

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 16 • Issue 4

GOD DOES SOMETHING NEW

Renewal, regeneration,
re-creation

Finding South Station

A faith journey

Listening for the Both of Us

A special guest





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION WHO IS HE?

Shortly after Jesus healed “great multitudes” and fed 4,000 people from seven loaves and a few fish,¹ He asked His disciples what people were saying about Him. They reported that some believed He was John the Baptist, others that He was Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the other prophets of old come back from the

dead. These answers indicated that most people held Jesus in high regard and thought of Him as a great prophet, but they were still way short of the mark!

Jesus then asked them, “Who do *you* say that I am?” We can imagine the scene—the disciples lowering their heads or glancing at one another, unsure of what to answer. Then Simon Peter, apparently the most outspoken of the apostles, plucked up his courage and correctly identified Jesus’ true identity and purpose: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”²

Throughout the Bible, Jesus is portrayed as many things—amongst others, the Light of the World,³ the Good Shepherd,⁴ the living God,⁵ our friend,⁶ and our Savior.⁷

No matter how Jesus is described, what’s truly wonderful is that we can each experience Him in our own way. Jesus takes us where we’re at, and He does often manifest Himself to each of us in the ways that we need or will best relate to as individuals.

Rather than trying to set forth a particular vision of Jesus or His work, this issue of *Activated* hopes to help you grow in your own relationship with the One who will always love you and seek the best for you.⁸

Who do *you* say that He is?

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. See Matthew 15:29–38.
2. Matthew 16:16
3. See John 8:12.
4. See John 10:11.

5. See John 10:30.
6. See John 15:15.
7. See Acts 4:12.
8. See Isaiah 54:10.

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TOUCH *of* LOVE

BY CHALSEY DOOLEY

I THINK ONE OF THE MAIN THINGS THAT MAKES ME WANT TO BE AS CLOSE TO JESUS AS I CAN is the personalized touches of His love that He gives.

He does special things in each of our lives—sometimes we notice, many times we don't, and other times we notice but don't peg the credit right. It must be sad for Him, but Jesus loves us too much to give up. On and on throughout our life, He just keeps showing us and saying those three wonderful words: I love you!

As a teen struggling with a myriad of powerful emotions and intense loneliness, I needed to feel that love in a tangible form. One day, I saw by the side of the road the cutest,

most adorable miniature pansy. The blossom was no bigger than my fingernail, and the stem only as long as my finger. I picked it and held it carefully all the way home, where I placed it in a paper cup on my bedside table. A week passed, and it was still cheery and bright, as good as new. I was happy.

Then the most curious thing occurred—a “never before, never since” event, in my experience. From the pansy's tiny stem, roots began growing, which soon extended longer and stronger. I planted it in a flowerpot and saw it grow into a plant with many other blossoms. I was amazed, but also reassured that my Creator—the one who made my pansy grow from nothing—was with me, molding me through the ups and downs, and bringing blossoms of joy my way.

As the days, months, years—and yes, decades—have passed, I've learned to better know and love Jesus through countless special touches and displays of His love. Many of these would seem totally insignificant when compared to all the change and miracles that are needed in the entire world—but they've made a world of difference to *me*. He's proven to me that I matter to Him, and in return, He has won my love forever. As the apostle John wrote, “We love Him because He first loved us.”¹

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1. 1 John 4:19



LISTENING FOR THE BOTH OF US

BY JOE JOHNSTON

IT WAS LATE IN THE SEASON.

The Heat led the series against the Lakers 2–1, with Game Four taking place this afternoon. I was busy. I was always busy, but today she had invited guests over for lunch, so *busy* had taken on a whole new dimension.

She had a lot of friends. Isn't it funny how your younger sister seems to always have more playmates than you? I didn't always care for her friends—but of course, one still wants to make a good impression. And a good impression takes a lot of work.

The salad was already done—it was a packaged mix, though I didn't

think they'd notice. However, the steaks were still frozen, the stove was a mess, the potatoes were sitting idly on the counter, and *someone* had forgotten to do their breakfast dishes.

First things first. I mumbled a blessing on whoever had invented the microwave, slipped into my favorite pink apron, and scrambled through the cluttered drawers looking for the peeler. The day had begun as a losing streak for me, and I hoped the game later would cheer me up. I wouldn't miss it for the world! Some people said I should watch the WNBA or the Home Shopping Network, but I had always been a tomboy.

For the Christian, heaven is where Jesus is. We do not need to speculate on what heaven will be like. It is enough to know that we will be forever with Him. When we love anyone with our whole hearts, life begins when we are with that person; it is only in their company that we are really and truly alive. It is so with Christ. In this world our contact with Him is shadowy, for we can only see through a glass darkly. It is spasmodic, for we are poor creatures and cannot live always on the heights. But the best definition of it is to say that heaven is that state where we will always be with Jesus, and where nothing will separate us from Him anymore.

—William Barclay (1907–1978)

Somewhere in the midst of unplugging the sink and looking for the broom, I heard her amble in the door and sprawl into the living room with her friend. I knew I should be out there with them, socializing and at least making small talk, but I was too busy. And if I knew my sister, she could do enough listening for the both of us. She's not a lazy person—really she's not. But every time *he* comes around, she suddenly gets a lazy itch and drops everything to be with him.

Not me, though! I know better than to leave the house a mess just to be with some guy. Besides, any guy who's worth my time should appreciate a gal who's able to stay on top of things.

The salad bowl slipped out of my fingers! Now what?! Can you serve guests using plastic? The orange glass crunched under my shoes, and I *still* couldn't find the broom! I bent to pick up the larger pieces, and my finger caught on something. Blood creaked down my wrist and onto my

sleeve. Mary's tinkling laugh floated into the kitchen from the living room—no doubt sharing a special moment with her friend.

The dish towel was soggy and dirty, and one or two potatoes tumbled onto the floor as I jerked it from the counter and dabbed at my arm. The sink was overflowing onto the counter and floor. The world was spinning. *Why was everything going wrong?*

"Martha."

What did they want with me? I hustled into the living room.

"Master!" I said. "Don't you care that my sister has left me to take care of you alone?" I waved my arm at her. "Can you, like, ask her to help me a little?"

He stood and touched my wrist. "Martha, you're getting too worked up. I know you have tons on your mind, but the most important thing right now is *not taking care* of me. *Listening* to me—what your sister has chosen to do—is the most important thing. You don't expect me to take it

away from her, do you?"

I shook my head and stared at the floor. "No." I swallowed. "Guess not."

The blood was gone. The tear in my skin had miraculously sealed shut.

"Sit down with us," he said. "Listen to what I have to say." His eyes crinkled at the corners as he grinned. "Please?"

Our brother would be home any second from his treatments at St. Lazarus Memorial Hospital, and the kitchen was—still—a wreck. But the most important thing ...

I scooted into the love seat with my sister and her friend. I listened to what he had to say.

I didn't notice when the microwave timer started beeping. I forgot all about the big game coming up in a few minutes.

I was busy.

JOE JOHNSTON IS A BLOGGER IN MEXICO. THIS STORY IS A RETELLING OF LUKE 10:38–42. ■



All in the Name

BY SUKANYA KUMAR-SINHA

I RECENTLY READ AN ARTICLE ABOUT HOW THE SOUND OF CERTAIN WORDS CAN AFFECT OUR EMOTIONS. Unsurprisingly, words like *accept*, *bountiful*, *embrace*, *glow*, *humor*, *laugh*, *play* left the subjects feeling positive. In the same way, hearing the name of a loved one can make us feel happy. Try it! Close your eyes and say the name of someone you love dearly. Didn't that make you smile?

When I hear "Jesus," I can't help but smile. The mere sound of His name brings up everything that He is—my closest friend, an ever-present guide and conscience, the source of my strength, and a true confidant who knows even my innermost fears, hopes, and thoughts.

1. See 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

2. See Philippians 2:10–11; Hebrews 13:15; 1 John 2:12.

The Bible encourages us to pray about everything.¹ I try to take that advice quite literally, and as a result, Jesus takes on many roles in my life. He becomes my financial adviser who helps me budget for a big purchase; He becomes a realtor when I am looking for the right house; He even becomes a chef when I have to cook for a large gathering. And I feel that's what He wants—to be a part of every bit of my life.

A few days ago, I was mulling over an important personal decision. Whatever I decided would be irrevocable and have long-lasting consequences. I felt the pressure and responsibility growing. As I was trying to come to a conclusion, I suddenly heard a voice inside me say, *Why worry? Jesus is here!* The sound of His name changed my entire perspective. I remembered that Jesus wanted to help me decide,

and that if I asked Him, I could trust that He would guide me on the right path.

I often find myself humming a song I learned when I was little. My favorite line goes, "There is power, power in the name of Jesus." As I've grown up, I've realized how true this is. We all have nice names. Our parents gave us beautiful names in the hopes we would live up to them. However, Jesus' name carries His unique purpose within. "Jesus," meaning "God with us," reflects His identity, His divinity, His purpose as our world's Savior.

And that's why His name is so precious. Jesus—it's all in the name!²

SUKANYA KUMAR-SINHA IS AN ACTIVATED READER FROM INDIA. SHE LIVES IN GURGAON, AND WORKS AS DEPUTY DIRECTOR IN A DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN NEW DELHI. ■



THE ONE WHO CARES

BY KOOS STENGER

“DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE TO TALK? It’s important!” said the young man who approached me with a big smile. *Talk to me? Why?* I had to admit he looked sort of friendly, but whatever he wanted, I was not in the mood. Suddenly I noticed he carried a Bible and thought I understood: He was converting people, and hoped to make me his next victim. *No way! Not me!*

I observed him self-righteously. What presumption to think he had anything I needed! Had he read the Tibetan Book of the Dead, as I had? Had he studied meditation and yoga, as I had? I was even experienced in the use of mind-altering drugs. No, this fellow would not be able to enlighten me.

“Do you know that God cares about you?” the young man asked.

“Of course I know God,” I answered rudely. “I am God, and so are you! Everybody is God. We

are all part of the great cosmic universe!”

He looked puzzled for a moment but then a big grin came on his face. “I don’t know about that, my friend. You sure don’t look like God!”

I rolled my eyes and stomped off. The thing is, that young man was right. I didn’t look like God at all.

I traveled the world for years longer in search of an answer, until in the loneliness of my own confusion, there was a voice: “Fear not. I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God!”¹

Passing through another town, I met another young man. He too had a big smile.

“Do you know that God cares about you?”

By then I had changed my tune. “Please tell me more!”

That was almost forty years ago and He has never left me since.

KOOS STENGER IS A FREELANCE WRITER IN THE NETHERLANDS. ■



Loved

BY EVELYN SICHROVSKY

LOVED—
Not for great deeds and heights attained,
Not for accomplishments and fame;
Not for moments when I succeed,
When I am strong, when I believe;
Not for times when I’m pressing on,
Unfazed by night, fixed on the dawn.

Loved—
For who I am, now and today,
Stumbling, groping to find my way;
A heart of dreams and fears and walls,
Of starts and stops, of peaks and falls:
A life unpolished, unprofound,
A sinner ransomed, lost and found.

EVELYN SICHROVSKY IS AN ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENT. SHE IS ALSO INVOLVED IN MISSIONARY VOLUNTEER WORK AND LIVES WITH HER FAMILY IN TAIWAN. ■

1. Isaiah 41:10

God Does Something New

BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED

WHEN JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD, His resurrection was the first phase of God's new creation, a new kind of existence—a human body was transformed by the power of God into one that is no longer affected by death, decay, and corruption. Nothing like this had ever happened! “We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him.”¹

Jesus' resurrected body no longer suffered from the torture He had undergone—His back torn to shreds from the whipping; His head bloodied by the crown of thorns; His hands, feet, and side pierced. He was no longer battered, nor was He exhausted from all He had endured.

His risen body wasn't a spirit; it was physical, which His followers could touch. He taught them,² walked with them,³ cooked for them,⁴ and ate with them.⁵ He was once together with 500 of them at one time.⁶ After 40 days,⁷ He ascended into heaven,⁸ where He sits at the right hand of God.⁹

As Christians, we too are part of God's new creation. We can look forward to the time when Jesus will return and raise our bodies as well.¹⁰ The apostle Paul speaks about our bodies raised from death in terms of a seed that is planted, and from which the more complete plant grows.¹¹ He goes on to explain that these new bodies will be imperishable, raised in glory and power as spiritual bodies.¹²

1. Romans 6:9 ESV

2. See Luke 24:27.

3. See Luke 24:13–15.

4. See John 21:9–13.

5. See Luke 24:41–43.

6. See 1 Corinthians 15:6.

7. See Acts 1:3.

8. See Acts 1:9–11.

9. See Mark 16:19.

10. See 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; 1 Corinthians 15:51–52.

11. See 1 Corinthians 15:35–38.

12. See 1 Corinthians 15:42–44,49.

13. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 832.

14. Titus 3:4–5 NLT

15. See Galatians 5:22–23.

16. *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995)

Being imperishable means our bodies will not have the weaknesses they have now. They won't be affected by aging, sickness, or weariness as they are today. As one author wrote, "In these resurrection bodies we will clearly see humanity as God intended it to be."¹³

When a person receives Jesus as their Savior, God's Spirit comes to dwell within them and they are renewed and regenerated. Renewal is a renovation, a change in the believer for the better. Regeneration is the production of a new life consecrated to God, a radical change of mind. "When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit."¹⁴

As part of the new creation, God's Spirit changes us, helping us to put on the mind of Christ, as we develop and reflect some of God's characteristics by growing in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.¹⁵

And that's why we have so much to celebrate!—That God dwells in us and helps, guides, and renews us; that we are part of His new creation; that we will live eternally in our new bodies, with perfect health and no aging, sickness, or disease. This is the good news of the Gospel: the love that God has for each individual, the offer of everlasting life, of resurrection from the dead, of being a new creature in Christ Jesus today and a part of the overall new creation for eternity.

May we be motivated by the beauty of God's gift through Jesus to share it and its blessings with all we can.

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

There are two ways to look at human history, I have concluded. One way is to focus on the wars and violence, the squalor, the pain and tragedy and death. From such a point of view, Easter seems a fairy-tale exception, a stunning contradiction in the name of God. That gives some solace, although I confess that when my friends died, grief was so overpowering that any hope in an after-life seemed somehow thin and insubstantial. There is another way to look at the world. If I take Easter as the starting point, the one incontrovertible fact about how God treats those whom he loves, then human history becomes the contradiction and Easter a preview of ultimate reality. Hope then flows like lava beneath the crust of daily life.

This, perhaps, describes the change in the disciples' perspective as they sat in locked rooms discussing the incomprehensible events of Easter Sunday. In one sense nothing had changed: Rome still occupied Palestine, religious authorities still had a bounty on their heads, death and evil still reigned outside. Gradually, however, the shock of recognition gave way to a long slow undertow of joy. If God could do *that* ...
—Phillip Yancey¹⁶ (b. 1949)



CLEAN SLATE

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA VALDIVIESO

AROUND LAST EASTER, I was feeling lousy about myself, thinking I was falling short of the Gospel admonitions to love others and live an unselfish life. I felt I was caring too much about material things and had begun trying very hard to improve.

Then I had a curious experience while returning home in the crammed rush-hour bus. When my wife and I got on, a couple of young men kindly offered us their seats. Sally accepted, but not me. “No, thanks!” I said. “You actually look tired yourselves.”

I felt quite smug and congratulated myself for doing a good deed, until a

girl sitting next to where I was standing tapped me on the arm. “Sir,”—she sounded irritated—“could you please control your bag? It’s been swinging and banging me for quite some time.”

So much for my good manners! I apologized but felt terrible, like Paul must have when he said: “I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.”¹

As Easter drew closer and I was preparing the message I wanted to share with our Bible study group, I was struck by the paradox of feeling condemned for my imperfections when the whole purpose of Jesus’ death on the cross was to save us from our sins and shortcomings, and empower us to love God and one another.

Another day, when watching Jesus’ passion in the movie, *Son of God*,² I suddenly understood once again a

principle that I hadn’t thought much about for years: at the moment of His death on the cross, Jesus wiped our slate clean.³ For the first time in years, I saw how vain my efforts were to try to live up to an unreachable standard. There He was, nailed to the cross, telling me: “I paid the price for you. Just go and live My new law as best you can. I will help you and work through you.”

The scene was so liberating! Over time, I had lost that simplicity and conviction that it’s all by grace and not by works or struggles and exercises in goodness.⁴ It was wonderful to be reminded again that only God is good,⁵ and we are just His instruments.

GABRIEL GARCÍA VALDIVIESO IS THE EDITOR OF THE SPANISH EDITION OF *ACTIVATED* AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN CHILE. ■

1. Romans 7:19 NLT

2. Christopher Spencer. 20th Century Fox, 2014.

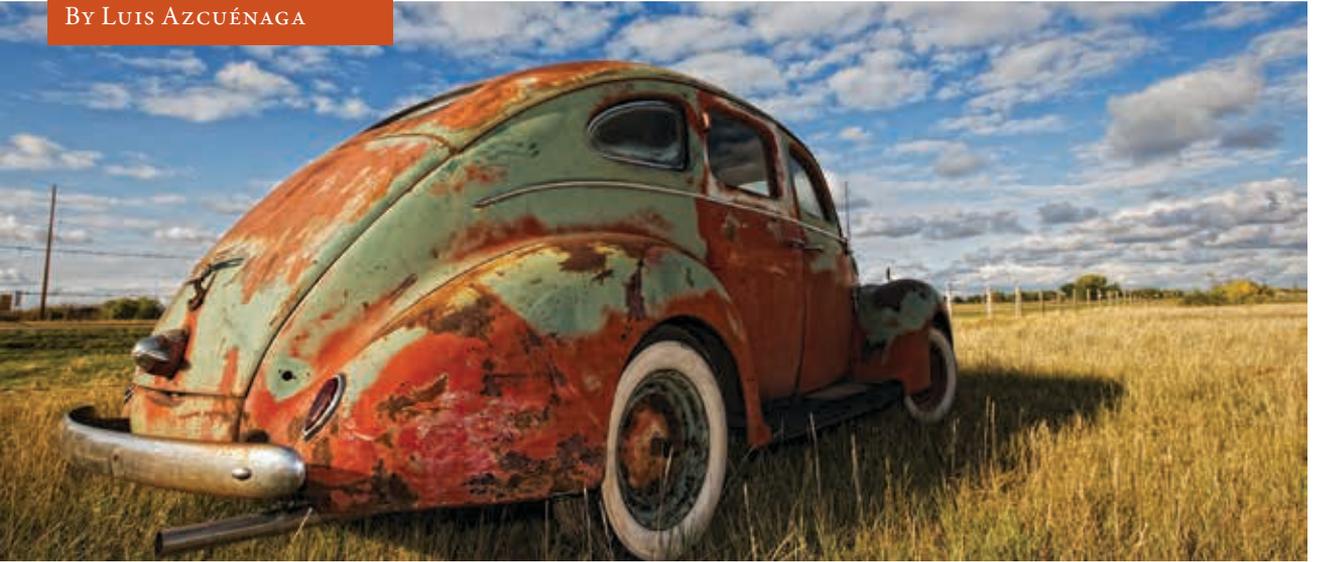
3. See Colossians 2:13–14.

4. See Ephesians 2:8–9.

5. See Matthew 19:17.

A SURE BET

BY LUIS AZCUÉNAGA



I'M A VERY COMPETITIVE PERSON and I've always loved taking chances and risks. The idea of investing a little in order to obtain big returns has always fascinated me.

I'm good at sports and games, but even when I was growing up, if there wasn't a wager or reward involved in a tennis or ping-pong match or a game of Parcheesi, I lacked the incentive to play my best and enjoy the competition. As an adult, I loved the weekend poker games with friends that would sometimes go on and on until the morning hours.

1. See Matthew 13:45–46.

2. Matthew 6:19–20,33

3. John 8:32

Later, I had a great and unexpected change. Jesus entered my life and His words began to reach deep inside me, gradually transforming my perspectives, goals, values, and priorities. I began to understand that real rewards were heavenly, not earthly, and that I could possess the most valuable thing one could ever have—eternal life. It was that same precious pearl as in the parable Jesus told, where a man was willing to sell all his possessions in order to buy it.¹

I knew it was a sure bet because it had the best guarantees—eternal rewards based on God's promises: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay

up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”²

Since my decision to follow Jesus and invest in eternal things, my desire to gamble in other material ways disappeared. I still enjoy games and sports, but I no longer feel the urge to bet on them. This has been the fulfillment of another wonderful promise: “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”³

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FINDING SOUTH STATION

By JOYCE SUTTIN



FAITH PERMEATED MY LIFE AS A CHILD. I never doubted the existence of a loving God who was concerned about my life, and who answered prayer and helped me on a daily basis. I prayed from the time I could form words. I sang songs about Jesus and loved Him. He was a very real presence in my life. When my great uncles died, it wasn't a grievous occasion but a celebration of their passing on to a better world.

But when I was a teenager, I began to question the principles of faith I had been taught as a child. I saw my parents and their faith in God and the Bible as fallible, and I

began a quick slide from believer to doubter to agnostic. What I heard and saw in the world around me no longer made sense alongside the simple childlike faith I had been taught. As I emphatically stated my new belief system, my parents just smiled and told me that they were willing to listen, but they couldn't be deterred from what they knew to be right.

My spiritual searching coincided with moving from a small town in the countryside to Boston, Massachusetts. One day, I was to take the train home for the holidays. I had called ahead and

reserved my ticket, and I was confident that I could find my way to South Station by subway.

After some time in the tunnels of the "T," as the Boston subway is known to locals, I exited at the right station according to my map, climbed a long flight of stairs, and was blinded by bright sunlight as I arrived at street level. I knew the station was supposed to be right there, but I looked around and couldn't see it. I stepped into the shadow of a huge archway, but still I couldn't find the station. I kept checking my watch and became nervous that I would miss my train. I asked a



passerby, but he just looked at me oddly and rushed on.

Eventually I ended up on the other side of the street. Somewhat frantic by now, I glanced back to where I had been standing. In gigantic letters ten feet above street level were the words “South Station.” There, right where I had exited the subway, was the train station entrance—the same huge archway I had stepped into to let my eyes adjust a few minutes earlier. It was so enormous and encompassing that I couldn’t recognize it from my previous perspective. Only after I stepped away and looked up

could I see that I had been where I belonged all along.

Shortly after that experience, I began to realize that I was different from my nonbeliever friends. For one thing, I enjoyed eating my lunch in a lovely old cemetery on Tremont Street, where gravestones dated from the 1600s. One day a friend joined me there and commented, “Don’t you think it’s a bit strange to come into a cemetery to relax? Doesn’t it make you think about death, and doesn’t that frighten you?”

I thought about that as I finished my sandwich. “Actually, I am not afraid at all,” I answered. “I believe that death is only a passageway from this world to the next, kind of like a rebirth. I believe that when I die I will find myself in a bigger, better world.” What made me different from my friends was that deep down inside, I still had faith—I still believed in God and Jesus.

A few days later I wrote my parents about my South Station experience and related it to my recent trek into agnosticism and back. From my new vantage point, I had no doubts about what I really believed. I thanked them for having

imparted their faith to me, as well as for their patience and understanding. They had known all along that all I needed to do was “cross the road and look up.”

I eventually became a mother of eight, and as my children have grown, I have watched some of them have doubts about their faith and step back. I have tried to follow my parents’ example of understanding by picturing my children standing under one of the arches of South Station, searching for it. I pray for them and know it is there, whether they believe it or not, and I pray that they will look up and realize where they are standing.

Sometimes we all feel lost and wonder where God is. We search around for faith and meaning in life, only to find that it is right in front of us, larger than life. Like South Station, we are standing right in front of it and only need to move to a different vantage point to realize that we are right where we belong.

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

A FRIEND FOR LIFE AND

QUIET MOMENTS

BY ABI MAY

I have a great friend, one I can trust completely. He opens His heart to me, and I feel safe doing the same in return. He knows what's going on inside my heart and understands what's important to me.

I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.—*Jesus, John 15:15*

I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.”—*Psalms 91:2*

The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword. ... It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.—*Hebrews 4:12 NLT*

I mess up often—that's the kind of person I am. But my friend never

judges. He always sticks up for me—that's the kind of friend He is.

Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.—*1 John 3:20 NLT*

I judge no one.—*Jesus, John 8:15*

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.—*2 Timothy 2:13*

He helps me out when I'm stuck. Sometimes, when I can't figure out where I should be going, He gives me advice. Sometimes He starts down the path so I can follow in His steps. Other times, He shines a light so I can see ahead.

When he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep

follow him, for they know his voice.—*John 10:4*

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.—*Psalms 119:105*

I've had some pretty rough times recently, when it was hard for me to cope. And there He was, at my side, always ready to help.

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.—*Psalms 121:2*

I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, “Fear not, I will help you.”—*Isaiah 41:13*

But He's not only around when I'm having a hard time; He's also a great friend to celebrate with and knows all about enjoying life. He strikes a good balance between knowing

BEYOND

when to laugh and be happy, and when to cry and sympathize.

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.—*Ecclesiastes 3:4*

“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”
—*Jeremiah 29:11 NIV*

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.—*Jesus, John 10:10*

He’s not my only friend. My other friends do bits and pieces of what He does. But there is no one, absolutely nobody, who is constant like He is.

Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.—*Matthew 28:20*

He’s not exclusive. He doesn’t look at our size, age, gender, race, or social standing. He’ll accept all who come to Him.

I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you’ll be able to take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.—*Ephesians 3:16–19 MSG*

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HAND IN HAND FOR ETERNITY

Jesus, You told us, “You believe in God, believe also in Me.”¹ I believe You are the Son of God and that You died for me, rising again to conquer death.² Please forgive my mistakes and shortcomings, come into my life, and hold me in Your loving care from now throughout eternity.

If Christ Jesus dwells in a man as his friend and noble leader, that man can endure all things, for Christ helps and strengthens us and never abandons us. He is a true friend.—*Saint Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582)*

There is only one secure foundation: a genuine, deep relationship with Jesus Christ, which will carry you through any and all turmoil. No matter what storms are raging all around, you’ll stand firm if you stand on His love.—*Charles Stanley (b. 1932)*

Hungry for love, He looks at you. Thirsty for kindness, He begs of you. Naked for loyalty, He hopes in you. Homeless for shelter in your heart, He asks of you. Will you be that one to Him?—*Mother Teresa (1910–1997)*

The soul that gives itself wholly and without reserve to God is filled with His own peace; and the closer we draw to our God, so much the stronger and more steadfast and tranquil shall we become.—*Jean Grou (1731–1803)* ■

1. John 14:1

2. See 1 Thessalonians 5:10.



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Let's live!

If you have found Me, you have found the secret to experiencing life to the full. I am far more than a historical character who lived and died 2,000 years ago. Because I rose from the dead, I am even more alive and active today than I was when I walked the earth. And because I live, you too can experience life and love as they were meant to be experienced, both here and now, and forever—boundless and eternal. There is no hurt that I can't heal, no sadness that I can't turn to joy, no need that I can't provide, no void that I can't fill.

I am alive today in each heart that welcomes Me. I am active and at work, always renewing, restoring, and replenishing, making everything better and more beautiful whenever I am given a chance. Let Me live in you!