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Vol 15 • Issue 8

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION HELP IN TROUBLED TIMES

One of the challenging aspects of Christian life is the fact that becoming a follower of Jesus does not make us immune to life's trials and tribulations. We know that God is love,¹ yet even those who have faith in Him still suffer disease, injury, financial hardships, worry, fear, and death just like everyone else. Jesus didn't sugarcoat the truth, but He did offer hope when He said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."²

Even though God doesn't always solve our issues for us or fix our frustrations, they do matter to Him. He knows us so intimately that He is aware of how many hairs we have!³ He understands what we're going through even when we can't put it into words,⁴ and He has compassion on us when we're hurting.⁵ God doesn't take away our troubles, but we can still find strength and hope knowing that He is with us and will help us. "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."⁶

Of course, it's great to know that God is on our side and working to bring about good through anything that happens to us, but when things are going wrong, people also crave the support and help of others. There is a lot of sadness and suffering around us, and we won't be able to solve all the problems we encounter; nevertheless, each of us can do our part to make things better for someone who is going through tough times and lighten their load. As St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) noted, "Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours."

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. See 1 John 4:8.
2. John 16:33 NIV
3. See Luke 12:7.
4. See Romans 8:26.
5. See Psalm 147:3.
6. James 1:12 ESV

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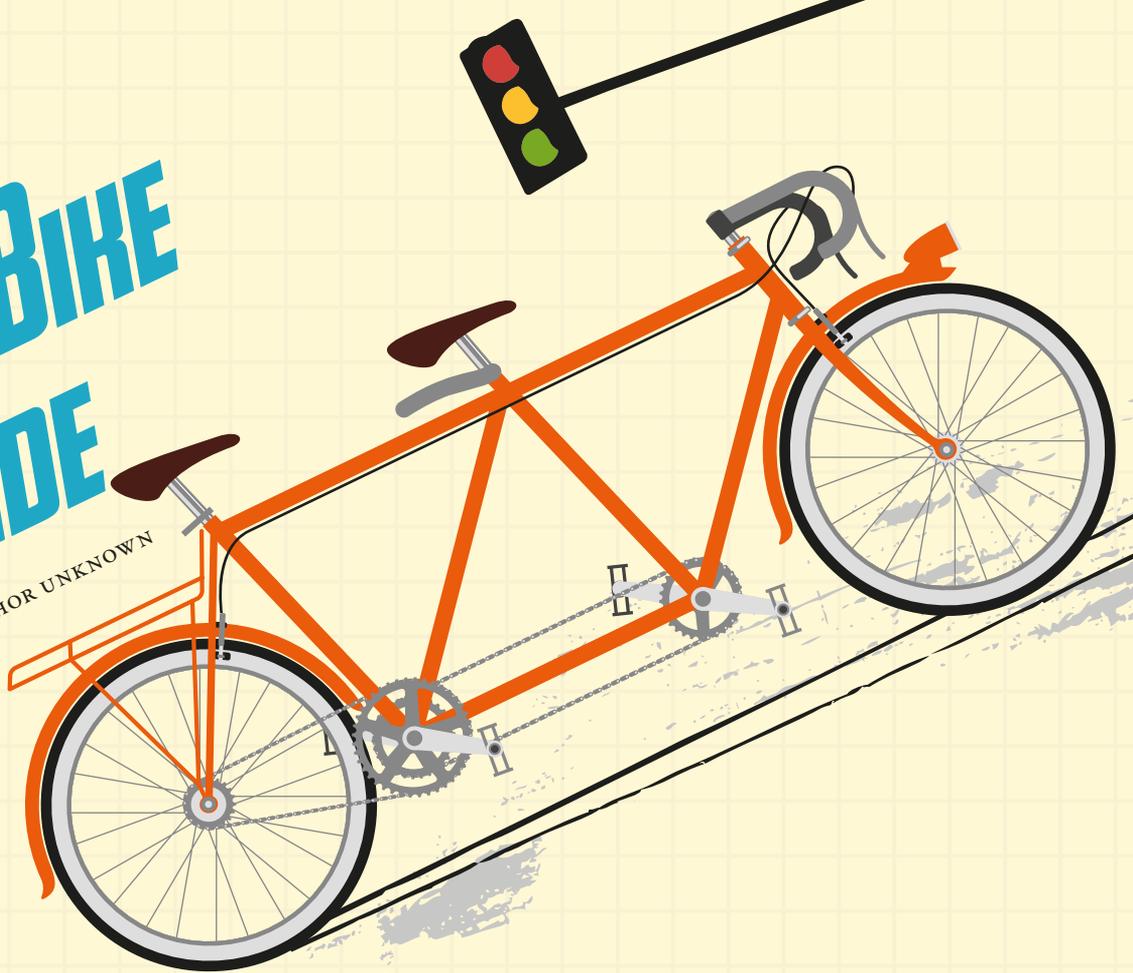
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THE BIKE RIDE

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



WHEN I MET JESUS, life became like a bike ride. It was a tandem bike; I rode in the front and steered, and Jesus was in the rear seat, helping to pedal.

I don't remember just when it happened, but Jesus suggested we change places. Life hasn't been the same since. Jesus makes the ride so exciting!

When I had control, I knew the way. It was safe and predictable but rather boring—always the shortest distance between two points. But when Jesus got in the driver's seat, He knew delightful "long cuts" up mountain roads and down again at breakneck speeds. It was all I could do to hold on!

I didn't want to question His judgment, but once I couldn't help

myself. "Don't You think we should slow down just a little? I'm scared." He turned and smiled and touched my hand and said, "It's okay. Pedal."

Sometimes I got worried and anxious and asked, "Where are You taking me?"

"It's a surprise," He would say with a laugh. Gradually, I learned to trust. I forgot my boring life and entered the adventure.

He took me to meet people with gifts that I needed—gifts of love, healing, acceptance, joy. They gave me gifts to take on my journey—*our* journey, my Lord's and mine—and we were off again. He would say, "Give the gifts away." So I would. But the strangest thing happened. I found that the more I gave away, the

more I had for myself and to give to other people we met along the way. And still our load was light.

At first I didn't trust Jesus to be in control of my life. I thought He would wreck it. But He knows the bike's capabilities and limits and all sorts of tricks. He knows how to take sharp corners at high speeds, make the bike "jump" to clear rocks in our way, and He can even make it fly when the road disappears beneath us.

I'm learning not to worry or want to get back in control but just to relax and enjoy the view, the cool breeze on my face, and the delightful company of my constant companion.

I still get tired sometimes because it is a long, hard ride, but Jesus just smiles and says, "Pedal." ■



ENDURING HARDSHIP

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

AS CHRISTIANS, we aren't exempted from the difficulties of this life, even if some think we should be. If we have the expectation that our faith should shield us from problems, struggles, and suffering, this can lead to somewhat of a martyr complex when things go wrong, until we start to wonder, *How could anyone possibly have it more difficult than I do?*

If you feel like that, it might help to look around at what others, believers and nonbelievers alike, have to endure. You may find some who

1. 2 Timothy 2:3
2. James 1:12 NLT
3. Hebrews 10:36 NLT
4. Romans 5:3-4

seem better off physically than you at the moment, but a lot of people are also so much worse off in ways that are very important, such as lacking the bare necessities of life.

Even though Christians face similar physical struggles to others and have lots of problems, at least we can usually understand from God's Word that there's a good reason for them, a divine purpose at work behind it all. Even when we can't see any immediate good coming from our trials, they have the potential to teach us lessons and make us stronger. That alone makes them easier to bear.

Some people struggle for years with afflictions, or under a difficult employer, or at a job they

hate. Others, both Christian and non-Christian, are ridiculed and criticized and rejected by others, or even openly persecuted for what they stand for. As Christians, we can often understand the ways that even our hardships serve to help us, but nonbelievers don't have the comfort of a Savior who can help them make sense of what they suffer through. We may have a lot of difficulties, but our lives would probably seem comparatively easy to so many who face life without the sense of purpose that our faith provides.

We learn and grow from our troubles. Our struggles teach us how to have more patience, how to hold on, how to cling to God's promises and "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ!"¹—not just for one day or one week or one month, but perhaps for many months or years at a time.

The Bible tells us, "God blesses those who patiently endure testing."² "Patient endurance is what you need

God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

—1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV

now [when troubles are surrounding you], so that you can continue to do God's will."³

Paul went so far as to tell us to "glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."⁴

We may sometimes have extended periods when we're not able to go on our feelings at all because things are going badly and we're feeling pretty rotten, but that's when we have to cling to the facts of God's Word, that He still loves and still cares, no matter what we feel like. Even when absolutely everything seems to have turned against us or be going wrong, we can trust that good will triumph in the end, and Jesus will be victorious.

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

IF WE COULD SEE BEYOND TODAY

If we could see beyond today
As God can see;
If all the clouds should roll away,
The shadows flee;
O'er present griefs we would not fret.
Each sorrow we would soon forget,
For many joys are waiting yet
For you and me.

If we could know beyond today
As God doth know,
Why dearest treasures pass away
And tears must flow;
We'd know that darkness leads to light,
And dreary days will soon grow bright.
Some day life's wrongs will be made right.
Faith tells us so.

If we could see, if we could know,
We often say,
But God, in love, a veil doth throw
Across our way.
We cannot see what lies before
And so we cling to Him the more,
He leads us till this life is o'er.
Trust and obey.
—Norman J. Clayton (1903–1992)

HE GIVETH MORE GRACE

He giveth more grace as our
burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength as our
labors increase;
To added afflictions, He addeth His
mercy,
To multiplied trials, His multiplied
peace.

When we have exhausted our store
of endurance,
When our strength has failed, ere
the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our
hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only
begun.

Fear not that thy need shall exceed
His provision,
Our God ever yearns His resources
to share;
Lean hard on the arm everlasting,
availing;
The Father, both thee and thy load,
will upbear.

His love has no limits, His grace has
no measure,
His power has no boundary known
unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth
again.
—Annie Johnson Flint (1866–1932) ■



REBUILDING



A



LIFE



BY MAG RAYNE

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH NADIA WAS SEVEN YEARS AGO, when a friend brought her to our home at 10 o'clock one night. Her skin was sallow; her eyes sunken and empty; her hair, obviously cared for meticulously at one time, was now dry and stringy; and her clothes, facial expressions, and body language told us, even before she said a word, that she had lost hope.

I learned that only a year earlier, Nadia had been the envy of many women in her neighborhood: beautiful, of good social standing, a wife

of 30 years and the “perfect” mother of two daughters, living in a large attractive house, and hosting parties galore for her friends. But this was all far behind as Nadia sat in our living room holding tightly to her friend’s hand. Life had taken a U-turn; her husband had divorced her, and their joint business was facing bankruptcy. The mortgage payments on the family house hadn’t been paid for several months, and it was about to be repossessed.

Nadia’s husband even tried to have her declared mentally ill, so that he would have sole control of the property and business. The breakdown of her marriage caused her to

feel like her world was falling apart, and even her physical health took a nosedive, culminating in a recent heart attack. To make matters worse, most of her friends were suddenly busy and hard to reach.

Nadia had only gained a casual faith from her traditional upbringing, leaving her with the vague idea of a God “somewhere far away,” as she put it. However, she now realized that she wouldn’t be able to overcome the current crises without making Him a much more real part of her life. Our first prayer together lifted her spirits a little, and by the end of our conversation, she’d committed to attending regular Bible studies.

1. See Romans 8:28.

2. Psalm 42:5–6 NLT

Difficult times have helped me to understand better than before how infinitely rich and beautiful life is in every way, and that so many things that one goes worrying about are of no importance whatsoever.—*Karen von Blixen-Finecke (1885–1962)*

In life, you will always be faced with a series of God-ordained opportunities brilliantly disguised as problems and challenges.—*Charles Udall*

When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change; at such a moment, there is no point in pretending that nothing has happened or in saying that we are not yet ready. The challenge will not wait. Life does not look back.—*Paulo Coelho (b. 1947)*

Being challenged in life is inevitable, being defeated is optional.—*Roger Crawford (b. 1960)*

The greater the obstacle, the more glory in overcoming it.—*Molière (1622–1673)*

“Clown therapy gave me beautiful inner strength, a special feeling of love I'd never felt before—the fulfillment of giving of myself. It was the unique feeling of bringing happiness to someone sad and needy.—*Nadia*”

In the months to come, she gained a foundation in prayer and faith, to where she could find answers on her own to her doubts, sad thoughts, and desperate longings. Progress was slow, and some days were better than others. There were a couple of years of ups and downs, but Nadia never lost hope and kept forging steadily ahead toward inner healing and a better future.

Over time, Nadia regained the will to live, to work, to take care of her family, to be a good example to her daughters. While others in her circle thought that what had happened to her was a tragedy, she now considered it another example of how God can

turn all things to good in our lives,¹ knowing that without that deep crisis of the soul and destruction of her former world, she would not have come to truly understand God's love for her or found the real meaning of her life. She reorganized her priorities in a new way: Now Jesus came first.

Nadia's financial and housing problems are still unresolved. Seven years later, the legal battle to keep her home is still ongoing, and she survives on a small pension, complemented by occasional part-time work. Though her own finances are tight, she often volunteers in our association's projects and even takes part in our clown therapy program.

Most importantly, Nadia is herself better equipped to face whatever troubles life may deliver. She's lost her fear of loss, because she knows that the One who took her through the greatest crisis of her life will never abandon her. Like a bird nested firmly in God's hands, she looks down on the problems of life, and they don't seem as earthshaking as they once did. Like King David, she says with a smile, “Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!”²

MAG RAYNE RUNS A VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION IN CROATIA. ■

A Different Kind of Security

BY LILY NEVE



THEY'RE NOT COMING BACK!

I remember how I felt when it finally hit home. Alone. Afraid. Unsure. For years I had been working on a social service project in an impoverished South Asian nation. I was busy and made a contribution to the work, yet it didn't depend upon me; I was a cog in the overall machine, and that suited me just fine. I felt secure benefiting from others' years of experience, not to mention their financial backing. There wasn't much for me to worry about.

Then, over the course of one summer, everything changed. Suddenly my coworkers' plans were radically altered due to health problems and their children's educational future. They moved away, and the projects were left in my hands. That is, *if* I could keep them going.

I knew I would have to take a hard look at the situation and reflect on the future of the work we had been doing. The next few months were secure—they had left resources enough to make sure of that. But beyond? I had no idea.

Around the same time, I fell sicker than I had ever been. For over a month, I was mostly bedridden, barely able to eat. In some strange way, my state of complete incapacity because of the illness prevented me from succumbing to hopeless worry, as I would normally have done. I was simply too sick to give in to fear. It was all I could do to make it through each day and night; I had no strength left over for worrying. And while I was incapable, God remained strong and He worked on my behalf.

As time passed, there were no major changes or interventions, but there was always enough. Donors to help with the social projects. A job when I needed it. When one door closed, another opened. I had always valued security, but in this time of change and newfound independence, I discovered a different kind of security and happiness. I finally came to a firm decision: For as long as I could—as long as God helped me—I would keep the work here going.

Life is challenging and unpredictable, but I am happier than I've ever been. I believe that God can work things out even when there's nothing we can do to help Him. How could I not believe this, when that's what He did for me?

LILY NEVE IS A MEMBER OF TFI IN SOUTH ASIA. ■

THE LONE GOOSE



BY JANET BARNES

THE LAKE NEXT TO MY HOME IS A QUIET, contemplative setting that's perfect for a pensive moment. One day when I'd been going through a particularly difficult time, I sat reading on the pier, feeling very alone and in need of answers—or at least a sign of God's presence, some reassurance of His hand on my life. But nothing seemed to come, so I eventually began making my way back to the house, somewhat disappointed.

Suddenly I heard a loud honk. A lone goose flew low and landed gracefully in the middle of the lake.

It's odd that this one is alone, I thought. Geese usually travel in flocks as they make their way to their northern homes in the spring. I paused to watch the solitary goose paddle. He quickly seemed to become more and more unsettled and began paddling faster, in

ever-smaller circles. His honking grew more distressed. I watched his continued honking and nervous paddling for a few minutes, then I started back toward the house, still deep in thought.

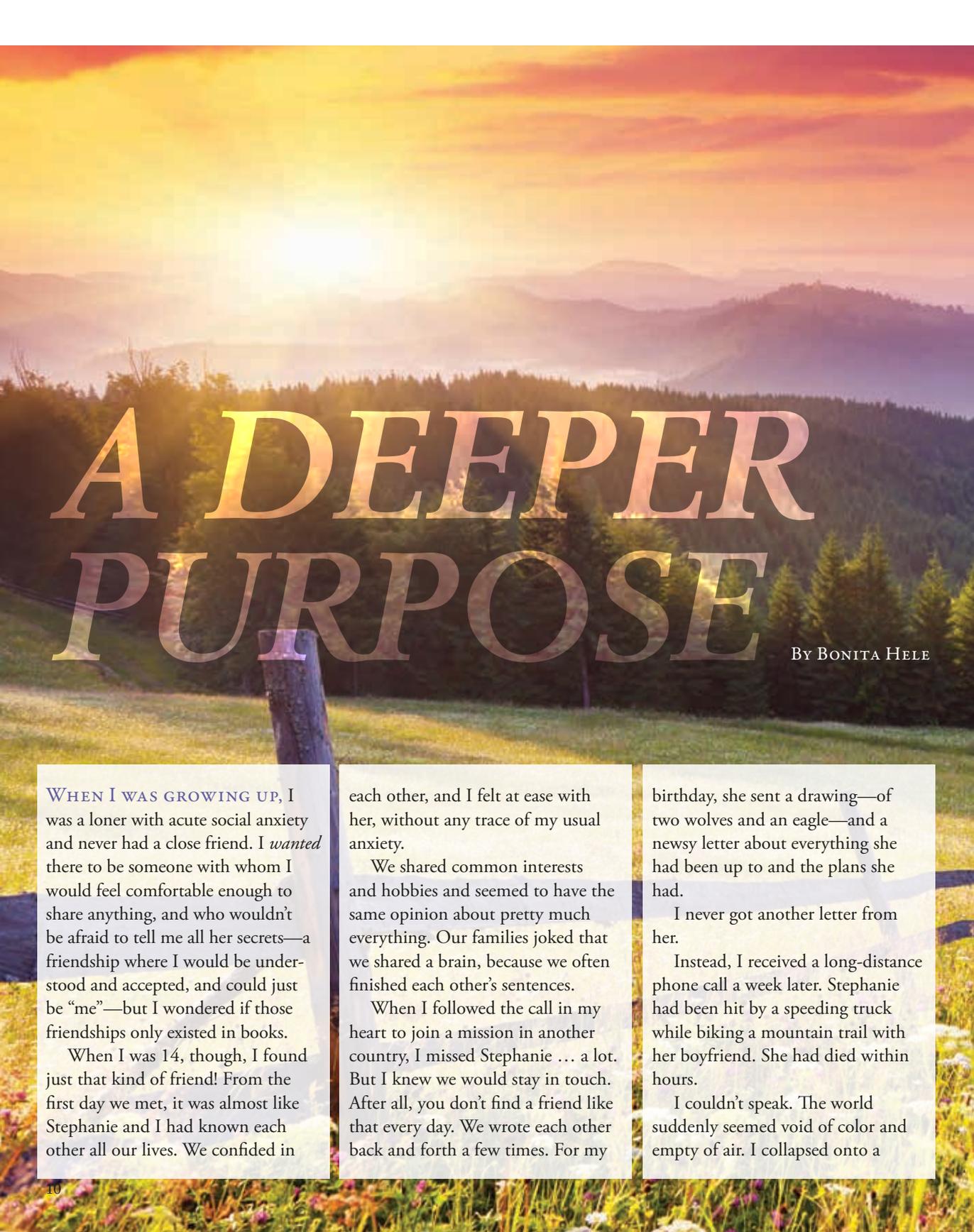
On my way, I crossed the bridge over the stream that runs into the lake, and to my surprise, I saw that hidden behind the underbrush were five other geese. Apparently the lone fellow in the lake was a part of this small flock, but had tried to go it alone for a while. I wondered what these others would do.

Suddenly they all turned in the direction of their friend and began honking as loud as they could, leaning their heads far forward. With that call of reassurance, they all flew to aid and comfort their wandering comrade. They landed and began to swim beside the formerly lone goose, honking in softer tones.

And suddenly I realized what this scene could teach me: I couldn't see God's comfort or care that day, just as the lone goose couldn't see the others around the bend, but they were there nonetheless, ready and willing to rescue him when he called for help.

Why am I surprised when God doesn't rescue me immediately? Maybe He's waiting for me to learn a lesson or to see the error of my ways. But He is always there, always present whether I sense His presence or not. And when I call out to Him, His presence will never fail to be with me.

JANET BARNES HAS BEEN A VOLUNTEER EDUCATOR AND MISSION WORKER FOR THE PAST 25 YEARS AND CURRENTLY LIVES IN THE U.S., WHERE SHE REGULARLY PARTICIPATES IN CHARITY AND SOCIAL WORK. ■



A DEEPER PURPOSE

BY BONITA HELE

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, I was a loner with acute social anxiety and never had a close friend. I *wanted* there to be someone with whom I would feel comfortable enough to share anything, and who wouldn't be afraid to tell me all her secrets—a friendship where I would be understood and accepted, and could just be “me”—but I wondered if those friendships only existed in books.

When I was 14, though, I found just that kind of friend! From the first day we met, it was almost like Stephanie and I had known each other all our lives. We confided in

each other, and I felt at ease with her, without any trace of my usual anxiety.

We shared common interests and hobbies and seemed to have the same opinion about pretty much everything. Our families joked that we shared a brain, because we often finished each other's sentences.

When I followed the call in my heart to join a mission in another country, I missed Stephanie ... a lot. But I knew we would stay in touch. After all, you don't find a friend like that every day. We wrote each other back and forth a few times. For my

birthday, she sent a drawing—of two wolves and an eagle—and a newsy letter about everything she had been up to and the plans she had.

I never got another letter from her.

Instead, I received a long-distance phone call a week later. Stephanie had been hit by a speeding truck while biking a mountain trail with her boyfriend. She had died within hours.

I couldn't speak. The world suddenly seemed void of color and empty of air. I collapsed onto a



ANGEL ESCORT

“The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.”

—Luke 16:22

Nothing is said about the beggar’s funeral. Of course, if he had one, it was only a pauper’s funeral. Earth had no honor for the beggar, no splendid coffin, no flowers. But the angels came, and were his bearers and escort to glory!

Notice also that nothing is said about what became of his body, for the man himself was no longer in that old, worn-out, battered frame. He was soon far away in the realm of eternal glory. When his body was dropped into the ground, the beggar, the real man, was carried away to heaven! We see him there, no longer a beggar, but enjoying eternal blessedness.

There is still another thought here. We dread death. It seems like the end of existence. But really, to the Christian, death is only a fleeting incident in his life. It is just a moment’s passage through an experience which we never can understand; and then, eternal glory.

One minute, this poor beggar lies at the rich man’s gate; despised, suffering, and starving. The next moment, a strange sensation passes over him, and all is confusion. And then he awakes, flying through the air with an angel escort. And in a moment, he is inside the celestial city, to dwell forever with the Lord. There is no break in his life.

—James Rupert Miller (1840–1912), adapted ■

chair and into tears. *How could she be dead? Why Stephanie?* She hadn’t even reached adulthood. And she’d had so many dreams. She’d wanted to make the world a better place, and I just knew she was going to do something great. She’d wanted to get married and have children. She’d been my friend, my best friend. Amidst the sobs that came from a place so deep it felt like my heart was being torn apart, I asked God “Why?”

Suddenly, I felt something ... more than a thought, more than a feeling. Where a moment before I

had been filled with deep sorrow and despair, now I was overcome by a wondrous feeling of lightness and joy.

A phrase came to mind: *If you only knew what it’s like here!* I felt Stephanie’s presence—only for an instant, but it was enough. Somehow, I knew she was letting me know that she was okay. I knew she was in a better place, a place of wonder and light and life beyond anything I could imagine. And I knew that I would see her again.

It left me with the indelible belief that every life has a deeper purpose

than I can understand. There was a beautiful purpose for Stephanie’s life; and yes, even for her death. Even if I can’t understand it, I can believe that one day I will.

That day, every tear that tries to dim our eyes will be wiped away. That day, we will finally meet Jesus face to face. That day, we will be reunited with those we loved and lost for a time. That day will last for eternity.

BONITA HELE IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND EDITOR IN THE U.S. AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

I [Jesus] am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.—*John 11:25–26*

SILENCE

BY PHILLIP LYNCH

I HAVE BEEN RUBBING SHOULDERS WITH DEATH LATELY. My father-in-law passed away a month shy of his 99th birthday. My wife and I had been staying with him and my brother-in-law for the last five months. He was a grand old man who wanted to live to 100, but his body just didn't last the distance.

Then today I heard that one of my cousins had also passed away. We weren't especially close, but it still caused me to reflect on the fact that someone I had known well for a time was no longer around. It is an odd

and unfamiliar feeling. A couple of voices have been lost to the world, distinctive voices that don't have a match anywhere. Life is different now. The world—or at least my world—is not the same.

What happens to those who pass on isn't talked about a lot in the Bible. Jesus went to a place called Paradise after His death on the cross.¹ We also know that He went to visit the spirits in prison,² but that doesn't necessarily mean Paradise and that "prison" are the same place. Paul said he knew of a man—many think he was alluding to himself—who visited Paradise, which he also called the third heaven, in an event so profound that he wasn't sure if he physically visited it or it was only a spiritual experience.³ In one of His parables, Jesus told of a poor man,

Lazarus, who died and was carried to Abraham's side.⁴

Jesus promised that those who believe in Him have eternal life, and knowing the nature of our God, and how love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and gentleness are the essence of His Spirit, I think we can be sure that life after death in His presence will be a wonderful experience.⁵

Physical life has a beginning and an end. We naturally rejoice at birth and grieve at death. For now there is a silence in my soul, but I know that is not the end of the story.

PHILLIP LYNCH IS A NOVELIST AND COMMENTATOR ON SPIRITUAL AND ESCHATOLOGICAL ISSUES, LIVING IN ATLANTIC CANADA. ■

1. See Luke 23:43.
2. See 1 Peter 3:19.
3. See 2 Corinthians 12:2–4.
4. See Luke 16:20–22.
5. See Galatians 5:22–23.



LIZ

BY REUBEN RUCHEVSKY

LIZ WAS MOM'S BEST FRIEND. I knew her from the tennis club where I worked after school and on weekends. She used to take time to chat as peers, which earned her high marks with me.

The late '60s saw me morph from a conservative, shy, middle-class Jewish kid into a searching and very intense "dropped out" hippie. On one of my quests to find meaning in life, I visited all those I felt had influenced me for good. Of course, this included Liz. When I knocked on their door unannounced, she and her husband, "Big John," received this wild-eyed, ragged acquaintance without prejudice, and listened as I presented them with all my far-out theories and ideas. If they rolled their eyes or winked at each other, I didn't notice.

Thankfully, I eventually found what I was searching for. A close friend told me he had received Jesus

as his Savior, and, after reading the Gospel of Matthew, I did likewise, eventually deciding to join a mission to the youth in New Zealand and Australia. As I made preparations, I heard that Liz was suffering from the latter stages of Parkinson's disease and was not expected to live much longer. My mother and I arranged to visit.

Lying on her chaise longue, with her husband and mother attending, a very frail Liz asked me about what had transpired in my life since our last meeting. She was amazed that someone could change so much in such a short time—from "nice" young man to bizarre hippie to Christian volunteer on his way overseas.

Before leaving, I asked Liz if she would like to say a short prayer with me, and after what seemed like a long period of silence, she agreed. Kneeling beside her, I took her hand

and we closed our eyes. First, I felt my mother's hand join ours, then Liz's mom's, and finally Big John's. All of them repeated the simple salvation prayer inviting Jesus into their hearts.

Liz lived for several more months, during which time she avidly read her Bible and was full of joy and faith. She was an accomplished artist, and continued painting right up to the end. The proceeds of some of her final work helped establish volunteer outreaches that continue to this day, over 38 years later!

Heaven is a place populated by those who accept Jesus' invitation. I'm looking forward to seeing you there, Liz!

REUBEN RUCHEVSKY CURRENTLY RESIDES IN ASIA, WHERE HE CONTINUES TO SHARE GOD'S HEAVENLY INVITATIONS. ■



WHAT COMES NEXT

To die is landing on some silent
shore
Where billows never break, nor
tempests roar;
Ere well we feel the friendly stroke,
'tis o'er.
—*Sir Samuel Garth (1661–1719)*

I shall hear in heaven.—*Attributed
last words of Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)*

Not all the subtleties of metaphysics
can make me doubt a moment of
the immortality of the soul, and of
a beneficent providence. I feel it, I
believe it, I desire it, I hope it, and
will defend it to my last breath.
—*Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)*

Earth is the land of the dying; we
must extend our prospect into
heaven, which is the land of the
living.—*Bishop George Horne
(1730–1792)*

It is impossible that anything so
natural, so necessary and so uni-
versal as death, should ever have
been designed by Providence as an
evil to mankind.—*Jonathan Swift
(1667–1745)*

Let us consider, beloved, how the
Lord continually shows us that there
shall be a future resurrection, of
which He has made our Lord Jesus
Christ the first fruits. Let us con-
template the resurrection that takes
place every season before our eyes.
Day and night declare a resurrection
to us. The night lies down, and the
day arises; again the day departs, and
the night comes on. Let us behold
the fruits of the earth. The seed is
sown. It fell into the earth dry and
naked; in time it dissolves; and from
the dissolution the power of the Lord
raises it again; and of one single seed
many arise and bring forth fruit.
—*Saint Clement of Rome (d. 99)*

We picture death as coming to destroy;
let us rather picture Christ as coming
to save. We think of death as ending;
let us rather think of life as beginning,
and that more abundantly. We think
of losing; let us think of gaining.
We think of parting; let us think of
meeting. We think of going away; let
us think of arriving. And as the voice
of death whispers, “You must go from
earth,” let us hear the voice of Christ
saying, “You are but coming to Me!”
—*Norman Macleod (1812–1872)*

**Whatsoever that be within us that
feels, thinks, desires, and animates
is something celestial, divine, and,
consequently, imperishable.**
—*Aristotle (384–322 BC)*

If God hath made this world so fair,
where sin and death abound, how
beautiful, beyond compare, will para-
dise be found!—*James Montgomery
(1771–1854)* ■

Being There

QUIET MOMENTS

BY ABI MAY



HE COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR TROUBLES SO THAT WE CAN COMFORT OTHERS. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.—*2 Corinthians 1:4 NLT*

If loved ones emigrate across the globe, cutting off all contact, we expect to miss them, to yearn for news of their well-being, to ache with the loss. How much more when that person emigrates out of this world completely! Even for those with faith in an afterlife, this world has changed irrevocably, and that is difficult to bear.

If you have a friend or colleague who has suffered the loss of a loved one, perhaps he or she has temporarily retreated from daily life to

take time to remember, to collect photographs, write memoirs, or set up some sort of memorial. Tears are no doubt part of the journey as well. It's okay to cry. Even Jesus wept.¹ All these have their place in the natural and healthy grieving process.

By the rivers ... there we sat down. Yes, we wept, when we remembered ... On the willows in its midst, we hung up our harps.
—*Psalm 137:1–2 WEB*

There is a time for mourning.² Let us hope that although their “harps”—the songs of faith and joy—are temporarily silent, they are not altogether discarded. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”³

So when does the mourner find the strength to face life once more, to reclaim the harp, to sing the song of faith and joy? There is no timetable. The closer the relationship, the greater the agony of loss. A sudden

death can be particularly difficult to bear. Parental loss—burying your child—is widely acknowledged as one of the most traumatic of bereavements. It takes time to mourn a loss of this magnitude.

May God help us be gentle with those who are immersed in grief and show our solidarity with a word of comfort, a phone call, a homecooked meal. We can support others through their loss by expressing our good memories of their loved one, by acknowledging the anniversaries, birthdays, and special days that mean so much to them, by taking time to listen. Let's be there for our friends, just as God is always here for us.⁴

ABI MAY IS THE AUTHOR OF *A VALLEY JOURNAL*, A BOOK THAT SUPPORTS THOSE WALKING THE DIFFICULT PATH OF GRIEF, AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE FROM WWW.AMAZON.COM. ■

1. See John 11:35.

2. See Ecclesiastes 3:4.

3. Psalm 30:5

4. See Hebrews 13:5.

A sunlit forest path with large trees and a stone path leading into the distance. The scene is filled with vibrant green foliage and dappled sunlight filtering through the canopy, creating a peaceful and inviting atmosphere. The path is made of flat stones and leads from the foreground into the heart of the woods.

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

A Special Place

When I was on earth, I told My disciples that I was going to prepare a place for us to be together forever.¹ This place is for all of you who have invited Me into your hearts and lives, and I want it to be the most wonderful place there has ever been, perfect in every way. I have also made beautiful dwelling places for you to live, so you can be comfortable and enjoy the beauties of your heavenly home.

If you have received Me as your Savior, that makes you one of My special friends, and I have such a place for you. I have reserved a place in heaven just for you, a place where all your tears will be wiped away, and all sorrow and grief will be forgotten, where you will be totally happy.² This is what is waiting for you when your earthly life is over. I can hardly wait to show you all that I've made for you and to enjoy the look on your face when I do.

You might feel you don't deserve these things. But I love you more than you could possibly know or understand, and these things are My gift to you. When you give a gift, it's not because of what someone can do for you or because they deserve it; it's because you love them. That's how I feel about you.

1. See John 14:2-3.

2. See Revelation 21-22.