

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 1 • Issue 1

NEW BEGINNINGS

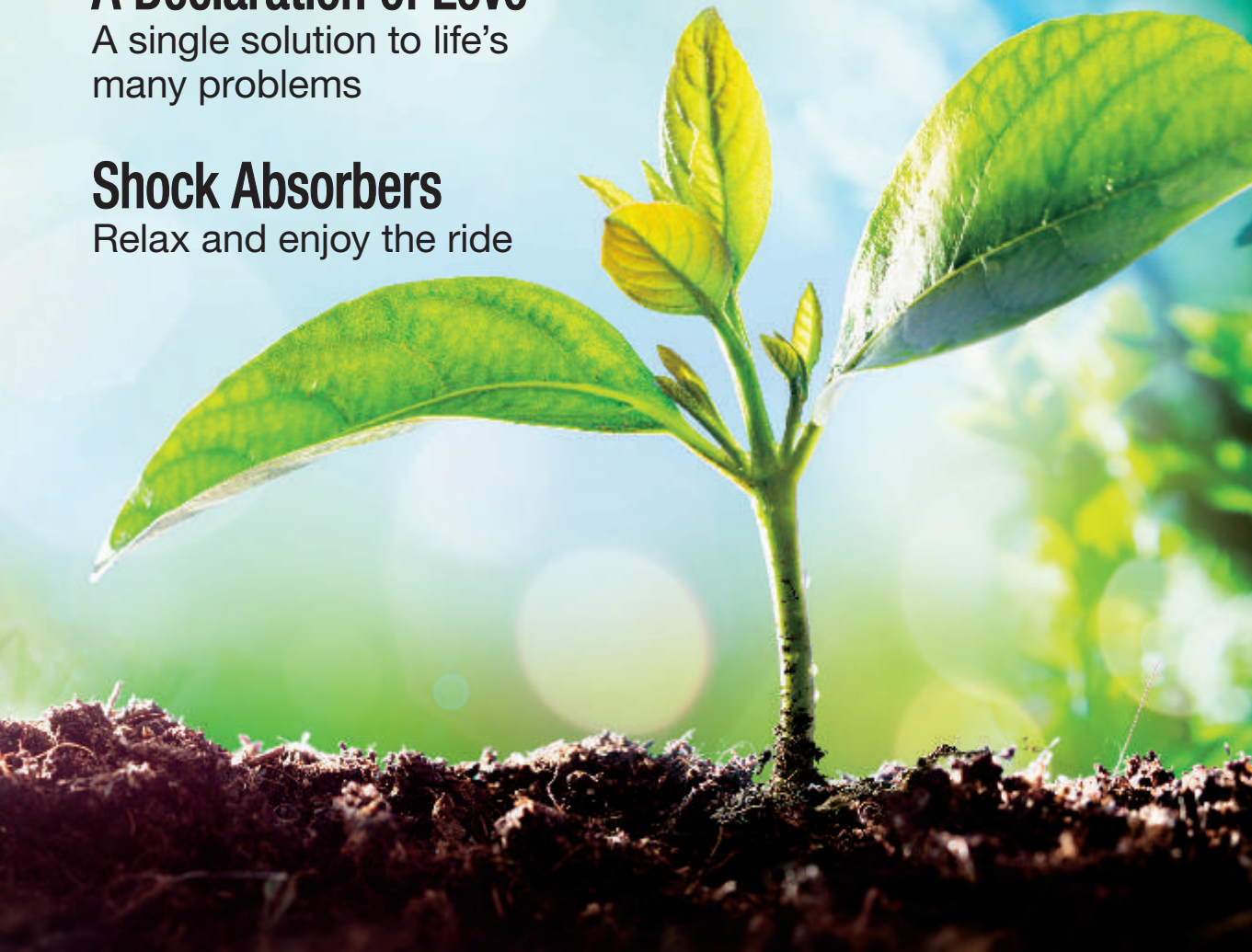
Meet the Man who can
make it happen

A Declaration of Love

A single solution to life's
many problems

Shock Absorbers

Relax and enjoy the ride





PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Life sure can be confusing! We search for answers, but often end up with more questions. What are we here for? Why is there so much pain and heartache in the world? Where can we find hope, even when things seem to be going all wrong? Where can we find the strength to face life's challenges? Where can we find happiness that lasts?

The answers to all these questions and more are found in a very personal and close relationship with Jesus, who promises us not only eternal life in Heaven, but that He will stick by our side until we get there. He has a world of happiness, peace, freedom, contentment, and everlasting love waiting for you. All you have to do is connect to the source of this life-changing power. Receive Jesus into your heart, and He will fill your life with the love and understanding you have always longed for.

And this is what *Activated* is all about—helping you get activated by connecting to God's power so you can experience that love in your daily life. The Bible says that "God is love,"¹ and His love has such power that once you connect to Him, you will never be the same again!

In this and other issues of *Activated* you will learn how to tap into God's power through prayer, studying His Word, and putting His principles of love into practice in your daily life. We invite you to turn on the power and connect to His love today!

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

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¹ John 4:8

“WHAT MANNER OF MAN IS THIS?”



BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

HE WAS BORN on the dirty floor of a barn. As an infant, He narrowly escaped a jealous king's death squad when His parents fled with Him to a foreign country, where they remained until it was safe to return. Until the age of 30, He was a carpenter like His earthly father. But His heavenly Father needed Him for another job that only He could do.

When the time came for Him to begin His life's work, He went about everywhere doing good—helping people, caring for children, healing heartaches, strengthening tired bodies, and saving all who believed in Him. He not only preached His message, but He lived it amongst the people. He ministered not only to people's spiritual needs, but He also spent a great deal of time tending to their physical and material needs, miraculously healing them when they were sick and feeding them when they were hungry, all the while sharing His life and His love.

His religion was so simple that He said you must become as a little child to receive it. He didn't advise people to perform complicated ceremonies or keep difficult rules. All He did was teach love and show love as He strove to lead God's children into the true Kingdom of God, where the only laws are to “love the Lord with all your heart” and “love your neighbor as yourself.”

He had very little to do with the hypocritical, pompous, rich-robed, religious leaders of that day, except when they insisted on annoying Him with their critical questions. Then He would rebuke them publicly and expose them as the “blind leaders of the blind” that they were.

He refused to compromise with their false religious system, but rather worked totally outside of it. He shared His message and love with the poor and common folk, most of whom had long ago abandoned and been abandoned by organized religion.

He made Himself of no reputation and was a companion of drunks, prostitutes, reviled tax collectors, and sinners—the outcasts and downtrodden of society. He even told them that they would enter the Kingdom of Heaven before the so-called “good” people, the self-righteous and the religious leaders who rejected Him and His simple message of love. The power of His love and appeal was so great and gave such great faith to the sincere truth-seekers that many didn't hesitate to leave everything they had to immediately follow Him.

Once, while crossing a large lake with His disciples, a great storm arose which threatened to sink the boat they were in. He commanded the winds and the waves to cease—and immediately there



Death itself could not stop His work or His words!

sedition and subversion. And though the Roman governor found Him innocent, he was pressured by these religionists to execute Him.

Just prior to His arrest, this Man, Jesus Christ, had said, “They couldn’t even touch Me without My Father’s permission. If I would but raise My little finger, He would send legions of angels to rescue Me!” But instead, He chose to die, to save you and me. Nobody took His life from Him; He laid it down. He *chose* to give His life because He knew that was the only way God’s plan for our salvation could be fulfilled.

But even His death did not satisfy His jealous enemies. To ensure that His followers couldn’t steal His body and claim He’d come back to life, they placed a huge stone over the entrance of His tomb and posted a group of Roman soldiers there to guard it. This was a scheme that proved futile, however, as these same guards became eyewitnesses to the greatest miracle of all. Three days after His lifeless body was laid to rest in that cold tomb, Jesus rose from the dead, the victor over death and Hell forever!

Death itself could not stop His work or His words! Since that miraculous day nearly 2,000 years ago, this same Man, Jesus Christ, has done more to change history and the course of civilization and the condition of man than any other leader, group, government, or empire. He has given hope, eternal life, and the love of God to billions.

God, the great Creator, is a Spirit. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere and in everything—far beyond our limited human comprehension. So He sent Jesus, in the form of a man, to understand us and show us what He Himself is like and to bring us to Himself. And though many great teachers have spoken and taught about love and God, Jesus *is* love and He *is* God! Jesus is the only one who died for the sins of the world and rose from the dead. He is the only Savior. ✠

was a great calm. His disciples, astonished by such a demonstration of miraculous power, exclaimed to one another, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

Throughout His ministry He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansed lepers, and raised the dead. In fact, so marvelous were His works that they prompted a leading member of the religious establishment that bitterly opposed and resented Him to exclaim, “We know that You are come from God, for no man could do these miracles that You do unless God were with him!”

As His message of love spread and His followers multiplied, the envious leaders of the religious establishment realized what a threat this formerly unknown carpenter had become to them. His simple doctrine of love was destroying their entire religious system by liberating the people from their power and control.

These powerful enemies ultimately had Him arrested and brought to trial on false charges of

ONE SOLITARY LIFE

THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

JAMES A. FRANCIS

HERE IS A MAN who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family.

He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that contemporary society would consider a sign of greatness.

He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing of this world, only the power of His divine manhood. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him.

His friends ran away. One of them denied Him; another

betrayed Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial.

He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth—His coat. When He was dead, He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today He is the centerpiece of the human race, the greatest source of guidance and divine inspiration.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as that one solitary life—Jesus! ✠

Why did Jesus die?


Why would the Lord of the universe, God in the flesh, allow Himself to be captured, falsely accused, tried and condemned, whipped, stripped, and nailed to a cross like a common criminal? The answer is simple: Because He loved you and me!

All of us at times have done wrong and been unloving and unkind to others. The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”¹ The worst thing about our sins is that they separate us from God, who is absolutely sinless and perfect. In order to bring us to God, Jesus, the sinless Son of God, took the sins of all mankind upon Himself. He took the punishment for our sins and suffered the horrible pain of death by crucifixion. He died the death of a sinner that through His sacrifice, we might find forgiveness and freedom from our sins.

Meet the Man

If you haven't yet met Jesus or received His forgiveness and gift of eternal life, you can right now by praying the following:

Thank You, Jesus, for paying the price for my mistakes and wrongs, so I can be forgiven. I ask You now, dear Jesus, to please come into my heart, forgive me, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen.



Twenty centuries have
come and gone,
and today He is the
centerpiece of the
human race

¹ Romans 3:23

Shock absorbers

“He will keep in perfect peace all those who trust in [God], whose thoughts turn often to the Lord.”¹

OH, THAT DITCH AGAIN! I was driving home and—as I had done every day for months—had to drive very slowly over a dip in the road to avoid a bone-jarring jolt.

My car was due for a general servicing, so I took it to the mechanic I regularly go to. As he got behind the wheel to pull it into his shop, I was feeling pretty good about myself for having remembered to have my car serviced. He had moved it only inches, however, when he stepped on the brakes, turned to me with a look of surprise, and asked, “How can you drive your car like this?! Your shock absorbers are gone!”

My reflex reaction to the instant diagnosis was to question the mechanic’s motives. How

could he be so sure, so quick? But since the car was 10 years old and my past experience with this mechanic gave me no reason to mistrust him, I asked him to check the shocks and replace them if necessary, which he did.

Oops, that ditch again. As I was driving my newly serviced car home, my mind was somewhere else and I didn’t think to slow down for the familiar dip until it was too late. I braced myself for the inevitable impact—tailbone to floor and car body to wheels—but hardly felt that old ditch. The mechanic had been right. I had gotten so used to driving my car with no shock absorbers that I had forgotten what it was like to have them.

If you drive only on good roads you hardly need shock absorbers, but when the road gets rough or you come to one of those bone-jarring dips or potholes, it’s a different story. Isn’t life a lot like that? Most of the time, thank God, the ride is pretty smooth. But what about when we lose someone close to us, or suffer a business failure, or an injury shakes our lives? What if there is a power failure and we are stuck in an elevator for hours, or we find ourselves in an earthquake or other disaster? What kind of “shock absorbers” can help us make it through incidents like these in one piece?

Ask the Man who walked the rough and rugged road to Mount Calvary and gave His life



there for you and me. He should know—and He does. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”² “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but because of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”³

So many people drive through life with absolutely no shock absorbers, carefully trying to avoid every bump and hole in the road that could give them a jolt. They try to only drive on the smoothest roads because they know they’re not prepared for any sudden bumps. They don’t have the peace that Jesus offers—shock absorbers for their earthly vehicle. Maybe they don’t even

Prayer for the Day

Dear Jesus,

Sometimes when I feel weak, when I feel low, when I feel muddled and lack words to express what’s on my heart, I bring a silent prayer to You. I know You understand, because You lift my would-be worries and fears, and You kiss away my tears.

realize they need shock absorbers, or how much wear and tear these things can spare them.

There are going to be bumps on the road of life. That’s inevitable. But with Jesus’ loving hands underneath you, you’ll hardly notice them. You can just relax, enjoy the ride, and arrive safe and sound at your final destination.

Put yourself in His hands, and see the difference it makes. 🌿

MATTHEW NANTES IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN GREECE.

¹Isaiah 26:3 TLB

²Matthew 11:28

³John 16:33

FEEDING READING The Gospel of John

The four Gospels of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—tell the beautiful story of Jesus’ life on earth. If you read the fourth Gospel first, the Gospel of John, you will find that it is one of the easiest to understand, contains the most words of Jesus, and outlines His loving plan for your life. Following are some of the key passages and verses from the Book of John which deserve special attention as you read and study:

Jesus: The Word of God, the True Light of the World.

Chapter 1, verses 1–18

Key verse: John 1:12

What does it mean to be “born again”?

Chapter 3, verses 1–21

Key verse: John 3:16

The woman at the well: “He told me everything I did.”

Chapter 4, verses 1–30

Key verse: John 4:24

All you can eat!—Jesus feeds 5,000.

Chapter 6, verses 1–13, 25–40

Key verse: John 6:35

The Good Shepherd—An all-time favorite chapter.

Chapter 10, verses 1–30

Key verses: John 10:27–28

Lazarus is raised from the dead.—How did it happen?

Chapter 11, verses 1–46

Key verse: John 11:25

Jesus, the True Vine.

Chapter 15 (all)

Key verses: John 15:4–5

Jesus’ last prayer, for love and unity.

Chapter 17 (all)

Key verse: John 17:23



ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Stress Reducers



Q: I'm under pressure at work and pressure at home, pressure to succeed, pressure to provide for my family, and pressure to be a good parent and spouse—pressure from every side. So often I just don't know how to cope! What can I do?

A: Stress is becoming an almost inescapable part of modern life—*almost*, because there are things one can do to avoid getting under undue stress or living in a state of constant stress. While some of the following tips are of a strictly physical nature—getting sufficient exercise or eating the right kinds of foods, for example—others add a spiritual dimension by bringing Jesus into the equation in a very real and personal way.

Jesus can be your counselor, coach, business manager, intercessor, executive secretary, personal trainer, confidant, and best friend. In short, He is everything you need to contend with the stress that has become part of modern living and to come through a winner!



Tips for Stress Reduction

Pray. Make quiet time with Jesus a daily habit.

Go to bed on time; get enough sleep.

Get up on time so you can start the day unrushed.

Say no to projects that won't fit into your time schedule, or that will compromise your mental health.

Delegate tasks to others who are capable.

Laugh.

Allow extra time to do things and to get to places.

Pace yourself. Spread out big changes and difficult projects over time, when possible; don't lump the hard things all together.

Concentrate on things you have direct control over—yourself and your habits—rather than on things that you have little or no control over.

Get organized so everything has its place.

Separate worries from concerns. If a situation is a valid concern, find out what God would have you do about it. If you're worried about something that you can't or shouldn't do anything about, then put it in His hands.

Live within your budget; don't buy things on credit if you don't have to.

Take one day at a time.

Have backups—an extra car key in your wallet; an extra house key buried in the garden; extra postage stamps; batteries for your flashlight, cell phone, etc.; back up your computer files.

Carry God's Word with you to read while waiting or during spare moments.

Take your work seriously, but yourself not at all.

Use the time while driving or riding in your car to listen to Bible-based cassettes, CDs, or MP3s that can help improve your quality of life.

Keep a folder of favorite Scriptures or inspirational readings on hand.

Remember that the shortest bridge between despair and hope is often a hearty "Thank You, Jesus!"

Don't take on new work until you have taken care of timely matters that are still pending.



Having problems? Talk to God on the spot. Try to nip small problems in the bud. Don't wait until it's time to go to bed to pray.

Remind yourself that you are not the general manager of the universe.

Simplify and declutter your life.

Every night before bed, think of at least one thing you're grateful for that came out of your day.

Develop a forgiving attitude. (Most people are doing the best they can.)

Get enough exercise.

Be kind to unkind people. (They probably need it the most.)

Eat right.

Slow down.

Thank God for what's coming, because He won't send you anything that you and He together can't handle. ✝

WHERE TROUBLES CAN'T TOUCH YOU

Submariners tell us that no storms ever reach very deep into the ocean. The water is perfectly calm a hundred feet down, no matter how high the breakers may rise on the surface. There is quiet in the depths that no surface storms can disturb. This is possible, too, in human lives; there can be serenity and peace within, undisturbed by the storms of the world. Jesus is our peace.

When life feels like a tiny, windowless room and its four walls are closing in, you can create a window of escape through the Word of God.

As you read and meditate on the Word, as you believe God's promises and claim them as your own, wonderful things await you. The warm sunshine of His love will melt away the tension.

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

{ A Declaration of Love }

LOVE IS THE PRIMARY solution to all of man's problems of today, as well as those of the past—true love, the love of God and the love of fellow man. This is still God's answer, even in such a complex and confused society as that of the world today.

It is people's rejection of the love of God and His loving laws that causes them to be selfish and cruel to their neighbor—man's inhumanity to man, which is so apparent in today's weary world with all of its enslavement by oppression, tyranny, and exploitation. Hundreds of millions suffer needlessly from hunger and malnutrition, disease and ill health, poverty, overwork, and abuse—not to mention the tortures of war and nightmares of perpetual fearful insecurity. All of these evils are caused by people's lack of love for God and each other, as well as their defiance of God's laws of love, faith, peace, and harmony.

The solution is simple: If we truly love God, we can love each other. We can then follow His rules of life, liberty, and the possession of happiness, and all will be well and happy in Him.

This is why Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment is to love—to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." And the second is "like it"—it's almost equal, almost the same: "You shall love your *neighbor* as yourself."¹

If we have
real love, we
can't face a
needy situation
without
doing
something
about it

If we have real love, we can't face a needy situation without doing something about it. We can't just pass by the poor man on the road to Jericho! We must take action like the Good Samaritan did.² Many people today say of those who need help, "Oh, I'm so sorry, how sad." But compassion must be put into action. That's the difference between pity and compassion: Pity just feels sorry; compassion does something about it.

We must demonstrate our faith by our works, and love can seldom be proven without some

¹Matthew 22:37-39

²See Luke 10:25-37



Let us not love
in word or in
tongue, but in
deed and in truth

tangible manifestation. To say you love someone and yet not try to help them physically in whatever way they may need—food, clothing, shelter, and so on—this is not love! True, the need for real love is a spiritual need, but it must be manifested physically, in works—“faith working through love.”³ “For whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”⁴

However, we must always remember that the greatest manifestation of our love is not the mere sharing of our material things and personal possessions, but the sharing of *ourselves* with others, along with our love and our faith. Jesus had nothing material to share with His disciples, only His love and His life, which He gave for them and for us, that we too might have life and love forever.

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”⁵ So we consider that the sharing of ourselves, our love, and our lives with others is the greatest of all sharing and our ultimate goal.

True happiness is found not in personal pursuit of selfish pleasure and satisfaction, but in finding God and giving His love to others and bringing *them* happiness. Do that, and happiness will pursue and overtake and overwhelm you personally, without your even seeking it for yourself.

“For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”⁶ If you sow love, you’re going to reap love. If you sow friendship, you’re going to reap friendship. So obey God’s laws of love—unselfish love, love for Him and others. Give others that love which is their due, and so shall you also receive. “Whatever measure you use to give—large or small—will be used to measure what is given back to you.”⁷

Find out what wonders love can do. You’ll find a whole new world of love you have only dreamed of! There are wonders of love that you can enjoy along with some other lonely soul—if only you will try. If you give love, you will get love.

Love wasn’t put in your heart to stay.
Love isn’t love till you give it away! ✂

(THE ABOVE WAS EXCERPTED FROM DAVID BRANDT BERG’S ARTICLE BY THE SAME TITLE, PUBLISHED IN *DARE TO BE DIFFERENT*.)

³Galatians 5:6

⁴John 3:17-18

⁵John 15:13

⁶Galatians 6:7

⁷Luke 6:38 TLB

Hey, wait a minute!



DAVE AND ANNE met at a travel agency. Dave was buying an airline ticket from Anne, when they got into a conversation that went something like this:

ANNE: I'm sorry this is taking so long. I'm so tired I can hardly think! I don't know which is worse—the illness I'm just getting over, or the medication I've been taking for it! It's going to be a long day!

DAVE: I know what you mean about the medicine. Personally, I do a lot better by simply keeping God's health guidelines in the Bible. Then I can have faith that God will either keep me healthy or heal me if I do get sick.

ANNE: Really? That sounds nice, but how can I have faith in God when I don't even know if there *is* a God?

DAVE: If you want proof of God's existence, just look around. It reminds me of the answer the world-renowned nuclear physicist Robert Millikan gave a skeptic who asked him how a man of science could believe in God—"Just as behind every watch there had to be a watchmaker, so behind the intricate precision and timing of this great universe there had to be a great Creator or Designer."

God is the all-powerful, all-knowing Spirit that pervades all things

ANNE: Well then, how do we know what God looks like? Nobody's ever seen Him.

DAVE: We *don't* know what God looks like, because He's a Spirit. He's not some old bearded gentleman way off somewhere, but He is the basic power and guiding light of the universe—the all-powerful, all-knowing Spirit that pervades all things. He is everywhere.

ANNE: Well, if there is a God, then why is there so much suffering and pain in the world? Why did God allow Hitler and all sorts of other atrocities? Why doesn't He put a stop to that, if He's in control?

DAVE: First of all, God doesn't do those things—man does. And if God didn't allow evil men to carry out their evil plans, then He'd have to put a stop to man's freedom of choice, which is an important part of His great design. Man was put here to make a choice between good and

evil, to do right or wrong. And in the process God gives us the opportunity to learn the benefits of loving Him and keeping the loving rules He has made for our own good.

ANNE: So, if there is a God, where did He come from? Who made Him, and when and where and how long has He been in existence?

DAVE: If you knew the answer to those questions, then you'd be God, wouldn't you? The Bible simply says that God has always been. He is the great "I Am" who lives in the Eternal Now, where there is no past nor future and "time shall be no more." Now let me ask you a question. How much do you know about electricity?

ANNE: Not much.

DAVE: Well, you're not alone. Not even scientists understand it completely. But does that stop you from using electricity?

ANNE: Of course not!

You benefit from electricity, even though you don't understand it fully

DAVE: You use it even though you don't understand it?

ANNE: Yes, I just turn on the switch.

DAVE: My point exactly. You flip the switch and make the connection, and it works. You benefit from electricity, even though you don't understand it fully. All you know is, it works. You make contact with the power of electricity, and it does the work for you. And that's how it is with God. We don't know where He came from or how He got here, we simply know He does exist and He is here, ever-present, all-knowing and all-powerful—omnipresent,

omniscient, and omnipotent. God exists, you may be sure, just like electricity exists, and both of these great powers can do us a great deal of good, even if we don't fully comprehend them. We can benefit from “turning on the switch” and making contact with God.

ANNE: Benefit from God?

DAVE: Yes! You just need to make personal contact with the power of God, and He will do the work of bringing joy, health, and

happiness to your everyday life. He'll also give you faith, comfort, and peace of mind.

ANNE: Just how do I make this contact?

DAVE: You can contact His power through prayer, a spiritual seeking of contact with His Spirit. Just as you flip the switch of your radio and tune in to a certain frequency, so you can make contact with God. And if you do, He will speak to you, both through His written Word and directly to your heart and mind when you pray.

ANNE: So you're saying that I don't have to understand God in order to believe in Him?

DAVE: You got it! We only have to make the connection that lets God's power into our daily lives. All we have to do is reach out our hand of faith and flip the switch of decision which makes contact and starts the flow of God's power into our lives to light, guide, warm, feed, provide, protect, work for us, and give us pleasure. Just try Him! You don't have to know where He came from, just meet Him!

ANNE: Okay! I can't lose by trying, can I?

DAVE: That's right! Don't try to figure Him out—just let Him in. Try Him!—You'll love Him! He works, and that's all you need to know. ☞



WHAT JESUS SAID ON THE CROSS

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

my god

father,
forgive
them

it is
finished

be
with
me in
paradise

i
thirst

behold
your
mether

into
your
hands

EVERYTHING THAT JESUS SAID ON THE CROSS WAS A DIFFERENT EXPRESSION OF HIS LOVE. HIS WORDS SPOKEN THEN STILL MOVE PEOPLE TODAY.

LOVE FOR ENEMIES

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”¹

“Them” were the Roman soldiers who had been following Pontius Pilate’s orders when they nailed Jesus to the cross to die. They had been following orders, but they had also been cruel and vicious in their mocking and whipping, proving what was in their own hearts. “Them” were also those in the misguided, manipulated mob that had called for Jesus’ death and forced Pilate’s hand—the same common people who had hailed Jesus as their King only a few days earlier.² How cruel, how awful, how unjust! How could Jesus say that any of these people didn’t know what they were doing? To a certain degree they had to, but

they didn’t realize the enormity of what they were doing—that they were killing the Son of God.

In asking His Father to forgive those who had turned on Him and those who had carried out His execution, Jesus actually spoke in their defense, and in so doing proved in the most powerful way possible that He believed what He had taught: “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”³ Despite the shame and pain the Romans heaped on Jesus, He forgave them. He also forgave those who had turned on Him. Now He wants us to have that much love, that much forgiveness.

LOVE FOR SINNERS

“Today you will be with Me in Paradise.”⁴

Jesus spoke these words to the repentant thief who was crucified beside Him.

The following true story shows the present-day effect of these words.

¹Luke 23:34

²Mark 15:6–14; Mark 11:8–10

³Matthew 5:44

⁴Luke 23:43

A couple was robbed of their credit cards, papers, and cash. Some friends prayed with them that they would be able to overcome the trauma of the theft and that the stolen items would be recovered.

A week later the couple received a thick envelope in the mail. All of their valuables were inside. So was a note, which was signed, “From a repentant robber.” There also was a drawing of three crosses. The cross on the right was circled. Jesus’ mercy and forgiveness still change people today.

LOVE FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

“Behold your son! ... Behold your mother!”⁵

Jesus spoke these words to His mother and to John, the closest of His disciples, as He looked down on them from the cross. Jesus understood the void that the end of His earthly life would leave in each of theirs, and that they could each help fill that void for the other. Jesus loved them so much that even in the midst of His most trying hour, He saw the needs of His loved ones and did something about it.

Thereafter, John cared for Mary as his own mother, and Mary loved John as her own son.

JESUS NEEDS OUR LOVE

“I thirst!”⁶

One Christmas some friends and I did a program at a center for the handicapped that is run by the Missionaries of Charity, the Catholic order that Mother Teresa founded. I noticed a large banner on the wall that read “I thirst,” and I asked why they had chosen these two last words of Jesus.

“That cry of Christ has become our rallying cry,” one of the sisters explained. “Shortly before she passed on to her heavenly reward, Mother Teresa said, ‘His thirst is without end. He, the Creator of all, pleads for the love of His creation. He thirsts for our love. These words, “I thirst,” do they not echo in our souls?’”

LOVE FOR GOD

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”⁷

Did Jesus doubt God’s love as He died? Had God forsaken Him? These words always troubled me until I read the following explanation from David Berg:

“What caused Jesus the greatest agony on the cross was not our sins, because He knew that we were going to be forgiven and saved. What broke His heart was thinking that His Father had turned His back on Him. Jesus went through an experience that, thank God, *we* will never have to go through—not just crucifixion, not just the agony of the body, but the agony of mind and spirit, feeling that God had actually deserted Him. ‘My God, My God,’ He cried out, ‘why have You forsaken Me?’⁸ Had God forsaken Him? Yes, momentarily, that He might die the death of a sinner, without God.

“Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the whole world on the cross,⁹ and these sins temporarily separated Him from His Father. He voluntarily gave Himself to die in our place—He loves us that much!”

LOVE FOR YOU AND ME

“It is finished!”¹⁰

What was it that He finished? On the same evening that Jesus hung on the cross, the Passover lamb was being sacrificed. Like the blood of the lamb saved the Hebrew people from destruction in Egypt, Jesus’ blood—the ultimate Passover sacrifice—redeems us from the power of sin and death.

When He died on the cross His work was done, and our salvation was won!

LOVE’S REWARD

“Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit.”¹¹

Jesus, help us to trust our lives to You and live to please You, like You trusted Your life to the Father and lived to please Him. Then what a day of rejoicing that will be when we see You face to face and enter into our heavenly reward—eternal life and love with You and the Father! ✠

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE MIDEAST.

⁵John 19:26–27

⁶John 19:28

^{7,8}Matthew 27:46

⁹1 Peter 2:24

¹⁰John 19:30

¹¹Luke 23:46

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE



I Love you —
JUST YOU

I love you as if you were the only one. My love is reaching out to you right now. My love, My forgiveness, and My mercy are all right there, just for you, if you will only receive them.

I love you just the way you are. I am not stacking up all your faults and failures and mistakes to hold against you. I see only the good, and I see possibilities that others do not see.

I see your every tear. I hear your every cry. I feel your every frustration, your every worry, your every burden, your

every desire. I know everything about you—all your wants, all your lacks. I see straight through to your heart of hearts and all that is in it, and I deeply love you.

I long to hold you close, here on My gentle breast. I am right there by your side, and I will never, ever forsake you.

I love you, just you, and here I patiently wait—for you! Won't you please come running into My arms, where we can live and love and revel in this love forever, eternally, immortally, without end? I'm yours.