

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 18 • Issue 6



WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?

Finding true riches

My Year Without Clothes

The surprising result!

I Never Lost by Giving!

Setbacks turn to opportunities



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST

In the course of working on this issue, I came across an inspiring story about two great men of God. I'd like to share it with you.

Charles Spurgeon, the famous evangelist, and George Müller, the thief-turned-Christian who founded and directed five orphanages, both lived in

19th-century England.

Once Spurgeon ran a campaign to raise the sum of 300 pounds—worth many times that today—that was urgently needed for the orphanage he supported. The night he reached that goal, he went to bed a contented man.

But before he could go to sleep, he heard God's still, small voice: *Give those 300 pounds to George Müller for his orphanages in Bristol.*

"But Lord," Spurgeon protested, "I need that money for my orphans in London."

Again he heard, *Give those 300 pounds to George Müller!*

Spurgeon wrestled with the idea for a while, but he finally agreed and went to sleep.

The next morning, he made his way to George Müller's home and was let into the study, where he found him praying. "George, God told me to give you these 300 pounds," he said.

"I have just been asking God for that *exact* amount!" Müller exclaimed.

Spurgeon was happy for his friend, but still a bit discouraged about his own situation. But when he returned to London, he found a letter waiting for him on his desk. It contained a donation of 300 guineas (one guinea was worth one pound and one shilling) designated for his orphanage. "God has returned my 300 pounds," he exclaimed, "with 300 shillings interest!"

God works in mysterious ways, and He doesn't always choose to reward giving in exactly this way, or in exactly the way we'd like or we think we need, but He will not fail to bless our giving.

This issue of *Activated* contains articles and testimonies that illustrate the Christian approach to wealth and possessions. I hope you find it encouraging and faith-building.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

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THE SMALLEST COIN IN THE WORLD



BY ANNA PERLINI

JUST BEFORE I LEFT FOR INDIA, where I was going to spend a number of years as a volunteer, a friend gave me a very original and, I thought, useful farewell present. “I’m kind of worried for you,” she confided. “You’re going to a difficult country and this might come in handy.”

On the small box was an inscription: “The smallest gold coin in the world.”

I packed it away and took it with me to India, and later on to Nepal.

My friend was right—things weren’t always easy, and we often encountered hardships of all kinds, from the climate to tropical sicknesses to financial challenges. We never lacked any of our basic necessities, but we did often have to skip the extras.

My husband and I sometimes talked about selling the coin, but we’d agreed it was to be our emergency fund, and that it wouldn’t be touched unless absolutely needed. Whenever the topic came up, we always came to the conclusion that it wasn’t really such a desperate situation, and I’d put it back in my suitcase.

After eight years, we returned to Europe, and one day I walked past a numismatic store and wondered just how much my gold coin had been worth all this time. A few days later, I brought it in to be examined.

My heart and everything in me dropped when the kind clerk examined my coin and told me that it had no value besides the gold weight—and as it was “the smallest gold coin in the world,” it obviously didn’t weigh very much.

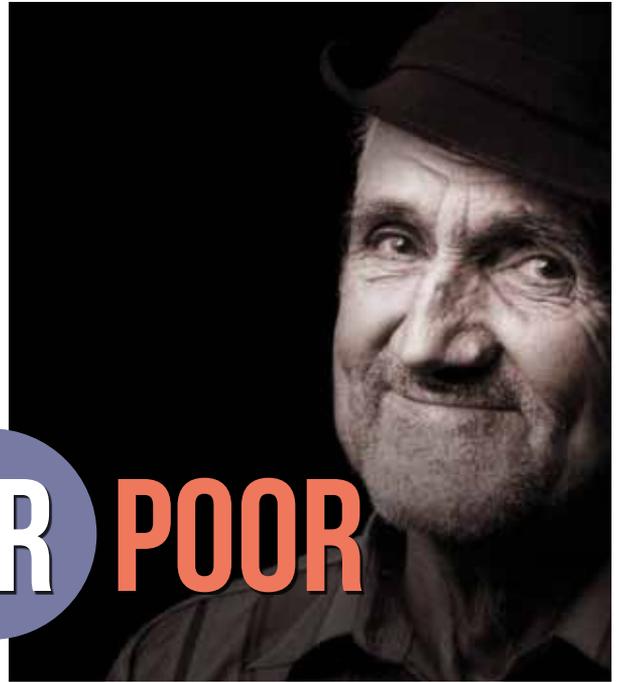
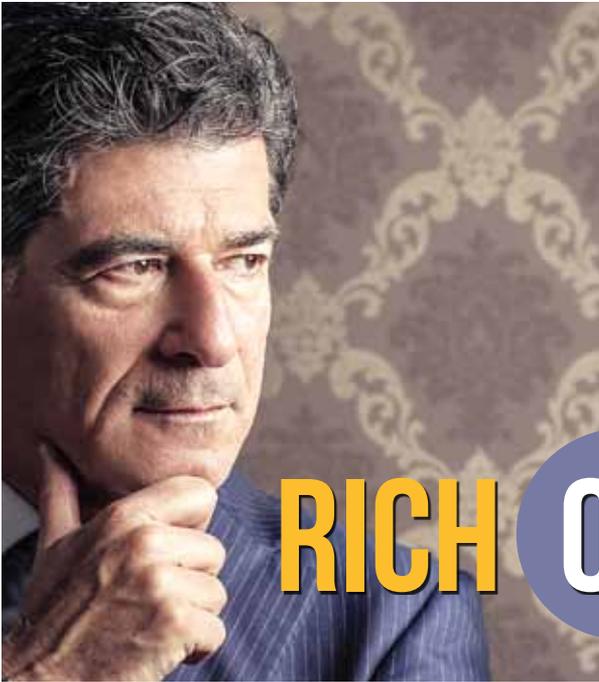
So all those years when we’d thought we had an emergency fund, were we just being naïve? A mix of disappointment and embarrassment overwhelmed me, and I actually almost threw the coin away. It seemed like that would hardly be a loss.

But later on, I realized that little coin was symbolic of our faith. We’d kept it with us all the time; we’d never lost it. And as we walked by faith, God never failed to provide for us.

We still have the coin, and it’s now a treasured memento. As far as I’m concerned, it’s actually gained value.

ANNA PERLINI IS A COFOUNDER OF PER UN MONDO MIGLIORE,¹ A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION ACTIVE IN THE BALKANS SINCE 1995. ■

1. <http://www.perunmondomigliore.org>



RICH OR POOR

THE APOSTLE PAUL addressed the issue of wealth in 1 Timothy 6:8–10: “If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”¹ Having money is not wrong, but loving money is. The abundance of money or the lack of money is less important than our spiritual condition.

In Jewish culture, poverty and even disability were often seen as the result of someone’s personal sin. In John 9:1–3, the disciples of Jesus

asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”² While human nature often attributes poverty or other weaknesses to something wrong a person has done, God can and does use such circumstances to work His perfect plan.

The account of the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17–22 shows how riches can be a spiritual stumbling block. Jesus told the young man to sell his possessions, give the money to the poor, and then follow Jesus. The man walked away sad because he was a man of much wealth. In this case, the man’s wealth was a negative since it kept him from following Christ. He loved his money more than he loved Jesus.

While many of the psalms and proverbs speak matter-of-factly regarding the benefits of wealth and struggles of poverty, the Bible is clear that both poverty and wealth can be

the will of God and a blessing from God. Jesus lived in relative poverty; Solomon was blessed with significant wealth. King David had a humble beginning and a wealthy ending. The apostles followed Christ to persecution and martyrdom; they were not regarded as wealthy, but they used all they had to share Christ with others.³ “Rich and poor have this in common: The Lord is the Maker of them all.”⁴

The human perspective sees wealth as a blessing and poverty as a curse. God’s plan is much greater and uses both wealth and poverty to accomplish His will. We are to avoid the temptation to see wealth as God’s only blessing and instead be content in any and every circumstance, knowing that God’s blessings are not defined by our possessions in this world but are found in their fullness in a kingdom not of this world.

THIS ARTICLE IS INCLUDED
COURTESY OF GOTQUESTIONS.ORG⁵ ■

1. NIV
2. NIV
3. See Luke 18:28.
4. Proverbs 22:2 NIV
5. <https://gotquestions.org/poor-vs-rich.html>



PLAYING GOD

BY SCOTT MCGREGOR

I'VE OFTEN WISHED I HAD A TRUCKLOAD OF MONEY that I could use to help others. There are many people I know who need financial help for one thing or another, and it would be great to have the means to be that help. I daydream of coming along and dropping a bunch of cash on my friends, family, and others, and watching them get out from under financial burdens and be free to enjoy life without the stress that money troubles can bring. As of now, I don't have those means.

Even though the idea of being this kind of benefactor is still a cherished dream, I've been coming to another realization: It's not my job to play God.

Now, that doesn't mean we can't be partners with God in His work as the kind, loving, and generous God that He is. But we are very junior

partners at best. We have a vote, so to speak, but the decision isn't ours. God has a plan, and He knows what He wishes to accomplish in and through each individual's and family's life.

I was going over the many miracles that Jesus performed on earth, and the only one that had to do with money at all was when the disciples needed to pay a tax. He had Peter go catch a fish and inside its mouth was a coin, which was enough to cover the tax.¹ But even in this case, it only met the immediate need and didn't multiply like the loaves and fishes. I came to the conclusion that as much as *I* am tempted to worry about money, I don't think *God* is worried about it at all.

You can do a lot of things with money, but money doesn't buy happiness. Studies have shown that the respect and appreciation of others has much more to do with bringing happiness than status

or wealth do. Once the basics are covered, happiness plateaus, and gaining more money doesn't increase feelings of contentedness. And if the respect and appreciation of others makes us happy, then shouldn't the appreciation and love of God for us *really* make us happy?

In fact, it does. The psalmist wrote, "Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!"² That's not just a statement, but it's a *formula* for happiness. When we are right with God, we are happy.

Back to "playing God." I still have that longing to be able to help others in a big way financially, but I have to remember that this isn't always going to be the best for the people involved. Only God knows, and it's better for me to step back and let God play His role.

SCOTT MCGREGOR IS AN AUTHOR AND COMMENTATOR LIVING IN ATLANTIC CANADA. ■

1. See Matthew 17:24–27.

2. Psalm 144:15



WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?

BY ROSANE PEREIRA

AS A CHILD, I loved to visit my grandmother Sabina's small house in the mountains. Aunt Iota lived next door, so my sister and I would spend our days exploring with our cousins, going to the waterfall, swimming in the river that ran behind the property, or climbing the many mountains in the Mantigueira Ridge. It was heaven on earth for a city girl like me.

Their family didn't have as much materially as ours did. Once, my cousin Anette said, "I may not be rich in things, but I am rich in my heart, and Grandma told me that is the most important!" That was a new thought for me. Was there another kind of riches other than material ones?

1. Cecil B. DeMille. Paramount Pictures, 1956.

2. See Matthew 13:45–46.

3. Matthew 6:19–21

I also remember how impressed I was as a child when my mother took me to see *The Ten Commandments*¹ at a movie theater. Moses could have stayed in his comfort zone until the day he died, but he didn't—he left everything to free his people from oppression. It took me until adulthood to understand how much it must have cost him to follow God.

When I first read the Gospels, one of the stories that stood out to me was the one of the jeweler who discovered a pearl of great price and immediately sold all that he had in order to buy it.² Jesus explained that this pearl was the kingdom of God, and when I read that, I felt a burning in my heart. I too wanted that pearl!

Jesus also taught: "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. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."³ Being from a metropolitan beach city with a high crime rate, I understood that concept very well.

As I matured, I came to understand more clearly that true riches are not things of this earth; they are joy, peace, love, goodness, faith, and all the other real valuables that God wants to give each of us daily. Ours is the easy part, opening our souls to receive His gifts. If our treasures are in heaven, we will experience God's joy now and in the life to come.

ROSANE PEREIRA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND WRITER IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

Heavenly Investment

By ANITA CLARK



AT MY AGE, people usually start to earnestly think about their future. Besides children, careers, and living arrangements, the subjects of pension plans and capital investment tend to pop up. There are a lot of different possibilities to choose from for financial investments and it's not easy to decide, since at the end of the day, no one can tell you what the right choice is for sure. Some of the investment possibilities that I looked into are life insurance, real estate, and investment funds, though there are many more.

Not long ago I met a friend who is a missionary who has traveled throughout Africa, Europe, and the Americas to speak to people about

Jesus. I admire her efforts and the love that she has for the people she meets, and for that reason, I decided to support her mission work financially. The last time we met, she thanked me for the sacrifice I made to be able to give that money to her. This got me thinking, since I don't view it as a sacrifice at all; on the contrary, I see it as an investment in my future. It's my most productive capital investment.

LIFE INSURANCE. The Bible promises that God will take care of us if we are generous.¹ It also says that if we give to others, He will bless us and our works.² Supporting God's work is paying into God's life insurance program, and in exchange, He takes care of me and my loved ones in both good and bad times. God is my safety net.

HOME SAVINGS ACCOUNT. Jesus told us that He will prepare a place for us.³ When I invest my money in His work, I am investing in a dwelling place in a beautiful future in His heavenly city. I'm sure He is an amazing architect.

STOCK PORTFOLIO. Jesus said that we will have treasures in heaven.⁴ In supporting my friend's missionary work, I'm buying heavenly stocks and placing them in my heavenly stock portfolio. The more time and effort my friend invests in her heavenly enterprise, the more valuable my stocks will be. When I stand in front of my Maker at the end of my life, my stock portfolio will be dissolved and the value will be paid out to me. I'm sure the wait will be worth it.

ANITA CLARK LIVES IN GERMANY AND HAS BEEN AN *ACTIVATED* READER SINCE THE FIRST ISSUE. ■

1. See 2 Corinthians 9:6.
2. See Deuteronomy 15:10.
3. See John 14:2.
4. See Mark 10:21.

BY RUTH MCKEAGUE

STEPPING OUT FROM A FIRST-WORLD MINDSET

ALMOST EVERY SINGLE DAY, I'm struck by how lucky I am to work where I do. I'm a teacher at an inner-city school that serves families from all around the world. I work in the library, where it is normal to see, at any given table, a group of four students working together who represent four different continents, four different languages, and four different faiths. The UN could learn a lot from my school.

Vanessa is a senior student who would like to run her own salon some day. I remember when I first met her last year, I was struck by how fashionable, pleasant, and confident she was. She is the image of happy potential.

She is also a refugee from a war-torn African nation who arrived in our city with her large family in March of 2014. The eight children range in age from nine to twenty years old. Vanessa's dad has worked sporadically since their arrival, but he hasn't been able to secure regular employment. Her mom has struggled for years with health problems, and she can't work outside the home.

1. <http://www.fruclassity.com/>

The family gets support from social assistance—and from Vanessa.

Besides attending school full-time, Vanessa works part-time at a salon. Her income is directed in three different ways:

It goes toward helping her family.

It goes toward savings for post-secondary schooling.

It goes toward her tithe.

I was very taken aback last week when I heard Vanessa say that she gives 10% of her income to her church.

"It's a must," she explained to me, her voice accented by her African homeland, quiet and steady. "When I was a little kid, my mom worked, and I saw her tithe. My dad did too. And we always had enough."

But what about now? I asked her if she ever felt tempted not to tithe because of the hardship in her life. She didn't seem to understand what

I meant. "There are a lot of people in your house," I said. She nodded her head, waiting for me to make my point. "Some people would find that hard," I explained. "Your dad not being able to find work ... Your mom's health problems ... Having to leave friends and family behind, being new to this country ..." I stopped trying to convince Vanessa of her struggles as I realized that she simply did not feel hard done by.

"Sometimes back home," she said, "we would let homeless people stay with us for a while. We still send money to orphanages back home. Here, if we have extra food or



clothing, we go out and bring it to people on the streets.”

I was unable to reconcile the picture of abundance and generosity that Vanessa was painting for me with my understanding of her limited resources. “But don’t you ever feel like you need something that you can’t buy?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said. “And then I ask for money. I ask friends or family. I don’t ask to borrow. It’s always a gift.” Sometimes giving, sometimes receiving (but never going into debt), Vanessa is equally comfortable in both roles. Happy to offer, and not too proud to accept.

Again, I came back to the tithing question. “But if you sometimes don’t have enough money, don’t you feel like keeping that 10% of your income that you give away?”

“No,” said Vanessa calmly. “God won’t let you miss the money that you give.” And she told about a time when she found \$10 in her pocket. And a story about a time when she couldn’t afford to buy a coat, but then someone who had bought a coat that was the wrong size gave it to her.

“What do you think,” I asked with some trepidation, because I was asking for myself, “about people with good jobs who live in big houses but who say they can’t afford to give very much?”

I braced myself, but the answer came with no judgment, a continued calm, quiet steadiness. “They don’t know the secret.”

She didn’t follow up with an explanation. “What secret?” I asked. I could see from the clock that our time was almost up. Vanessa had to leave for work at 3:45. But I wanted to know the secret.

“When you give something, there are more blessings,” she said.

There was a math that just didn’t add up. And yet somehow, it did. I believe this young lady has a bright future in her new country. The skills that she’s learning at school and at work will help to prepare her for it, but her quiet confidence and strong foundation will see her through. I’m grateful to Vanessa and other students who challenge my first-world perspectives and stretch my understanding. She sees the world through a lens of gratitude, trust, and hope, and the obstacles that don’t even register on her seem to vanish beneath her feet as she moves forward.

RUTH MCKEAGUE LIVES IN OTTAWA, CANADA, AND WRITES FOR FRUCLASSITY,¹ A SITE DEDICATED TO SHARING IDEAS AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES TO HELP PEOPLE GET OUT OF DEBT. ■



BY MASAHIRO NARITA

I NEVER LOST BY GIVING!

IN THE EARLY YEARS OF MY BUSINESS ACTIVITIES, I believed that money was everything. When my wife complained that there wasn't enough love in our marriage, I retorted that love wouldn't keep food on the table. Since I believed that material things were everything, I didn't believe in God or His supply.

That changed gradually after I was introduced to the Bible. I started learning about God's economic plan, which is based on love and sharing—quite different from the “me-first” materialism that had driven me up till then. This helped me readjust my priorities.

It was 1985, and Japan's economy was booming. My wife and I began supporting various volunteer projects and had just pledged a regular donation to missionaries. We hadn't given in the hope of being blessed in

1. Luke 6:38

return, but I was curious to find out if Jesus' “give, and it will be given to you”¹ promise could be taken literally.

At the time, I was planning to build a condominium, and just one week later, my bank recommended a building contractor, whom I ended up hiring. Overly eager to get started, however, the contractor applied for a building permit before I had approved his design—and as it turned out, I *didn't* approve it. When we couldn't agree on the matter, I contracted another builder, and the first contractor sued. Eventually, we agreed on a new design and that the condominium would be a joint construction project between the two contractors. The three-month delay did not appear to be a blessing. However...

At the onset of the project, we had set aside funds to pay the city planning fees—but while we were sorting out the contractor business, the

city planning regulations changed, and under the new rules, I was no longer required to pay this tax on my project.

While I was glad to not be eligible for the city tax, I learned that the government was significantly increasing its own taxation on construction, effective in April. As it turned out, the first contractor's mistake in prematurely applying turned out to be for the best, as our project received building approval right before the tax hike took effect.

Through these events I learned to recognize God's presence in my life. Looking back on how God had blessed us in both situations, I concluded that it must have been because my wife and I were helping His work in whatever way we could.

MASAHIRO NARITA (1925–2012)
WAS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY
INTERNATIONAL IN JAPAN. ■



GAINING BY GIVING

BY STEVE HEARTS

GIVING IS EASIER TO TALK ABOUT THAN TO DO. This is especially true when it involves sacrifice. On the other hand, the Bible shows that God greatly honors this kind of giving.

“Jesus sat down at the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.’”¹

1. Mark 12:41–44 NIV
2. See 2 Samuel 24:24.
3. www.just1thing.com

Quite possibly, some of those rich people gave out of duty or a desire to be noted for their giving, rather than out of a sincere love for God. It was no great sacrifice on their part either. The widow, on the other hand, was poor but willing to give all she had. She was giving with a sacrificial heart. That’s why Jesus singled her out for such praise.

We tend to give more freely when it doesn’t cost us anything. But King David refused to give to the Lord “of that which cost him nothing.”²

Several years ago, I prayed specifically for an Ovation guitar. As soon as I got one, I felt God speak to me about giving it to someone else who really needed a guitar. This surprised me and made me wonder how I would ever be able to save up for one again. But there was no doubting what I felt in my heart I needed to do.

About a week after I gave it away, I was invited to sing at the church of a musician friend who owned a music

store. When I told him I had no guitar to play, he said, “No problem. I’ll choose something from my store and let you use it.” It turned out to be an Ovation guitar. I was thrilled!

When the service was over, I sought out my friend to thank him and return the instrument, but he said: “While you were singing, God clearly told me to bless you and your mission work with this guitar.”

I left that church feeling as though I were walking on air.

Although we may not always reap material blessings as a result of our giving, it never goes unrewarded.

STEVE HEARTS HAS BEEN BLIND SINCE BIRTH. HE IS A WRITER, MUSICIAN, AND MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN NORTH AMERICA. THIS ARTICLE WAS ADAPTED FROM A PODCAST ON JUST1THING,³ A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. ■



BY JESSIE RICHARDS

MY YEAR WITHOUT CLOTHES

WELL, not literally. I can explain.

At the start of last year, I made a resolution to not purchase any new clothes or shoes that year. I had a combination of reasons for that:

I didn't need more shoes and clothes. I'm not one of those shopaholic types, and with a combination of going to plenty of garage sales, occasional online shopping, and having lots of girlfriends around to swap with, I already had a lot of stuff!

I had recently read about a growing movement of people who had decided they would only own 100 items.¹ I did some quick calculations and decided that wasn't exactly for me, but I admired the concept. And

I had exactly zero set aside in savings at the time, and I wanted to change that.

As it turned out, I ended up getting more new clothes and shoes within that year than I had in the previous several years, despite not buying any of them. That was due to a combination of visits with my mother, sister, and sister-in-law—all of whom had a stash set aside for me—and gifts from other friends. Granted, not everything was brand-new, but some was—and it was all new to *me*. So, the happy news is that I got variety in my wardrobe and shoe-drobe (shouldn't that be a word?) without having spent a penny on it.

I woke up this morning thinking about that decision and that year and how well it went. I strongly suspect that my recalling that situation was somehow connected to the minor panic I've been experiencing over the last few days in thinking about my current financial situation. I've recently relocated, bringing about a lot of changes in my life, and I'm facing some, shall we say, challenges. I have a lot of experience in being frugal, I'm disciplined in my budgeting and spending, and I think that with a little caution I'll be okay.

Anyway, I suppose my "year without clothes" came to mind because God was reminding me that, as I like to say, "Stuff works out." During that year, spending less time and money pursuing the acquisition

1. See <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1812048,00.html>.

I believe God is managing affairs and that He doesn't need any advice from me. With God in charge, I believe everything will work out for the best in the end. So what is there to worry about?—*Henry Ford (1863–1947)*

If you get too attached to how you want it to come out on the other side, you freeze. I try to trust that it will work out in the end.—*Jennifer Connelly (b. 1970)*

of things didn't actually result in my lacking anything. If in the near or distant future there is a month, or even a year, when I have to do without buying a certain thing, could I maybe trust God to bring it along in some unexpected way? I think so.

I often feel I don't have a lot to show as far as manifestations of God's involvement and activity in my life. I love Him, we spend time together, and I know His presence is always with me ... but once in a while someone asks me to tell them about "something wonderful or a miracle God's done for you," and I kind of hem and haw and usually can't think of anything offhand.

I used to feel horrible about that, until I came to accept that my life is probably one of those where God

just doesn't work in a "showy" way. He's entitled to that, and I'm not entitled to expect Him to treat me in a particular way. But then, there are sweet little things like this, where I can see with hindsight that God could very well have had a hand in how things played out. I can't quite bring myself to believe that He cared as much as I did about me getting more shoes, but He at least did care about helping me realize that if I trust Him, I'll always have what I need, and sometimes even what I want—even if it's not through the channels I expect or because of my best-laid plans.

Another thing I came to realize during my "year without clothes" was how much I had in many ways. For example, I had a job at a time when a lot of people didn't. I've never been

homeless. And contrary to what you might have thought when reading the title of this article, I've never had to run around without clothes either! I've had things pretty good.

On the practical side, this experiment also kept me from having even more stuff than I do, which was good, because as it was, I had to trim down when I moved earlier this year.

All in all, I've felt richer since then.

JESSIE RICHARDS HAD A ROLE IN THE PRODUCTION OF *ACTIVATED* FROM 2001 TO 2012, AND HAS WRITTEN A NUMBER OF ARTICLES AS AN *ACTIVATED* STAFF WRITER. SHE HAS ALSO WRITTEN AND EDITED MATERIAL FOR OTHER CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS AND WEBSITES. ■

BY DINA ELLENS

BREAK OPEN IN EMERGENCY



RECENTLY TWO FRIENDS got in touch to let me know about some pretty major events that were happening in their lives. First, Ina called to share that her daughter had tested positive after being leukemia-free for three years. She had just received the heartbreaking news and was overwrought with emotion when she called.

Later that same week, Susan emailed me to say that her husband had unexpectedly been laid off. She was worried that they might have to give up their new house since they were depending on his salary to make the payments.

I encouraged both of them as best as I could and assured them that I'd keep them and their families in my prayers. While thinking about my friends' circumstances, I remembered

that "Break Open in Emergency" sign that's often posted in public places, usually above a glass box that has a fire extinguisher or a small axe for use in an emergency.

As Christians, we have a "Break Open in Emergency" box too. I've found that taking time to find refuge in Jesus and His Word can bring me through. Jesus said, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."¹ And through taking time to read God's words and meditate on them, we can find fresh spirit and life—no matter how discouraging our circumstances may seem.

When I called Susan again to find out how things were going, she replied, "Well, my husband hasn't gotten a job yet, but I'm not worried. I feel sure God is going to take care of us. The best news is that my husband came forward in church last Sunday and was baptized."

As it turned out, God didn't fail this couple financially either. By the end of the month, I'd heard again from Susan that her husband had accepted a good job with a multinational company.

Then a text from Ina said that her daughter was recovering rapidly after chemotherapy. Both of them had felt God's presence with them the whole time they were in the hospital.

Each of my friends found God to be their "very present help in time of trouble" in unique and special ways. They held on to their faith so courageously during trying times, and God brought them through!

DINA ELLENS TAUGHT SCHOOL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR OVER 25 YEARS. ALTHOUGH RETIRED, SHE REMAINS ACTIVE IN VOLUNTEER WORK AS WELL AS PURSUING HER INTEREST IN WRITING. ■

1. John 6:63 ESV



A TALE OF TWO BROTHERS

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

ACCORDING TO LEGEND, there was once an abbey which had a very generous abbot. No beggar was ever turned away, and he gave all he could to the needy. The strange thing was that the more he gave away, the richer the abbey seemed to become.

When the old abbot died, he was replaced by a new one with exactly the opposite nature. One day an elderly man arrived at the monastery, saying that he had stayed there years before, and was seeking shelter again.

“Our monastery cannot provide for strangers like it used to when we were wealthy,” the abbot said. “No one seems to make gifts towards our work nowadays.”

“Ah, well,” said the stranger, “I think that is because you banished two brothers from the monastery.”

1. See Luke 6:38.

“I don’t think we ever did that,” said the puzzled abbot.

“Oh, yes,” was the reply. “They were twins. One was called ‘Give’ and the other, ‘It will be given to you.’¹ You banished ‘Give,’ so his brother decided to go as well.”



Freely you have received, freely give.—*Jesus, Matthew 10:8*

I believe that a trusting attitude and a patient attitude go hand in hand. You see, when you let go and learn to trust God, it releases joy in your life. And when you trust God, you’re able to be more patient. Patience is not just about waiting for something... it’s about how you wait, or your attitude while waiting.—*Joyce Meyer (b. 1943)*

I am determined to be cheerful and happy in whatever situation I

may find myself. For I have learned that the greater part of our misery or unhappiness is determined not by our circumstance, but by our disposition.—*Martha Washington (1731–1802)*

The more you give, the more comes back to you, because God is the greatest giver in the universe, and He won’t let you outgive Him. Go ahead and try. See what happens.—*Randy Alcorn (b. 1954)*

In all of my years of service to my Lord, I have discovered a truth that has never failed and has never been compromised. That truth is that it is beyond the realm of possibilities that one has the ability to outgive God. Even if I give the whole of my worth to Him, He will find a way to give back to me much more than I have given.—*Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892)* ■

MY PROMISES STAND

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE



I told My disciples that every hair of their heads was counted and that not one sparrow falls to the ground without My Father knowing about it. I told them that they didn't need to worry about their material needs, that if they trusted and followed Me, I would make sure their needs were met.¹

This may sound unrealistic in today's materialistic world, where the pursuit of money seems more important than ever. Times have changed, but My promises have not. They are just as sure today as they were 2,000 years ago. Seek first the kingdom of God and obey My Word to the best of your ability, and My Father will provide everything you need.²

When you love Me and are trying to follow My example of loving and caring for others, God will take care of you. That doesn't mean that you can expect a life of luxury and ease. The tough times are also part of your heavenly Father's plan to shape your character. And just as an earthly father doesn't automatically give his children everything they want, My Father doesn't necessarily give you everything you want. He gives you what you need and what He knows is best for you—not only best for your body, but more importantly for your immortal spirit.

1. See Matthew 6:33.

2. See Matthew 6:33.