book of Psalms on the subject of trust. In psalm after psalm, King David expounded on his many problems, but sooner or later he always hit on the solution: Trust the Lord.

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

## TRUST—A PSALMS SAMPLER

*Trusting God means giving our burdens and worries to Him.*

“Cast your burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved” (Psalm 55:22)

*Trusting the Lord frees us from fear.*

“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you” (Psalm 56:3).

“He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord” (Psalm 112:7).

*Trusting God gives us the ultimate security.*

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust’” (Psalm 91:1–2 NKJV).

*Trusting puts us in line for God’s blessings.*

“Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him” (Psalm 2:12 NKJV).

“Oh, how great is Your goodness  
... which You have prepared  
for those who trust in You”  
(Psalm 31:19 NKJV).


# HAND IN HAND, CONNECTED TO LOVE

BY EVA MARIANNE

**MY HUSBAND AND I LIKE TO GO FOR LONG WALKS.** It has been part of our daily exercise to go outside to enjoy the beauty of nature in all seasons. We often hold hands as we walk, which brings joy and comfort to both of us.

I have been thinking about our hands and what a wonderful gift they are. We can reach out and lend a helping hand to those in need. We can gently touch and with our hands say, “I love you and I care.” I can hold a dear one’s hand and offer comfort and reassurance. I can walk hand in hand with my grandchild and assure him that he is safe. Holding hands shows that we are united and connected. There is so much beauty to be found in our hands, and we can use them for that which is good and beneficial to those around us.

In the Bible we read about how Jesus used His hands to bring healing and comfort to the people He met. “When the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them” (Luke 4:40). “‘Let the children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them” (Mark 10:14,16 NKJV).



A beautiful work of art that comes to mind is “Praying Hands” by Albrecht Dürer (1508). So much in art, music, and creative endeavors has come by the work of someone’s hands—sculptures, paintings, music, architecture, and so much more. Some artists created amazing works even though they were painfully and laboriously wrought. Think of Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel, and Leonardo da Vinci’s “The Last Supper.” There were musicians like Chopin and Schumann who played and wrote music, though at times it was very difficult because of sickness or ailments in their hands. They portrayed the beauty of God’s love both in art and music, as shown in many of their masterpieces. And let’s not forget those who toil daily with the work of their hands as they build, craft, farm, and labor.

As I reflect on these artists and the amazing gifts given to them, my thoughts turn to our great Creator, our dear Father. He is the artist that created it all with His loving hands and the power of His Word. When my husband and I go for our walks, we enjoy nature and the beauty of His creation. We marvel at all that His hands have made.



It is all for us to enjoy and to take care of.

Here are a few verses from the Bible that tell of His work:

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (Psalm 19:1).

“In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind” (Job 12:10).

“You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Psalm 145:16).

Knowing that God is watching over me and that His loving hands will guide me has been a big comfort to me. I have faced many fears in my life, such as before medical examinations, worries about the welfare of our adult kids and grandkids, worries about finances, etc. These fears can, at times, overwhelm me or bring discouragement. Maybe this has happened to you, too.

Holding on to the Lord and His Word in these situations has brought me both comfort and peace. I have found that keeping my mind on what is good and positive has helped me to overcome and to hold on to courage and hope to see me through.

If you have not yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can do so by praying the following prayer:

*Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died on the cross for me so that, through Your death and resurrection, I can live forever with You in heaven. I open the door of my heart to You. Please forgive my sins. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Guide my life and help me to follow You. In Your name I pray. Amen.*

Here are a couple of verses that give me strength and peace:

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

Learning to put my hand and life into His guiding and loving hands has brought much joy to my heart and peace to my mind. I know that my life here on earth is not a journey that I take on my own, but rather, He is with me, keeps me safe, guides me faithfully, and supplies all my needs. His touch comforts and heals me, His hand lifts and holds me, and His endless love brings me such joy. What a wonderful travel partner! He has promised, “I will never leave you nor forsake you. I am with you always” (Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20).


I hope that these thoughts and reflections help assure you that you are loved and safe in His hands, always.

EVA MARIANNE IS A RETIRED TEACHER AND FORMER MISSIONARY TO THAILAND, THE PHILIPPINES, AND JAPAN. SHE AND HER HUSBAND LIVE IN SCANDINAVIA. ■



# THE POWER OF OUR THOUGHTS

BY ROSANE CORDOBA



I REMEMBER, WHEN I WAS A CHILD, WATCHING A MOVIE ABOUT MARTIANS THAT WERE INVADING EARTH. I was greatly impacted and began to see Martians inside my closet and other places around the house. My mother was so concerned that she took me to my pediatrician. His advice was simple: “She is watching too much TV! Control the amount of time and what she is watching.” My mom took heed of this advice, and sure enough, the aliens disappeared.

Another time, I developed an immense fear of darkness. But something inside me said: “If you face it, it will go away!” So, I started to make myself go through parts of the house with the lights off at nighttime. And that fear vanished.

I once had a dream where a good friend and I were running in a beautiful open field, when a thought suddenly came to my mind: “This is too good to be true, something bad is going to happen!” Suddenly, a big horizontal rift appeared right in front of us, and I woke up scared!

This dream reminded me of when Peter had the faith to start walking on the water towards Jesus in the Sea of Galilee. But then he looked at the waves and started sinking. He called out to Jesus, who came to his rescue.

After they were safe again on the boat, Jesus said, “Why do you have so little faith?” Being afraid is part of human nature, but we read “fear not” and other similar phrases over and over again in the Bible.

When the science of psychology began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was believed that feelings cause thoughts. Later, however, the conclusion was reached that thoughts cause feelings. The Bible instructs us to think about whatever things are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent or praiseworthy. (See [Philippians 4:8](#).) That is something we learn through practice, it comes with time. Reading the Bible and filling our minds with positive thoughts and images is very important.

It’s also crucial to have the protection of the armor of God that’s described in [Ephesians 6:10–17](#). This armor includes the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and last, but not least, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, with which we can go forward conquering fears and leading others to God’s kingdom of love.

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

# The Victory That Overcomes

BY MARIE ALVERO

JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES, “I HAVE SAID THESE THINGS TO YOU, THAT IN ME YOU MAY HAVE PEACE. IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION. BUT TAKE HEART; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD” (John 16:33).

I’m sure it was hard for the disciples to push out all the noise of their day. There were arrests, executions, sickness, suffering, political unrest, poverty, injustice—all of the challenges that have always been part of the human story. I think their hearts were troubled, just like ours are. That’s why Jesus told them, “Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).



I can’t help but wonder how in the world can one’s heart not be troubled with all that’s going on?! Do you ever think that? I do. I have been reading the book of Acts, and it’s amazing to see the disciples’ transformation.

They went from being afraid and defeated following Jesus’ crucifixion to boldly defying those who opposed them and stopping at nothing to let the world know that Jesus had fulfilled the promise of redemption. What changed? Jesus was risen! When that piece of the puzzle clicked into place, everything Jesus said and did had context.

They saw clearly that Jesus wins! They were confident enough to face all that was going on in their world with peace in their hearts, and to lead others to Jesus despite whatever opposition they faced. Their peace came from knowing that Jesus had won!

This is the same place where we get our peace, and that will never change. Things going on in our world—political conflict, natural disasters, health crises, or personal tragedy—will always threaten our peace. We can choose to go deeper into fear or deeper into faith.

We fight the same spiritual battles that disciples have fought since Jesus’ day. Satan attacks our faith because it is our faith that defeats him. We can put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10–17). We have all the same tools that Peter and Paul had, so we can have the same confidence John had when he said, “This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4).

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. ■

# GOOD OUT OF BAD

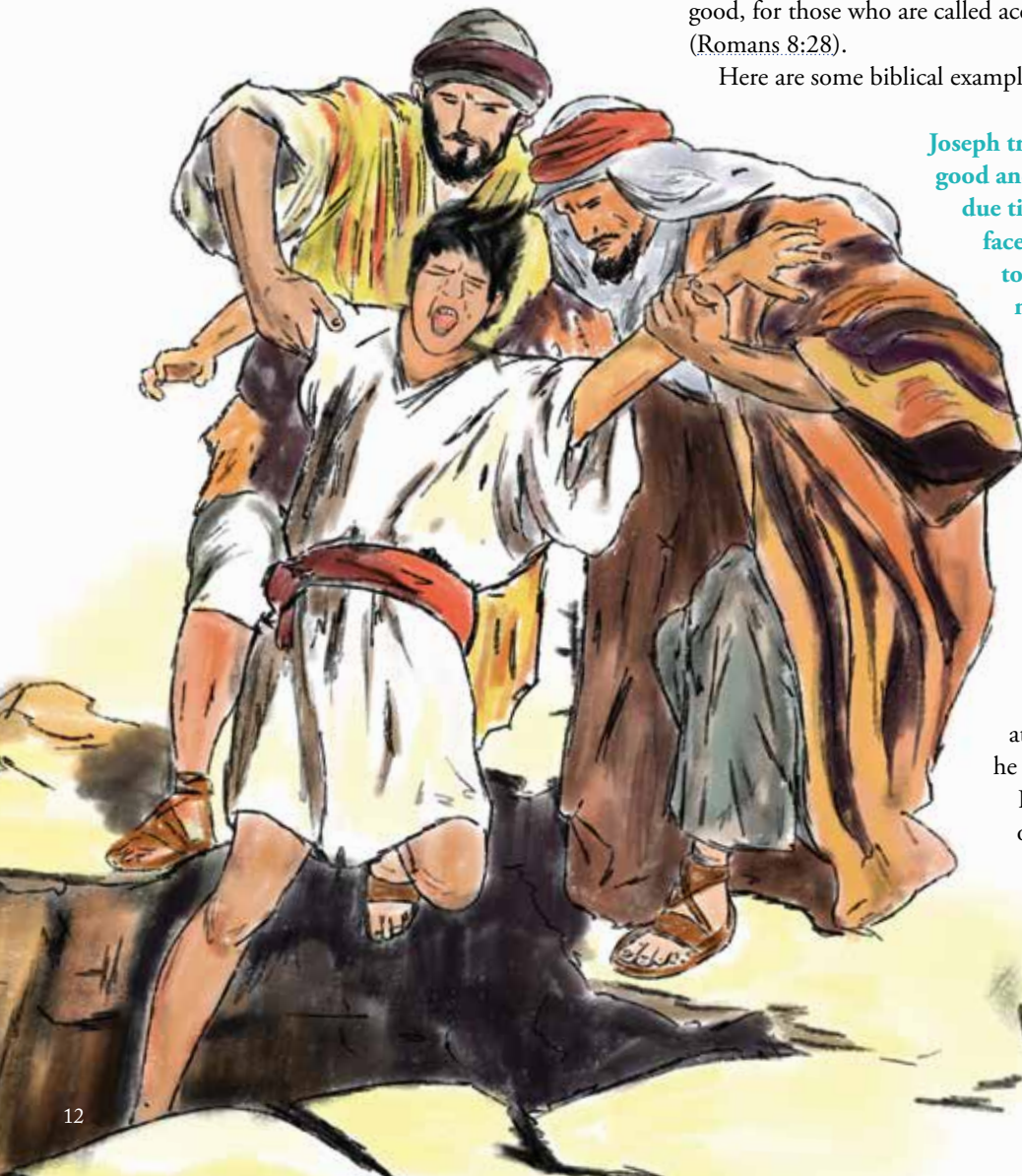
BY RONAN KEANE

GOD KNOWS OUR HUMAN WEAKNESSES, PERSONAL SHORTCOMINGS, AND HIS PLAN FOR OUR LIVES. Nothing is outside of God's control, and with our cooperation, He can bring good out of any situation, even a bad one. In fact, instead of being roadblocks on the road of life, problems often can become stepping stones to good things. "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Here are some biblical examples:

**Joseph trusted in God through good and bad times, and in due time the difficulties he faced put him in a position to help his family and nation (Genesis 37–47).**

Joseph's brothers secretly sold him into foreign slavery, where he wound up being the property of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. Joseph rose to prominence in his new position, but when Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of attempting to molest her, he was thrown into prison. He rose to a position of responsibility in the prison as well, and when he correctly interpreted a dream that Pharaoh's cupbearer had, the cupbearer agreed to



petition Pharaoh for his release. Unfortunately, the man promptly forgot his promise, and Joseph languished in prison for two more years. It seemed like things had only gotten worse for poor Joseph.

But when Pharaoh himself had two troubling dreams that none of his wise men could interpret, the cupbearer remembered Joseph and mentioned him to Pharaoh. When Joseph correctly interpreted the dreams, Pharaoh not only released him from prison but also made him his senior minister, second in command over the entire land of Egypt. As such, Joseph eventually found himself in a position to save Egypt, his family, and much of the region from a seven-year famine, and he was finally reunited with his family.

Joseph declared that God had brought good from his brothers' evil deed, despite numerous troubles in the meantime.

*“You [Joseph’s brothers] intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people” (Genesis 50:20 NLT).*

**Through His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sins and made it possible for us to enjoy eternal life with Him (Matthew 27:11–54).**

The Jewish religious and civil leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy, decided He should be put to death, and took Him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Judea. Pilate could find no reason to condemn Jesus, but because he feared the hostile crowd that had gathered, he let the people decide Jesus' fate. Provoked by their leaders, the crowd demanded, “Crucify him!”

Jesus was mocked, struck, and spat upon. He was whipped, and the sharp bits of iron and bone that were tied to the tips of the whip's thongs mauled and tore His flesh. A crown of thorns was placed on His head. He was stripped of His clothes and since He was too weak after all these tortures to carry His cross to the execution site, a bystander was forced to carry it for Him.

At Golgotha, stakes were driven through His wrists and ankles, fastening Him to the cross where He was

left to die between two common criminals. Jesus hung on the cross for six hours, during which time soldiers gambled for His clothing and onlookers shouted insults at Him. Nearly all His friends and followers abandoned Him. Feeling utterly alone, He cried out to His Father, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” But as He died, He declared, “It is finished!” With His death and resurrection, our sins were atoned for. Salvation had come.

*“Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, [God’s] holy servant, whom [God] anointed. But everything they did was determined beforehand according to [God’s] will” (Acts 4:27–28 NLT).*

**Things seemed to have gone horribly wrong for Paul and Silas at Philippi (Acts 16:16–40).**

When Paul freed a fortune-teller from the demon that possessed her, the woman's irate masters stirred up a mob against the Christian teachers, dragged them before the local authorities, and brought false charges against them. The officials had them stripped, beaten, clamped in irons, and tossed into prison, disregarding their rights as Roman citizens.

That night there was a massive earthquake that shook the prison so violently that the walls crumbled and the doors flew open, freeing the prisoners. But Paul and Silas saved the jailer's life by not fleeing the scene. Then the jailer took them to his own house, set a meal before them, tended to their wounds, and listened to what they had to say. That very night, the jailer and his entire household came to believe in Jesus. The next morning Paul and Silas were released from custody, with the apologies of the court.

*“[The jailer] and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God” (Acts 16:34 NLT).*

RONAN KEANE SERVED AS THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR FOR ACTIVATED FROM 2013–2023. ■

# JUST HOLD MY HAND

BY JOSEPHINE KIND

**TWENTY YEARS AGO, I WAS IN A CAR ACCIDENT.**

Thankfully, it wasn't too serious, but somehow it left quite a scar on me. I became afraid to travel by car, especially on highways. I dreaded the thought of even getting into a vehicle. This was unfortunate, as I was involved in humanitarian trips bringing much-needed help to the refugee camps in Croatia.

My heart was torn. I felt fear and a desire for self-preservation, but also a longing to help people who had it much worse than me. Generally, the latter prevailed, but it felt like torture to enter that van! I would try to find some excuse as to why someone else could go instead of me. Eventually, I would get in the van, and would suffer and cringe all the way to the destination. With my eyes closed I would break out in a cold sweat. It felt like a panic attack that lasted hours.

My family and coworkers would often try to help me, pray for me, humor me, whatever they could do. Sometimes people would try to minimize my fear with comments such as: "But it's nothing, what are you worrying about?" I felt so alone in my pain, as if no one could really understand what I was going through. I also felt humiliated.

This went on for several years. Eventually, however, the panic attacks subsided, surely thanks to many prayers and much encouragement.

One turning point I remember with fondness was when things got so bad that I had to sit in the back seat of the van. I couldn't even look at the road ahead. At one point my 14-year-old son sat beside me and whispered, "Just hold my hand." That's all. I held his hand for the rest of the trip. There were no words, just this simple act.

I was moved to tears. A young boy had found the key to reach me, calm me down, and comfort me. No words, no judgment, just empathy and comfort. It was what I needed and it helped bring about my healing.

I still travel down that highway that used to cause me such pain and fear, and I recall that it was there that I experienced how much love and comfort holding someone's hand can bring. And there is even *greater* help available to us when we reach for our Father's hand. "I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, 'Do not fear; I will help you'" (Isaiah 41:13 NIV).

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# FINDING PEACE IN AN ANXIOUS WORLD

BY IRIS RICHARD

## A LOT IS HAPPENING IN TODAY'S WORLD.

From one crisis to the next—wars, natural disasters, and the rise of AI reshaping the job market—the news often leaves us feeling anxious and unsettled if we allow it to dominate our thoughts.

Here in Africa, stories of carjackings, robberies, and general insecurity are part of daily conversation, which brings worry. Fear easily creeps into our lives, weakening our faith, stealing our peace, and robbing us of joy. In a broken world like ours, no one can completely escape fear—it is real and powerful. But God is greater still.

How do we deal with fear? Trusting God with our worries becomes a daily choice. Recognizing His presence and His power to provide peace, and remembering that He is not the author of fear but the source of strength and comfort is essential. I have had to acknowledge that, in times of difficulty, fear often grips my heart. Once I realized how crippling fear can be, I knew I had to fight back and not let it dictate my actions. Someone once told me that 99% of our worries never come true, yet they drain our energy, fuel anxiety, and rob us of sleep.



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. Under His protection, though the path of duty should lie through fire and water, we may cheerfully and confidently pursue it.  
—John Newton

Left unchecked, anxiety can weaken conviction, hinder change, and cause us to miss God's leading.

Philippians 4:6-7 has been my anchor when negative thoughts press in. It reminds me who is truly in control. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through

Christ Jesus" (NKJV).

Here are some practices to help overcome fear and regain peace:

- Guard your thoughts—don't give fear center stage.
- Turn worries into prayers, inviting God's peace.
- Meditate on God's promises in the Bible.
- Remember past experiences when God helped you overcome.
- Face fear with courage, knowing God's power is greater.

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# FAITH for Times of Uncertainty

Times of uncertainty work to draw you close to Me. During these times, you learn to trust in My power to work in the situation and bring good out of everything you experience (Romans 8:28). So when you are in the midst of life's storms, trust Me no matter how circumstances around you appear. Take refuge in My Word, and it will be a strength and ballast for you. Focus on the essentials of loving Me and loving others and keep these at the center of your thoughts and actions.

When your faith is grounded in Me, there is no need to fear or worry or wonder, for you know that no matter what you face, I will care for you. There is nothing that could happen in the world around you that will separate you from My love (Romans 8:38–39). You can have peace of mind and rest in Me because you have placed your trust in Me (Psalm 56:3).

All things will change throughout your life—except Me and My love for you. I am always with you, and that will never change (Matthew 28:20). Though the mountains are shaken and the hills are removed, My unfailing love will never depart from you (Isaiah 54:10). My perfect love will cast out all fear, worry and anxiety as you bring every concern to Me, and you will be able to claim with confidence that all is well with your soul.