

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 15 • Issue 4



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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION OVERCOMING CRISES

Are you worried about your future and that of your loved ones? Does it feel like your world recently came crashing down around you? Do you feel helpless, depressed, isolated, or lonely?

If so, you're not alone. Unfortunately, these are challenges that people all over the world are

confronted with. And the gospels tell us that it's similar uncertainty and apprehension that Jesus' disciples faced shortly after His execution. (If you've ever wondered what it might have felt like to be a disciple in the days leading up to Easter morning, I think you'll find Peter's insightful article, "Easter—Yesterday, Today, and Forever," on pp. 10–12 of this issue of *Activated* especially interesting.)

In their case, the solution was realizing that the Master was still around and that they could continue depending on Him, just as they had done until then. It took awhile for them to understand it, but seeing the risen Christ put everything else into perspective and confirmed that He was powerful enough to provide all the help they could need.

The same is true for us today. Jesus didn't promise that everything in our lives would go smoothly or that we wouldn't face problems and opposition. But He did promise that He would never leave us,¹ and that He will always love us.² Our path may not be easy,³ but we are not traveling it alone.

If we don't let the trials and tough times overcome us, but instead use them to strengthen our connection with the one who can give us hope, joy, and peace,⁴ we will come through our personal difficulties and crises stronger than ever, just as Jesus' disciples did.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. See Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5.
2. See John 14:21.
3. See John 16:33.
4. See Romans 15:13.

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TINY WORLDS

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

I REMEMBER LEARNING ABOUT THE WORD “MICROCOSM” WHEN I WAS IN FIFTH GRADE.

As homework, our teacher handed each of us a 36-inch string and told us to make a circle on the ground. Then we were to look at everything within the circle, study it, and see what lived in our tiny world.

From then on I was fascinated with little worlds. I spent hours sitting in the grass creating environments for ants and little bugs. I made chairs out of leaves and gowns out of petals. I made tiny roads and houses out of twigs. But mostly I just watched.

I took my string everywhere, and suddenly I saw the world with new eyes. Lawns, pebble-strewn pathways,

rock ledges with carpets of moss—all I had to do was make a circle and I could create a new world. Well, not exactly “create,” but I could modify existing worlds and try to improve them.

Today I hear of tragedies in the news and weep over the headlines. I listen to political debates and wonder if people will ever agree, or if they are so absorbed in their arguments that they’ll never see the things they have in common.

I wish I could change the world. I wish I could make it a cleaner, more beautiful place. I wish I could end war and violence. I wish good will really could fill the earth. I was pondering this as I took my morning walk. Then I remembered the little

girl in fifth grade, and I realized that while I cannot change the entire world, I can make my little world a better place. I cannot change everyone’s heart, but I can influence the person walking beside me.

I can create a microcosm of peace in a world of tempests. I can make my home a haven of calm in the midst of storms. I can take steps to make my surroundings more beautiful. God may not have given me a huge world to change, but I can change my tiny world by finding ways to fill it with God’s love each day.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A TEACHER AND WRITER, AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, USA. ■



SEEING JESUS

BY MARIE STORY

IN A SERIES OF EXPERIMENTS CONDUCTED A FEW YEARS BACK, dogs were given the command “shake,” and they were normally happy to do so whether they got a reward or not. However, researchers found that if the dogs saw that another dog was being rewarded and they weren’t, they began hesitating to obey the command and eventually stopped cooperating altogether. The dogs knew when they were being treated

unfairly, and they didn’t like it.¹ If even dogs can understand when something isn’t fair, how much more will people know when they’re being treated unfairly!

Deuteronomy 25:13–14 warns us, “Do not have two differing weights in your bag—one heavy and one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house—one large, one small.”² Very simply, God is saying, “Treat others fairly and don’t cheat.” However, I think there’s a broader application as well.

How often do we walk around with different weights in our bags? How often do we measure out great amounts of kindness to those we care about yet very little to those we have a more difficult time getting along with or don’t know as well? How often do we show partiality to some and indifference to others?

We offer a smile and a kind word to a friend but a cold shoulder to that annoying classmate.

We’ve got a ready helping hand for a buddy when he needs it, but our schedules are all booked up when the request comes from someone we don’t care about.

We’re happy to loan or even give money to a friend in need, but we try not to see the homeless person on the street corner.

While there are reasons why giving or helping or treating others equally isn’t possible in every situation, very often we’re simply falling prey to partiality. Instead of asking ourselves, “Why should I help this person?” or, “Why should I show kindness to this person?” we should be asking, “Why *wouldn’t* I?”

While it’s logical to assume that Jesus had a closer relationship with His disciples, for instance, than with some

1. “Dogs Understand Unfairness, Get Jealous, Study Finds” (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97944783>)

2. NIV

3. Source: <http://www.wright-house.com/religions/christianity/mother-teresa.html>

4. See Matthew 25:45.



others, when we examine His life, we find that He treated everyone—from government officials to outcast lepers, from religious leaders to simple day laborers—with respect and consideration. Even more impressive, His fairness and kindness extended even to those who treated Him poorly, those who abused and mocked Him, and even those who killed Him!

In my case, I find acting with impartiality difficult, because it means that I have to forget myself completely. It's human nature to be constantly calculating and weighing things out in the recesses of our minds to see what returns we might get on each investment of self. We're naturally more inclined to be partial to those who are likely to return the good will, the favor, or the kindness. If we're unlikely to get anything out of it, it's easy to walk away.

Mother Teresa is someone who didn't make such calculations. Her giving was to the poorest of the poor—people who had nothing to offer her in exchange for all she did. She also interacted with celebrities and heads of state, and one thing I find stunning about her life is that she treated each one with the same respect and love. She didn't reserve better treatment for those whom the world deemed more “important.”

One day she asked a visiting bishop, “Would you like to see Jesus?” Then she took him to see a man lying on a black pallet. The man was sick and gaunt, and his body was crawling with vermin.

Before the stunned bishop, Mother Teresa knelt down and wrapped her arms around the poor man. She held him close and said, “Here He is. Didn't He say you'd find

Him in the least person on earth?”³ Mother Teresa considered everyone to be equally deserving of love, *because she saw Jesus in each one.*

Jesus has told us that whatever we do (or fail to do) for even the “least of these,” we have done (or failed to do) to Him.⁴ It's rare that we are called upon to love in such extreme physical conditions as Mother Teresa faced; more often we are faced with the unkindness of others, or our own prejudices or indifference. No matter what challenges *we* face, though, unconditional love should be our aim, so that when Jesus tells us, “What you did to others, you did to Me,” it's something He's happy about.

MARIE STORY IS A FREELANCE ILLUSTRATOR AND DESIGNER, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S. ■

2100

BY CHRIS HUNT

TWO THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED! Not a date but a number. Bono, the lead singer of rock band U2, known for his anti-poverty campaigns, notes that this is how many mentions of poverty there are in the Scriptures: “That’s a lot of airtime.”¹ In the introduction to the *Poverty and Justice Bible*,² the Bible Society adds, “A concern for the poor and an emphasis on just and fair behaviour flows through the Bible like a river. It underpins the laws of the Old Testament and resounds through the words of the prophets; it forms a core part of all that Jesus said and did and shapes the activities of those who followed him.”

Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.—*Psalms 41:1*

The poor come to all of us in many forms. Let us be sure that we never turn our backs on them, wherever we may find them. For when we turn our backs on the poor, we turn [our backs] on Jesus Christ.—*Mother Teresa (1910–1997)*

1. Bono, *On the Move*, 2006

2. See <http://www.povertyandjusticebible.org/>.

3. See Deuteronomy 24:14–15.

4. See Leviticus 23:22.

5. See Luke 14:12–14.

HEARTS AND MINDS

Many of the world’s current problems of inequality and poverty have their origins in a loss of empathy. Author and psychologist Daniel Goleman observed, “When we focus on ourselves, our world contracts as our problems and preoccupations loom large. But when we focus on others, our world expands. Our own problems drift to the periphery of the mind and so seem smaller, and we increase our capacity for connection—or compassionate action.”

The good-hearted understand what it’s like to be poor; the hardhearted haven’t the faintest idea.—*Proverbs 29:7 MSG*

THE JUSTICE CONNECTION

When the Bible talks about “the poor,” it’s not only referring to those who are destitute but also the downtrodden, oppressed, defenseless, and unrepresented. There is a clear connection in its pages between poverty and injustice, while justice is linked to honesty and fairness. The Bible offers practical examples, such as giving a fair wage to employees³ and sharing part of our income.⁴ Jesus also suggested making friends with those who are less fortunate than ourselves.⁵

Christian hope ... enables us to act humbly and patiently, tackling visible injustices in the world around us without needing to be assured that our skill and our effort will somehow rid the world of injustice altogether. Christian hope, after all, does not need to see what it hopes for (Hebrews 11:1). ... Rather, it simply requires us to trust that even the most outwardly insignificant of faithful actions—the cup of cold water given to the child, the widow's mite offered at the temple, the act of hospitality shown to the stranger, none of which has any overall strategic socio-political significance so far as we can now see—will nevertheless be made to contribute in some significant way to the construction of God's kingdom by the action of God's creative and sovereign grace.—*Craig M. Gay*

Always be generous, open purse and hands, give to your neighbors in trouble.—*Deuteronomy 15:11 MSG*

See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern.—*Micah 6:8 CEV*

The best index to a person's character is how he treats people who can't do him any good.
—*Abigail Van Buren (1918–2013)*

WHAT CAN I DO?

Even with limited resources, there are always ways to make a difference. We can share our time, we can be fair and honest at work, we can speak up for those who have no voice of their own.

Break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts. What I'm interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families. ... If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming

victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins, if you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out, your lives will begin to glow.—*Isaiah 58:6–7,9–10 MSG*

Dear Lord,
Help us to follow your example,
by looking out for those who each day feel that they are marginalised,
who cannot find hope,
who believe that they have little to offer,
who are overcome by the challenges of poverty.
Help us to widen our horizons,
to make space for the stranger,
to watch out for those who feel invisible,
to give time to the outsider,
to talk to the person facing silence,
to restore justice and value.

Give us the courage to undertake this, the determination to join with others in seeing grace in every human face,
and the faith to embrace the opportunity.
—*A prayer for justice from the Church Urban Fund (www.cuf.org.uk)*

CHRIS HUNT LIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND HAS BEEN READING *ACTIVATED* SINCE IT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1999. ■



The Water

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

IT WAS THE HOT, dry season. With no rain in almost a month, crops were dying, cows had stopped giving milk, streams had long dried up, and we, like other farmers in the area, faced bankruptcy if we didn't see some rain soon.

I was in the kitchen making lunch when I saw my six-year-old son, Billy, walking purposefully and carefully toward the woods. I could only see his back. Minutes after he disappeared, he came running back.

I continued making sandwiches, but noticed later that he was once again walking toward the woods with that slow purposeful stride. This activity—walk carefully to the woods, run back to the house—was repeated a few more times. Finally I couldn't take it any longer, so I

crept out of the house and followed him on his journey, being careful to remain out of sight.

I sneaked along as he went into the woods. Branches and thorns slapped his face, but he didn't try to avoid them. Then I saw the most amazing sight. Several large deer loomed in front of him, but Billy walked right up to them. I almost screamed for him to get away—a huge buck with elaborate antlers was dangerously close. But the buck did not threaten him. He didn't even move as Billy knelt down. Then I saw a tiny fawn that was lying on the ground, obviously suffering from dehydration and heat exhaustion, lift its head with great effort to lap up the water my beautiful boy had brought, cupped in his hands.

When the water was gone, Billy jumped up to run back to the house and I hid behind a tree. I followed him back to a spigot that we had shut off the water to. Billy turned it all the way and knelt to catch the few drops that trickled out. I remembered the trouble he had gotten into for playing with the hose the week before and the lecture he had received about the importance of not wasting water, and I understood why he hadn't asked for help.

The leftover water in the pipes was all but gone, and it took a long time for the drops to fill his makeshift "cup." When he finally stood up and turned around, I was in front of him.

His eyes filled with tears. "I'm not wasting," was all he said.

With a lump in my throat, I



handed Billy a cup filled to the brim with water from the kitchen, and together we walked back into the treeline. I let him tend to the fawn, watching proudly as my son worked to save a life.

Tears rolled down my face and hit the ground, where they were joined by other drops ... and more drops ... and more. I looked up and saw the sky was dark and rumbling. Billy and I barely made it back to the house before the clouds burst and a heavy rain shower hit.

Some will probably say that this was just a huge coincidence, that it was bound to rain sometime. And I can't argue with that. All I can say is that the rain that came that day saved our farm, just like the actions of a little boy saved a life. ■

INVESTING IN FOREVER

BY MICHAEL FRENCH

GIVING UP SOME OF THE THINGS WE ENJOY OR DESIRE can seem like a sacrifice, but when we get to heaven and see things in proper perspective, we'll be ashamed that we didn't make those little sacrifices more cheerfully.

Even now I feel bad, remembering little jobs I weaseled out of, arguments I had to have the last word in, times I made sure to get the biggest piece of pie. I'm beginning to see how temporary those things were, and that the things that have really counted were the times I gave up some free time to help someone out, the times I let a mean comment pass without answering back, the times I helped someone save face, and the times I saved that biggest piece of pie for someone else. Giving up these inconsequential things doesn't seem like such a sacrifice anymore, when I consider that I'm investing in forever.

Because I have been given much,
I, too, must give:
Because of Thy great bounty, Lord,
Each day I live
I shall divide my gifts from Thee
With every brother that I see
Who has the need of help from me.

Because I have been sheltered, fed,
By Thy good care,
I cannot see another's lack
And I not share
My glowing fire, my loaf of bread,
My roof's safe shelter overhead,
That he, too, may be comforted.

Because love has been lavished so
Upon me, Lord,
A wealth I know that was not meant
For me to hoard,
I shall give love to those in need,
Shall show that love by word and deed,
Thus shall my thanks be thanks
indeed.

—Grace Noll Crowell (1877–1969) ■

EASTER—YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER!

BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED

WHAT DID JESUS' RESURRECTION MEAN TO HIS ORIGINAL DISCIPLES—all of those who believed in Him during His lifetime on earth? And what does it mean to us today?

By the time Jesus shared the Last Supper with His followers, just hours before He was arrested, tried, and killed, they had come to understand that Jesus was the Messiah (Savior) that the Old Testament prophets had foretold. Their understanding of this, however, was different from ours today.

The Jewish people in first-century Palestine believed and expected that God would send a Messiah, but according to their interpretation of Scripture, this was going to be an earthly king who would free Israel from oppression and domination by other nations, from which it had suffered for centuries. As they saw it, the kingdom to come was going to be an earthly one.

The disciples' understanding of Jesus as the Messiah up until the time of His death was still based on this interpretation. They were expecting that Jesus would be the anointed king of physical Israel. This would have been the motivation behind the request of the brothers James and John to be allowed to sit on Jesus' right and left hand once He came into power.¹ In other words, they wanted prominent positions when He would rule Israel. Even after His resurrection, they still asked Jesus

when He was going to free Israel and restore the physical kingdom.²

Recent events had added to this anticipation. Seeing the large crowd of those who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover feast waving palm branches and hailing Jesus as king³ must have been exhilarating for the disciples! When pilgrims who didn't know who He was or what was going on asked about it, the crowds who were following said, "This is the prophet Jesus."⁴ Throughout His ministry, Jesus had healed multitudes of sick people, had fed thousands miraculously, had spoken God's word with authority, and He had just recently raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. His popularity was at its cusp, and it seems a lot of people had high expectations that He was the awaited Messiah.

However, to all appearances, everything soon went wrong. Within days, Jesus was unfairly accused

1. See Mark 10:35–38,41.

2. See Acts 1:6.

3. See John 12:13.

4. See John 12:12–18; Matthew 21:6–11.

5. See Luke 24:17–21.

6. John 11:48 ESV

7. See Matthew 26:63–66.

8. See John 19:12.

9. Matthew 27:37 ESV



and savagely executed in the most degrading manner. The Messiah was expected to bring the pagans to justice, not to suffer unjustly at their hands.

You can imagine how devastating this shocking turn of events must have been for the disciples! The teacher they followed, their beloved Master, who they were sure was the Messiah, was dead. They were confused and discouraged, as seen in the account of two of them who were walking to the village of Emmaus on the day of the resurrection. The risen Jesus drew near and started walking with them. In the course of telling the story of what had happened, they said: *“We had hoped He was the one who would redeem Israel.”* Those hopes had seemingly been dashed, and they were deeply saddened by His death.⁵

But then, the resurrection changed everything! God raised the

so-called “failed” Messiah from the dead. There had been no Jewish expectation that the Messiah would be raised from the dead, so it wasn’t as if the disciples, or the Jewish people in general, were waiting to see whether Jesus would fulfill some prophecy in that respect.

A short time before this, the chief priests had come to the conclusion that Jesus must die, saying, *“If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”*⁶

During Jesus’ trial, the high priest asked Him if he was the Christ, and upon hearing Jesus’ affirmative answer, which included quotations from the book of Daniel about the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God, the high priest and those with him accused Him of blasphemy, which by their law was punishable by death.⁷

Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect, condemned Jesus to death on the basis of His claim of being a king. It seems Pilate didn’t genuinely consider Jesus a threat, but due to the insistence of the crowd and the Jewish authorities, he chose to have Him crucified under Roman anti-sedition laws.⁸ The plaque that Pilate hung on the cross said, *“This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”*⁹

Jesus was executed because the Jewish leaders rejected Him as the Messiah, and because the Romans said no unauthorized king could live. Yet the extraordinary and unexpected event of His resurrection reversed the verdicts of both the Jewish and Roman courts.

Despite Rome’s law that would-be kings must die, and the Jewish leaders’ belief that Jesus was not the Messiah, God Himself overturned their judgments, validating Jesus as both King and Messiah by raising Him from the dead.



This, in turn, validated all that Jesus had taught about His Father, the kingdom of God, and salvation. The resurrection, which proved that Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah, coupled with the coming of the Holy Spirit, established a new understanding about God. The significance of the resurrection in Jesus' day was that it validated that Jesus was who He said He was.

Before the resurrection, the disciples hadn't fully understood the things Jesus had told them about His death and resurrection. However, after He rose, during the 40 days before He ascended into heaven, He explained the Scriptures to them and they then understood.¹⁰

The realization that through Jesus' incarnation, death, and resurrection, salvation was available to all was the reason the apostles preached about

10. See Acts 1:3; Luke 24:27,32.

the resurrected Christ throughout the book of Acts. It's why the New Testament writers stated that the resurrection proved Jesus was the Son of God.

Fifty days after the resurrection, after Jesus had ascended, the Holy Spirit also entered the world in a new way by dwelling within believers. These events motivated the disciples and the early church to spread the news throughout the world of their day that through Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross, humanity could become reconciled with God.

For the disciples then, and for us now, Easter is the bedrock of Christian faith and hope. The early disciples, while initially faced with crushed hopes due to their expectations, soon came to see that because Jesus arose, what He had done, said, and promised was true. That carries down through history to us today. The risen Christ gave proof of His

divinity and trustworthiness by dying for our sins and then rising from the dead.

Because of what He did, we know that all He said is true: that we have salvation and eternal life, that the Holy Spirit dwells within us, that we have the promise of answered prayer, that He will guide us when we ask Him to. The separation between us and God has been bridged. We are His children, who will live with Him forever.

Because of the resurrection, we have the assurance of salvation, the ability to lead a Christ-infused life today, and the honor to live with God forever.

Let's rejoice in the significance of Easter—yesterday, today, and forever. Happy Easter!

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■



THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

BY KATRIN PRENTICE

ABOUT A YEAR AGO, I sprained my ankle quite badly coming out of the movie theater and needed to go to the hospital for an x-ray and to have it properly bandaged. Thankfully, nothing was broken, but the swelling lasted a few days, and it was some time before I could walk normally.

Later, when I was reflecting on this unexpected mishap, the main thing that struck me from all that had happened was the kindness of strangers. Here is what I mean:

When I first tumbled down the stairs, the pain was excruciating. I was also scared and in shock. Right away, a man appeared—a complete stranger, at the right time and place—and helped my husband, Brian, pick me up and carry me to the car, all the while talking to

me and comforting me in a very soothing voice. When we got to the car, he left, just as suddenly as he had appeared.

Then, as we were discussing the route to the emergency hospital, a young couple, whom we had never met before, approached our vehicle and offered to lead the way. Once we reached the hospital, they stayed until I was done with my x-ray, in case we needed their help for anything, especially considering my husband isn't fluent yet in the local language. Mind you, it was past midnight, and they were strangers to us, but it was comforting to have them around and to talk with them while waiting.

Then another thought started forming in my mind as the timing of it all became rather significant to me. This incident took place on the eve

of the Easter weekend. And thinking on the “kindness of strangers” that we experienced, I couldn't help but see the similarity to what Jesus did for humanity on this day so long ago. Only in His case, He didn't just carry an injured person to a hospital, or even stay on to make sure she was okay—*this* Stranger went all the way, by giving His life for people who didn't even know Him.

And then I recognized Him in the strong arms of the kind man who helped my husband carry me, and in the reassuring smiles of Martin and Anastasia who stayed with us into the night to make sure I was all right. He lives on in each loving deed.

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Debt Free

By MÁRIO SANT'ANA

SÉRGIO WAS GOING THROUGH A SEVERE FINANCIAL CRISIS.

He had taken out a large loan in a foreign currency, but a wild fluctuation in the exchange rate had raised his debt to more than double the value of everything he possessed.

Sérgio's main creditor was his father-in-law, a very wealthy man. One day he told Sérgio, "I know you're going through rough times, and I want to help you. You don't have to continue the monthly payments on the money you borrowed from me. Actually, I'd like to forgive the debt altogether."

That would have given Sérgio enough financial leeway to renegotiate his other debts and keep his company afloat, but Sérgio refused the offer.

"I can't let you do that, sir. It's a matter of principle. I must pay back all I owe you."

The old man tried to reason with his son-in-law.

"What you've been paying monthly doesn't even cover the interest on the money I loaned you. Besides, you are married to my only daughter. When I die—and it won't be long—all I have will be hers and yours. This is not a matter of principle, but stupid pride."

However, Sérgio stubbornly continued in his futile attempts to restore to his father-in-law what he had borrowed from him. In the end, Sérgio went bankrupt and lost his company and almost everything else.

Of course, we should do what we can to pay our debts. But Sérgio was like many people who refuse the pardon God so generously offers, who insist on trying to make restitution themselves. They try, through good works, sacrifice, and self-denial, to repay the unrepayable, when they could start writing a new story for their lives by accepting Jesus' payment for their mistakes.

Jesus offers a full pardon to every man, woman, and child. All we have to do is accept it.

MÁRIO SANT'ANA IS THE EDITOR OF *CONTATO*, THE PORTUGUESE VERSION OF *ACTIVATED*. HE IS ALSO THE FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF PROJETO RESGATE, AN NGO IN BRAZIL. ■

Receive God's free pardon by simply asking and inviting His Son, Jesus, into your life:

"Thank You, dear Jesus, for dying for me and forgiving me. I open my heart to You and accept Your gift."

He paid a debt He did not owe;
I owed a debt I could not pay;
I needed someone to wash my sins away.

Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.

—Ellis J. Crum



QUIET MOMENTS

BY ABI MAY

Easter Praise

PICTURE A TINY, hard seed trapped in darkness. Rain falls, the sun shines, and within that seed, cells are multiplying. Soon there's a green shoot of life. A new plant is growing.

Now picture a baby bird trapped in a hard, unwelcoming shell. A crack appears as the little creature pecks and scratches. Out comes a yellow chick, bright and fluffy.

These are just a few manifestations of new life that we witness, season after season, year after year.

While we expect new life to blossom, we don't expect something that is dead to come back to life. A dead bird will not fly again. Yet the Bible tells us there were many witnesses to Jesus' resurrection:

"Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time."¹

We stand amazed, just like those early witnesses. How could a lifeless, broken body, lying in the cold and dark of the tomb, spring to life? The miracle of Christ's resurrection, flouting the natural order, is truly beyond our human comprehension.

Yet the miracle doesn't end there. As C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) wrote, "Jesus has forced open a door that had been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because he has done so."

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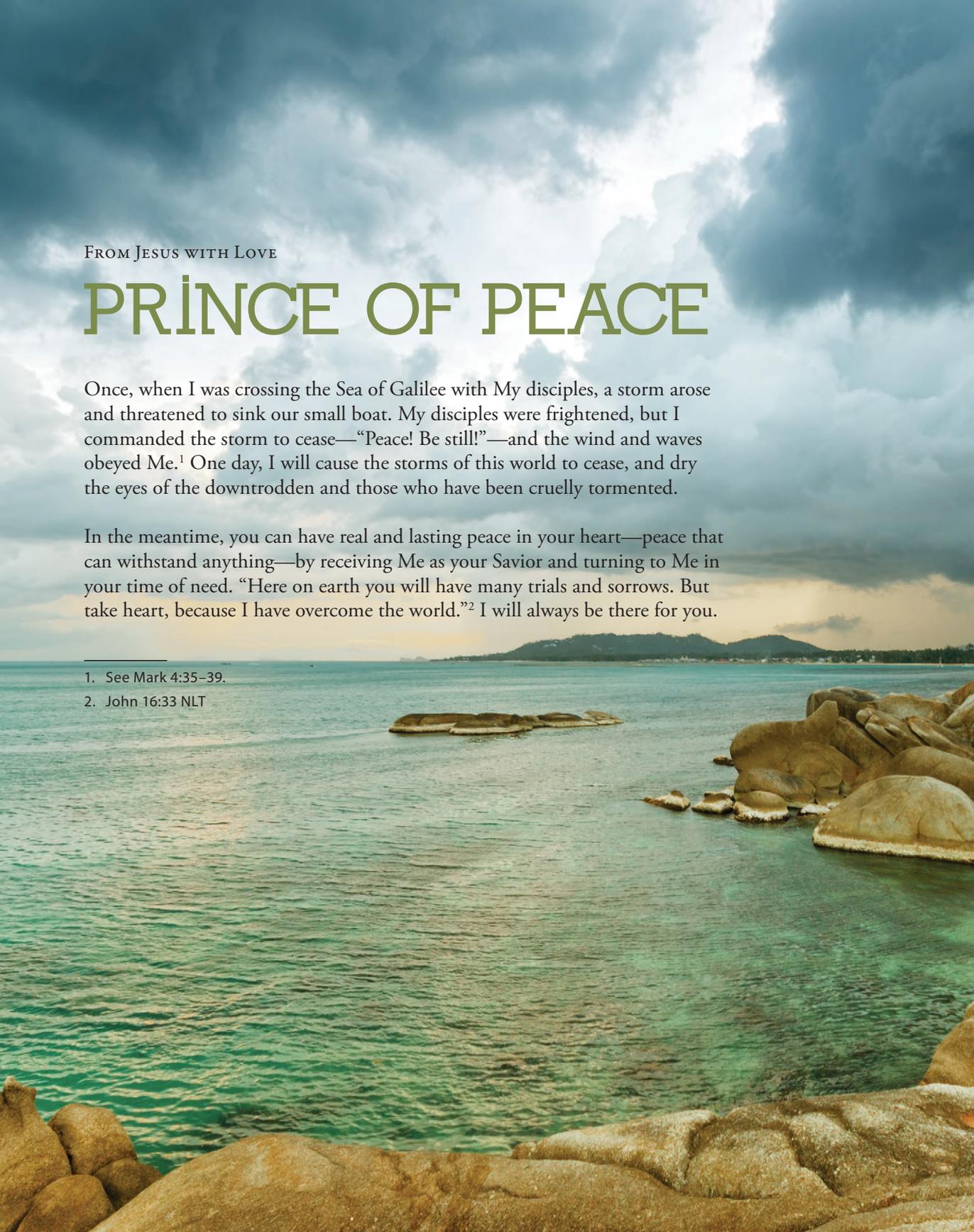
1. 1 Corinthians 15:3–6 NLT

What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him! ... Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now!—*1 Peter 1:3–4 MSG*

I am the living one! I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever.—*Jesus, Revelation 1:18 GNT*

The best news the world ever had came from a graveyard.—*Author unknown*

Now the iron bars are broken,
Christ from death to life is born,
Glorious life, and life immortal
On this holy Easter morn:
Christ has triumphed, and we
conquer
By His mighty enterprise,
We with Him to life eternal
By His resurrection rise.
—*Christopher Wordsworth*
(1807–1885) ■



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

PRINCE OF PEACE

Once, when I was crossing the Sea of Galilee with My disciples, a storm arose and threatened to sink our small boat. My disciples were frightened, but I commanded the storm to cease—“Peace! Be still!”—and the wind and waves obeyed Me.¹ One day, I will cause the storms of this world to cease, and dry the eyes of the downtrodden and those who have been cruelly tormented.

In the meantime, you can have real and lasting peace in your heart—peace that can withstand anything—by receiving Me as your Savior and turning to Me in your time of need. “Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”² I will always be there for you.

1. See Mark 4:35–39.

2. John 16:33 NLT