



CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 22 • Issue 2

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Seeing color for
the first time

Bible Heroines

The women who
did it

The Idle Thought

When thinking
works against you

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE PLAN

Perhaps you've heard the story of a young man who makes a million-dollar mistake in his company and is overwhelmed with stress and worry. A few days pass, and sure enough, his managers call him in and say to him:

"After spending a million dollars training you, I sure hope that you aren't thinking of quitting!"

I wonder if that's how God feels sometimes. After all the time and effort He put into creating us and helping us grow into the men and women He wants us to be and knows we can be, I'm sure He's hoping we stick with the plan. This is what He told the prophet Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you."¹

Several years ago, I began a research project on women in the Bible, thinking I would be relatively familiar with the results. Nearly everyone has heard of Mary Magdalene or Mary the mother of Jesus. But as I dug deeper, I discovered Puah and Shiphrah, Huldah, Lois and Eunice, and so many more.

The result of that research was an article that appears in this issue of *Activated* (pp. 4–5). Rereading it now, I'm again moved by the extraordinary feats of bravery and faith of these remarkable women. They sure stuck with the plan.

But there's much more packed in this issue, including the answers to some questions you may not have known you had. Where do pets go when they die? How does it feel to see color for the first time? Read on to find out.

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1. Jeremiah 1:5



BY KOOS STENGER

WHY DON'T YOU GIVE SOMETHING?

WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM COMING DOWN THE STREET I WAS TEMPTED TO LOOK AWAY. He was ugly, dirty, and clearly asking for money. Maybe if I would just look the other way, he would pass me by and I wouldn't have to deal with him.

I'd had a bit of a rough day myself. I was living in France at the time, raising support for a missionary project by selling books at a market booth; but so far, after several long hours in the hot sun, I had only made a few sales. It was definitely one of those days.

I had nothing else to do, so I kept on watching the man's progress down the alley. Nobody was giving him anything and he looked utterly lost.

Then I heard a still, small voice in my heart. *Why don't you give him something?*

But I have so little, I argued. You have a whole lot more than he does, don't you?

Suddenly I had an idea.

OK, then. If anyone's bought something by the time he passes by, I'll give him the proceeds of that sale.

I figured that would be a smart move. I didn't know what the Lord thought of my proposal, but I had learned that He takes our promises quite seriously. I was waiting to see if anything would happen.

Suddenly a man walked up to my little booth and asked what we were doing. He looked at the books and picked out the smallest little booklet on the table, with a €5 price tag.

"I'll take this one," he said, and handed me two €10 bills.

"Keep the change," he said with a smile. "God bless you!" Then he was off.

Suddenly I remembered the deal I'd just made with God.

The beggar was just now passing my stall. I held out the bills with a big smile.

He looked stunned. "Is that for me?" he crackled with a raspy voice.

"Yes, I believe God wants you to have it!" Suddenly his face lit up. He took the money with a trembling hand and thanked me profusely. Then he was off.

I saw the dirt and the poverty. But God saw something else. He saw a human being.

KOOS STENGER IS A FREELANCE WRITER IN THE NETHERLANDS. ■

BIBLE HEROINES



By RONAN KEANE

IN ANCIENT ISRAEL, MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ROLES WERE CLEARLY DEFINED, with the women's sphere traditionally being the household and everything pertaining to it, including the care of the children, the oversight of the servants, and often the managing of the family's finances. But throughout the Bible, God didn't limit Himself by gender when choosing who to use to accomplish His will, speak His words, or lead His people.

In some cases, the tasks God gave women would have appeared daunting even to most men, but that didn't prevent these bold and full-of-faith women from answering His call.

Meet a few of the amazing women in the Bible Heroines' Hall of Fame:

Sarah, Abraham's wife, has the honor of being the only woman in the

Bible whose age (127) was recorded at death, which is an indication of the respect shown her as mother of the Hebrew people. When Abraham and Sarah were both old, God promised them a son, and she gave birth to her first and only child, Isaac, when she was 90. The apostle Peter cited Sarah as an example of the holy women who trusted in God and possessed inner beauty. (Genesis chapters 11–23; Isaiah 51:2; 1 Peter 3:4–6)

Puah and **Shiprah**, two Hebrew midwives during the time when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, disobeyed the Pharaoh's orders to kill all newborn male Israelites. (Exodus 1:15–22)

Jochebed waited until her baby boy, Moses, was three months old before "obeying" the Pharaoh's

commandment to cast him into the Nile; when she did, it was in a floating baby bed. Because of her faith and ingenuity, Moses was found and adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter, was raised and educated in the Pharaoh's household, and later led his true people out of bondage to the Promised Land. (Exodus 1:22–2:10)

Deborah was a prophetess and judge. She rallied and organized the army that freed Israel from the occupying forces of Jabin, a Canaanite king. (Judges chapter 4)

Jael, another woman, ended that war by slaying Jabin's general, Sisera. (Judges chapter 4)

Ruth left her homeland of Moab and chose to follow God and care for her widowed mother-in-law, and

He blessed her greatly. She settled in Bethlehem and became an ancestor of both King David and Jesus. (Book of Ruth; Matthew 1:5)

Hannah was a childless woman who promised God that if He gave her a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord's service. God answered her prayer, and she became the mother of the prophet Samuel. (1 Samuel 1)

Abigail saved the lives of her servants and family, as well as her own, after her surly husband offended the future King David. Abigail rode out to meet David with a message from God, and David was dissuaded from exacting revenge. (1 Samuel chapter 25)

The widow of Zarephath believed and obeyed the prophet Elijah, and saved three lives in the process—his, her son's, and her own. Through nearly three years of famine, her previously almost depleted supplies of flour and oil never ran out. (1 Kings 17:1–16)

Huldah, a prophetess and contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah, was consulted by King Josiah as to the authenticity of some scrolls that were found in the rundown Temple. Through her testimony, the kingdom

of Judah was brought back to faith in God. (2 Kings 22:13–20)

Esther was a young Jewish girl named Hadassah when she caught the eye of the heathen Persian king, Xerxes, also known as Ahasuerus. After becoming his queen, in a chilling episode of court intrigue, Esther risked her life to save her people when the king's corrupt minister, Haman, ordered all the Jews in the kingdom to be put to death. (Book of Esther)

Mary, the mother of Christ, conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit when she was a virgin and faced the prospect of being stoned to death until an angel persuaded her fiancé, Joseph, to marry her. For her role as mother of the Savior of the world, she was called “blessed among women.” (Luke 1:26–55; Matthew 1:18–25)

Mary and **Martha** were close friends of Jesus and often put Him and His disciples up in their home. Mary was commended by Jesus for listening intently to His teachings (Luke 10:38–42), and Martha was one of the first to identify Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. (John 11:20–27)

The woman at the well was both a Samaritan—a people despised by the Jews—and possibly of ill repute

even among her own. But after Jesus revealed Himself to her, she led many of her townspeople to know Jesus. (John 4:3–30)

Mary Magdalene was a close disciple of Jesus, stood by Him during the crucifixion, and was the first person to whom He appeared after His resurrection. (Mark chapter 16; John chapter 20)

Lydia, a seller of cloth in the Greek port of Philippi, was the first recorded person on the European mainland to embrace Christianity. She also hosted the disciples in her house. (Acts 16:14–15)

Lois and **Eunice** were the grandmother and mother of Timothy, an early Christian leader, whom they trained from the time he was young in the knowledge of the Scriptures. They were renowned for their faith. (2 Timothy 1:5)

These women and countless others after them rose to the callings God had for them, defied the odds, and manifested faith, courage, and love that continue to inspire us today.

RONAN KEANE IS THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF THE *ACTIVATED* MAGAZINE. ■



PETS ACT AS COMPANIONS, HELPERS, and sources of comfort in difficult times. When pets die, the resulting sense of loss can be very painful. People who experience this often search for answers and the hope that they haven't lost forever what had become very dear to their hearts. Our compassion and understanding can help them look to God for their comfort. Our words can help them feel an assurance that they'll be reunited with their beloved pets in heaven.

I believe that heaven will be home to God's ultimate pet rescue service as He restores His creation to its original perfection. While we can't

know from the Bible that pets go to heaven, we do know that Jesus loves us and wants us to be content and happy in our eternal, heavenly home.

Someone was telling me recently how difficult it had been when he'd had to put his pet dog down due to old age. This dog had been his beloved companion for many years and had been with him almost constantly, had slept by his bed and had been a friend he could talk to when he was lonely or depressed. This special dog had originally appeared almost out of nowhere, on his doorstep. This man was convinced that God had sent this beloved pet at a time when he greatly needed companionship and unconditional love.

The deep bond that had been forged between them made this pet

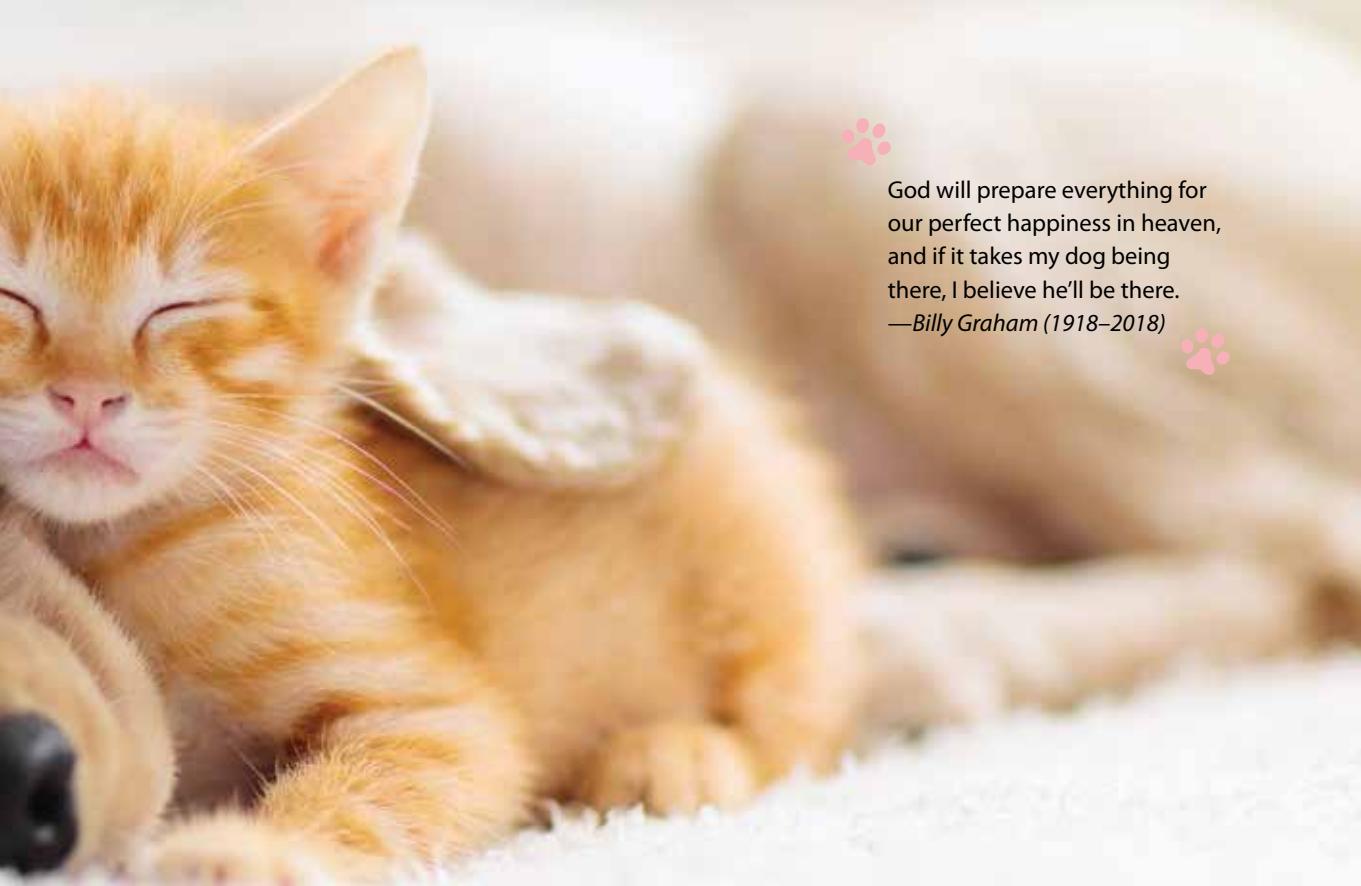
his pride and joy and one of the dearest things in the world to him. I realized that for him this dog's passing caused a grief and mourning virtually as deep as that of the loss of a human member of his family. This loss left an aching void in his heart and a sense of intense loss.

I told him that I believe that God's unlimited love for us will make our eternal home a place of happiness, where He's promised to give us the desires of our heart as we delight ourselves in Him—which may even include being reunited with the pets who meant so much to us on earth.¹

Supporting those who have lost a dear pet is a chance to build a connection with them at a time when they need help and God's love and the hope of what that love can do. Our great privilege—and

1. See Psalm 37:4.

2. This anecdote by Martin McTeg was printed in *Reflections* 427, July 2008



God will prepare everything for our perfect happiness in heaven, and if it takes my dog being there, I believe he'll be there.

—Billy Graham (1918–2018)



responsibility—is to reach out to help those who need comfort and support in their time of suffering, and to offer it to them in a context that meets their need.

Here is an account that shows what a great help this can be:

A few weeks ago, some children in our neighborhood faced a tragedy—the sudden passing of their beloved dog, Kaluua. It was decided that Kaluua would be laid to rest under a shade tree in the garden at her home, next to a beautiful statue of an angel, and that a simple memorial ceremony would be held on Saturday morning. I offered to say a few words at the ceremony to try to cheer up the kids.

We gathered on the lawn on a beautiful summer morning. I explained to the children that heaven

is a real place, like our present world, only much more beautiful, and that it's where we go when we leave this life.

"The Bible isn't entirely clear on some details," I went on to explain, "but I believe, like many others, that family members and close friends who have gone before us to heaven will greet us when we arrive. I also believe there will be pets in heaven."

Then we sang a hymn, laid flowers on Kaluua's grave, and said a prayer. The kids all said goodbye and returned to their busy little lives. But the adults who had attended the memorial stayed and thanked me over and over. "That was beautiful." "It was so uplifting!" "The best memorial service I have ever been to."

I thanked them and thought at first that their kind remarks had been out of courtesy more than anything, but as we continued talking, I realized that they had also been comforted by my description of heaven. I realized then how little many people know about heaven. Many don't understand that, if they accept God's salvation in Jesus, the door will swing wide open when they arrive. As believers, our every thought of heaven and the afterlife should be only of joy and gratitude for such a precious gift.²

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



A WHOLE NEW WORLD

BY GEORGE SOSICH

SOME DEGREE OF COLOR BLINDNESS AFFECTS AROUND 8% OF MEN AND LESS THAN 1% OF WOMEN. The degree of disability ranges from mild inability to differentiate between certain colors to achromatopsia or total color blindness. This means that there are some people among us that cannot enjoy the full spectrum of beautiful colors that God has splashed into His creation.

Recently, however, many of these people have been able to see colors for the first time in their lives with the aid of a new type of glasses produced by a company called

EnChroma. These glasses work by selectively filtering out wavelengths of light at the precise point where confusion or excessive overlap of color sensitivity occurs, allowing the wearer to see colors more accurately or even for the first time. While for some users the difference is not so stark, many users report life-changing improvements in their color vision.

I recently came across a series of videos of color-blind people being presented with a pair of these amazing glasses. In most cases the glasses were given as a gift by relatives or friends, and in settings surrounded by other loved ones and vividly colored items like balloons and flowers. Many of them were overcome with emotion and burst into tears at seeing some colors for the very first time. Some excitedly pointed at various objects, asking in wonderment things like, “Is that purple?” “Is that orange?” Others

were so overwhelmed that they simply sat down.

Observing these reactions reminded me of the verse, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”¹

We live in an amazingly beautiful world, and our spirits inhabit equally amazing bodies by which we can enjoy many wonderful experiences. But these experiences are not completely perfect. Unfortunately, right now, like the color-blind person, we are limited in our ability to fully enjoy God’s creation and the beauty of nature.

Take a walk in a beautiful forest and you might have to contend with the bugs or foul weather. Do you love snow? Careful you don’t get frostbite. Love food? Don’t overeat or eat something that doesn’t agree with you or get food poisoning.

1. 1 Corinthians 2:9 NLT

2. See Revelation 22:3.

3. C. S. Lewis (1898–1963), *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980), 136–37

4. 1 Corinthians 13:12 NLT



Neither are our bodies perfect. We get tired, we get sick, and some even suffer debilitating chronic conditions. There is so much that is good and beautiful to enjoy in this life, but along with it, there always seems to be some sort of obstacle to that enjoyment as well.

But that will change the day we enter heaven! The impediments to our ability to enjoy beauty and nature will be completely removed.² On that day we, like the wearers of the EnChroma glasses, will be overwhelmed by the beauty we behold.

Those who have had near-death experiences report that they visited a place of indescribable beauty. A land that is very similar to our world as it is, but so much more beautiful. They say that the flowers and trees are so much more vivid in color. Some claim to have seen colors and heard sounds not known to us now. Some

described the music and sound as so much more beautiful and harmonic than anything they've ever heard.

C. S. Lewis in his famous book *Mere Christianity* said that the pleasures we enjoy on this earth are mere copies, echoes, or mirages of their true realities in heaven:

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or

mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others do the same.³

Every believer will one day be catapulted from this life, where we “see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror,”⁴ to the heavenly realm, where we will see God face to face and finally be able to see and experience His creation in all its magnificent color and glory. Like the first-time wearers of the EnChroma glasses, I have no doubt we will be overcome with the euphoric exhilaration of the moment.

GEORGE SOSICH IS A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY, MUSICIAN, AND WRITER BASED IN JAPAN. ■



BY KEITH PHILLIPS

YOUR HEAVENLY ABODE

IF YOU WERE TOLD THAT A BRAND-NEW SPLENDID HOME WAS YOURS, bought and paid for, would you believe it? What if it was guaranteed in writing? Wouldn't you believe it then, and wouldn't you want to find out where your new home was located and what it looked like? Wouldn't you ask about the view, the neighbors, the climate, and every other detail you could think of? Wouldn't you start dreaming of the day you would move in? And how do you suppose that news would change your life and priorities in the meantime?

Well, someone *has* promised you such an eternal home—Jesus—and

He has put it in writing. “In My Father’s house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there you may be also.”¹ If you have received Jesus, it’s all yours—no payments, no taxes, no upkeep. Sound too good to be true? Well, that’s just the beginning.

Even the most luxurious home won’t do you much good without good health and time to enjoy it, so God made provision for those too. “I am the resurrection and the life,” Jesus promises. “He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”² Eternal life in a new, supernatural body that is impervious to sickness, disease, or death is also part of the offer.³

And just as the best things in this life are shared, so it is in the next. You will be reunited with loved ones

and friends to enjoy all of this and much, much more—gifts from your heavenly Father, who the Bible calls the very spirit of love.⁴

KEITH PHILLIPS WAS *ACTIVATED*’S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FOR 14 YEARS FROM 1999 TO 2013. HE AND HIS WIFE CARYN NOW WORK WITH THE HOMELESS IN THE USA. ■

You can know that you will join Jesus in heaven after you die by praying this prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me for the forgiveness of my sins and for my salvation. Thank You for Your promise of an eternity with You. I invite You into my life and ask You to help me learn to follow Your ways and to love others. Amen.

1. John 14:2–3

2. John 11:25–26

3. See 1 Corinthians 15:51–54.

4. See 1 John 4:8.



BY ROSANE PEREIRA

THE SOURCE OF STRENGTH

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK IS ONE OF THE SHORTEST BOOKS IN THE BIBLE. It begins with the writer's laments over Israel's troubles but concludes with a beautiful affirmation of faith: "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!"¹

During the coronavirus crisis, my first reaction was to panic, doubt, and despair. But seeing that people in my prayer groups were posting songs of praise and words of thankfulness, I realized, like the Old Testament

prophet, that praising God through this adversity was the way to victory.

I also listened to James Taylor's biography about his troubled family and loss of loved ones. He affirms that songwriting was his way of healing whenever these sad events would come in his life. Much like another famous musician, Eric Clapton, who after grieving the death of his young boy for almost a year, decided to make a song in the memory of his child. He composed "Tears in Heaven," which became a big hit and has been a source of consolation for many through the years!

After being locked in due to COVID-19 for about two months, my son and I decided to go to the beach to see the sunset. There was no one in the area where we parked, and we were able to watch the marvelous sunset over the sea, walk in the wet

sand, run from the waves, talk, take pictures, and enjoy a connection with nature that had been missing for so long.

As we were leaving, my son noticed an older couple sitting on the veranda of their home bordering the sand. "Beautiful, isn't it?" my son commented, to which they replied: "Yes, and a different show every day!"

Right away those verses of Habakkuk came to mind, and they made perfect sense for the first time. God is good all the time! "From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is."² It's in rejoicing in Jesus and His goodness that we draw our strength!

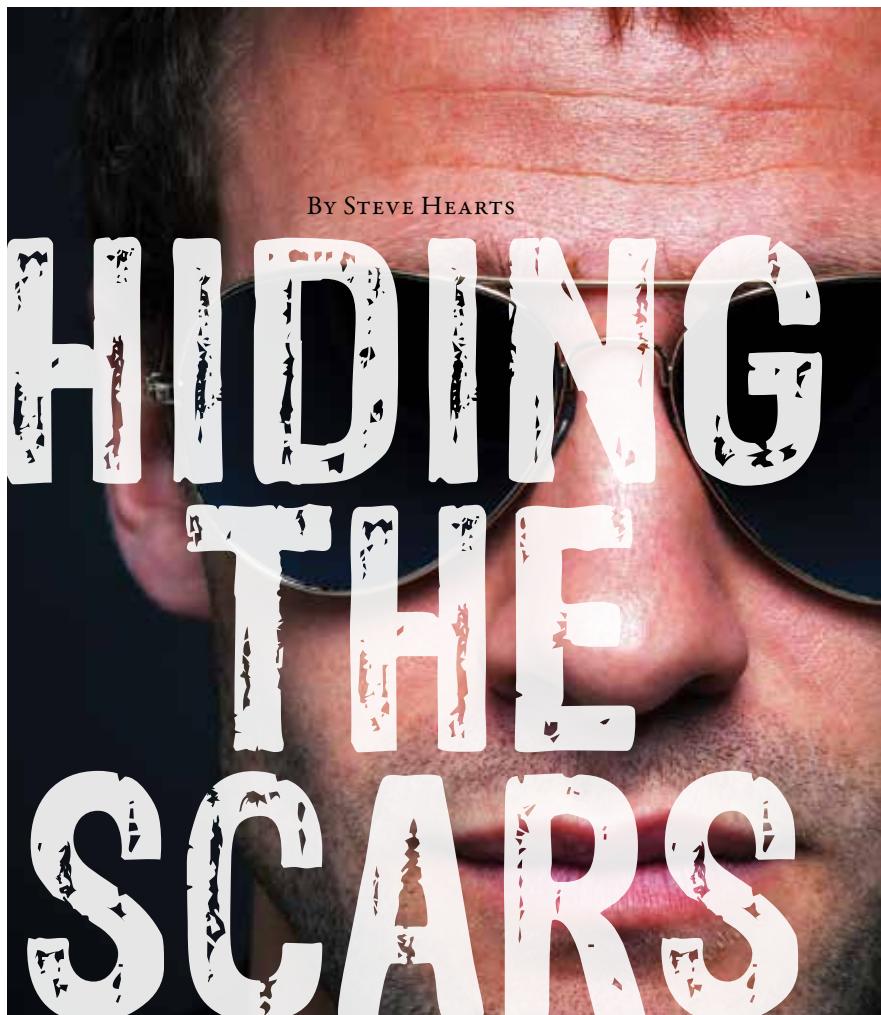
ROSANE PEREIRA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND WRITER IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

1. Habakkuk 3:17–18 NLT
2. Psalm 103:17 NIV

WE ALL GO THROUGH EXPERIENCES IN LIFE THAT LEAVE US WITH SCARS, and whether the scars are physical or emotional, we often try to hide them out of fear of what others might think if they were to see them. These scars could be anything about ourselves that we may feel ashamed of and try to hide—such as buried hurts from the past, inner struggles we face, physical traits we aren't proud of, etc. Throughout my life I have come to learn that there is great freedom in being open about our scars rather than hiding them. Here's an example of one of my proverbial scars I've learned not to be ashamed of.

Several years ago, I did a musical performance for the students of a university. When I finished, a girl who had been in the audience came up to me and told me how much she'd enjoyed the program. Then she made a request I wasn't ready for. "Would you mind taking off your sunglasses for a moment? I'd like to see your eyes."

For as long as I can remember, I've been wearing sunglasses when I go



out or interact with others. Though I'm not ashamed of being blind, this was the first time a total stranger had asked to see my eyes, so I was a bit unsettled. But I told myself, *What's the big deal? Especially as it's unlikely you'll ever see her again.*

I removed the sunglasses, and inwardly braced myself for what seemed like several minutes, though it had to be much less than that. Finally, she said, "Your eyes are beautiful."

"There's no need to hide them." I never saw her again after that, but I also never forgot what she said.

Some years later, I was introduced over the internet to the girl who is now my girlfriend. We didn't live in the same city, so at first we chatted over Google Hangouts, then decided to try calling on Skype. The first call was just audio, as it hadn't occurred to me to do a video call. When she suggested we try a video call the next

1. Matthew 5:16 NIV



time, I agreed—feeling more than a little nervous.

Before the call, out of habit, I donned my sunglasses. I knew they helped improve my presentation when I performed, and I wanted to put my very best foot forward. But to my dismay, after the initial greetings, she said, “I was hoping to see your eyes.”

This time, I was genuinely nervous. Unlike the girl at the university,

this was someone whose opinion I cared about. But this moment would eventually come, and there was no use delaying the inevitable.

When I removed the glasses, I had the same sense of being closely examined. She said, “What beautiful eyes! You don’t need the glasses when talking with me.”

I recently heard a short, moving story that clearly shows how valuable certain scars can be, because of the reminders they carry. It tells of a boy who was attacked by a crocodile while swimming in a pond near his home. He screamed loudly as the creature grabbed him by the legs, and his mother, hearing the screams from inside the house, came running out and grabbed his arms. She held on with all her might, digging her nails into his flesh, until a neighbor who also heard the screams hurried over with his pistol and shot the crocodile.

While the boy was in recovery, a newspaper reporter came to see him and asked him if he’d show him the scars on his legs where the crocodile had bitten him. He rolled up his pants legs, then he said, “But *these* are the scars you need to see,” as he rolled up the sleeves of his shirt and

revealed his mother’s fingernail marks on his arms where she had grabbed him. “I have these,” he said, “because my mother never let go of me.”

Jesus also had scars. Even after His miraculous resurrection, He still had nail marks on His hands and a hole in His side where He had been pierced. Though He was able to make them go away, He not only chose to keep them, He willingly showed them to His followers to prove to them that He had indeed resurrected, just as He had promised He would.

So if Jesus wasn’t ashamed of His scars, why should we be ashamed of ours? When we choose to let our scars show rather than hide them, God’s light and love can shine through them, causing an indelible impact on the lives of others for His glory. “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”¹

STEVE HEARTS HAS BEEN BLIND SINCE BIRTH. HE IS A WRITER, MUSICIAN, AND MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN NORTH AMERICA. ■



BY MARIE ALVERO

YOU DON'T NEED A GURU

NOT LONG AGO, my social media exploded with the news that a high-profile couple had announced their divorce. This power couple had established a following as “relationship gurus,” with books, websites, videos, podcasts, numerous guest appearances and endorsements, and a very expensive “couple’s conference.” People who had bought into their empire felt betrayed, lied to, and confused.

The idea that “if this couple, who did date night, counseling, regular couple getaways, had a strong friend group, nary a financial worry, an army of trainers, house staff, and yet all their relationship ‘wisdom’ failed at marriage, why should the rest of us even try?” was expressed in many different forms of social media comments.

But when I heard the news, I wasn’t surprised. Not because “I

could see it coming,” but because I’ve learned how easy it is for anyone to fail, even (or maybe *especially*) in their area of expertise.

For most of my adult life, I’ve been the person who just wanted to be handed the formula or the program for success. I wanted to be told “do this, that, and the other; and don’t do this other stuff, and you will have a great [marriage, financial situation, family, relationship with God, career, etc.]” I didn’t want the responsibility of doing my own research, making my own mistakes, and working out my own faith/path.

As you can imagine, this is a great recipe for disappointment. More than once, the gurus have failed. So let me summarize my learning here for you:

- The Bible puts a very personal responsibility on each of us when it tells us to be “careful to do the good things that result from being saved, obeying God with deep reverence, shrinking back from all that might displease him.”¹

- We’re not meant to put our faith in anyone, no matter how qualified they seem. That doesn’t mean that there isn’t good advice out there. It simply means that our confidence is in God. We build our house on the rock of God’s truth precisely so that it doesn’t get swept away with every storm or disappointment.²
- Give people permission to fail. We’re all just trying our best here. My security doesn’t come from someone else’s perfection or infallibility; it comes from knowing that God is in control and that nothing can separate me from His love.³

This may seem like spiritual advice for practical matters, and it is—because even practical matters involve faith, and in order for faith to endure, it needs to be rooted in truth.

1. Philippians 2:12 TLB

2. See Matthew 7:24–27.

3. See Romans 8:38–39.

MARIE ALVERO IS A FORMER MISSIONARY TO AFRICA AND MEXICO. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES A HAPPY, BUSY LIFE WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN IN CENTRAL TEXAS, USA. ■



By CHANDRA REES

THE IDLE THOUGHT

BY NATURE I'M A BROODER. Any topic or event will do, real or imagined. What's astounding is that until recently I hadn't noticed the way my brooding was impacting my interactions with others, and specifically my husband. I think all women attempt to read a person's looks, gestures, and other unspoken communication, but I have a tendency to fixate on those musings until they've developed a life of their own. Sometimes my conclusions might be correct, but often I'm either off the mark or can't fathom the full picture, and I've wasted a lot of mental energy and emotion without good cause.

One morning my thoughts were in a rage. I felt upset by a brief disagreement with my husband. In fact, the whole exchange had hardly consisted of a few words, but

my mind was awhirl attempting to dissect what it was that he was *actually* thinking. I was getting more and more irritated as I mentally responded to his imaginary arguments, building my case against him. I was waging a mental war against my husband without him even being aware of it. In the end, I felt awful when he stopped by on his way out, put his arms around me, told me he loved me, and apologized that our day had gotten off to a rough start.

I couldn't help but wonder how many times my thoughts had negatively influenced my interaction and communications with my husband. I'm usually cautious in *verbally* expressing anger, but here I was, freely hosting a dispute *in my mind*. I had allowed my idle thoughts to alter

Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, Lord, my rock and my redeemer.—*Psalm 19:14 CEB*

my view of the man I love, without even giving him a fair hearing.

In the Bible, Jesus warns that we will have to give account for every idle word we speak. But I wonder how often the *unspoken* idle words fester in my heart and put a spin on my perception of reality and my actions. Will He ask me to account for those too?

Ever since that day, I've tried to catch myself when I begin brooding or thinking unloving thoughts and to replace them with positive ones. I haven't yet achieved this new thought process fully, but I'm working toward it, and I've already seen the positive effects in my life.

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A photograph of a young woman with blonde hair, wearing a white crop top, dark jeans, and a red jacket, captured mid-air in a joyful jump. She is smiling broadly with her arms raised. The background is a warm, golden sunset over a grassy hillside.

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

FULLNESS OF JOY

I want you to be filled with My joy, which will be your strength. I want you to rest in My love and be at peace.

Sometimes your expectations are unrealistic and cause you to overextend yourself, and then you end up feeling that you failed or didn't make the grade. I want to wipe away all those negative feelings. I want to wipe away your fears and worries, and give you peace. All is well.

As the scripture says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength!" You can hold on to that promise. That can be your motto from this day forth, no matter what challenges you are facing. Fear and worry are debilitating and dampen your personal happiness. So relax. Trust Me.

Let My joy be your strength. Rejoice in your victories. Rejoice in the challenges. Rejoice in the blessings. Rejoice in the triumphs. Rejoice in the changes. Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice! Do not dwell on your seeming defeats. Knowing Me is a joyous experience! I know it's not always easy, and there are a lot of trials, pain, and suffering along the way, but there can always be the joy of My Spirit in your heart.