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P.O. Box 462805
Escondido, CA 92046–2805
USA
activatedUSA@activated.org
(1–877) 862–3228 (toll-free)

Activated Europe
Bramingham Pk. Business Ctr.
Enterprise Way
Luton, Beds. LU3 4BU
England
activatedEurope@activated.org
(07801) 442–317

Activated Africa
P.O. Box 2150
Westville 3630
South Africa
activatedAfrica@activated.org
083 55 68 213

Activated India
P.O. Box 5215
G.P.O.
Bangalore – 560 001
India
activatedIndia@activated.org

EDITOR
Keith Phillips

DESIGN
Giselle LeFavre

ILLUSTRATIONS
Etienne Morel

PRODUCTION
Francisco Lopez

VOL 3, ISSUE 6
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www.auroraproduction.com

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personally speaking



If this isn't Monday, it sure feels like it! It's been another hectic day and nothing's gone right. Now you're about to get stuck in traffic for a couple of hours. What a way to spend this dismal, rainy day. Surely this justifies a *Guinness Book of Records* case of the blues—but why do they call it “the blues”? There's not a patch of blue anywhere. “The grays” or “the blacks” or “the drabs” would be more like it. ...

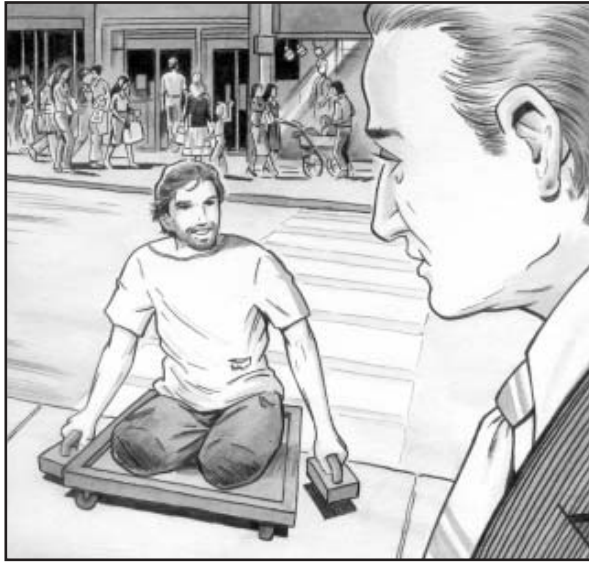
We all get down in the dumps at times, and sometimes it seems nearly impossible to climb out. But no matter how low we sink, Jesus is always there to rescue us. He offers us a lifesaver, but we have to grab on. That lifesaver is praise and thanksgiving.

The Bible tells us that we should thank God *always* for *all* things (Ephesians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:18). That seems easier said than done when everything is going wrong, but it works! Not only will praising the Lord and being thankful for what you have pull you out of the dumps, but maintaining a positive, praiseful attitude will nearly always keep you from getting down in the dumps in the first place.

Life looks brighter when seen through the rose-colored glasses of faith in God's unfailing love and care. Come and take a look through them now. Let the power of praise and positiveness pull you out of the dumps if—God forbid!—you happen to be there today. Kiss the blues goodbye!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Phillips".

Keith Phillips
For the *Activated* family



we're Rich!

HAROLD ABBOTT WAS A CHRONIC WORRIER. That is until one spring day in 1934 when, as he was walking down the street, he saw something that put an end to all his worries. “It all happened in ten seconds,” he told a friend years later, “but during those ten seconds I learned more about how to live than I had learned in the previous ten years.”

At the time, Harold had been trying to run a grocery store—not easy in the middle of the Great Depression. He had gone heavily into debt, and had been forced to close his store a few days before. Now he was on his way to the bank to try to borrow some money so he could go to a nearby city to look for a job. Harold had lost all his fight and faith. He walked like a beaten man.

Then he saw a man coming down the street—a man who had no legs. The man was sitting on a little wooden platform equipped with wheels from roller skates. He propelled himself along with a block of wood in each hand. Harold met him just after the man had crossed the street and was starting to lift himself over the curb and onto the sidewalk. As the man tilted his little wooden platform to an

angle, their eyes met and the man greeted Harold with a smile. “Good morning! It is a fine morning, isn’t it?” he said with spirit.

As Harold stood looking at him, Harold realized how rich he was. He had two legs. He could walk. He felt ashamed of his self-pity. “If that man can be happy, cheerful, and confident without legs,” Harold said to himself, “I certainly can *with* legs.” He could already feel his self-esteem returning. He had intended to ask the bank for one hundred dollars. Now he had the courage to ask for two hundred. He had intended to say that he wanted to go to the city to *try* to get a job, but at the bank he announced confidently that he wanted to go to the city to *get* a job. He got the loan, and he got the job.

For years afterwards, Harold Abbott kept the following words pasted on his bathroom mirror, and read them every morning as he shaved:

*I had the blues
Because I had no shoes,
Until upon the street,
I met a man who had no feet.*

the power of praise

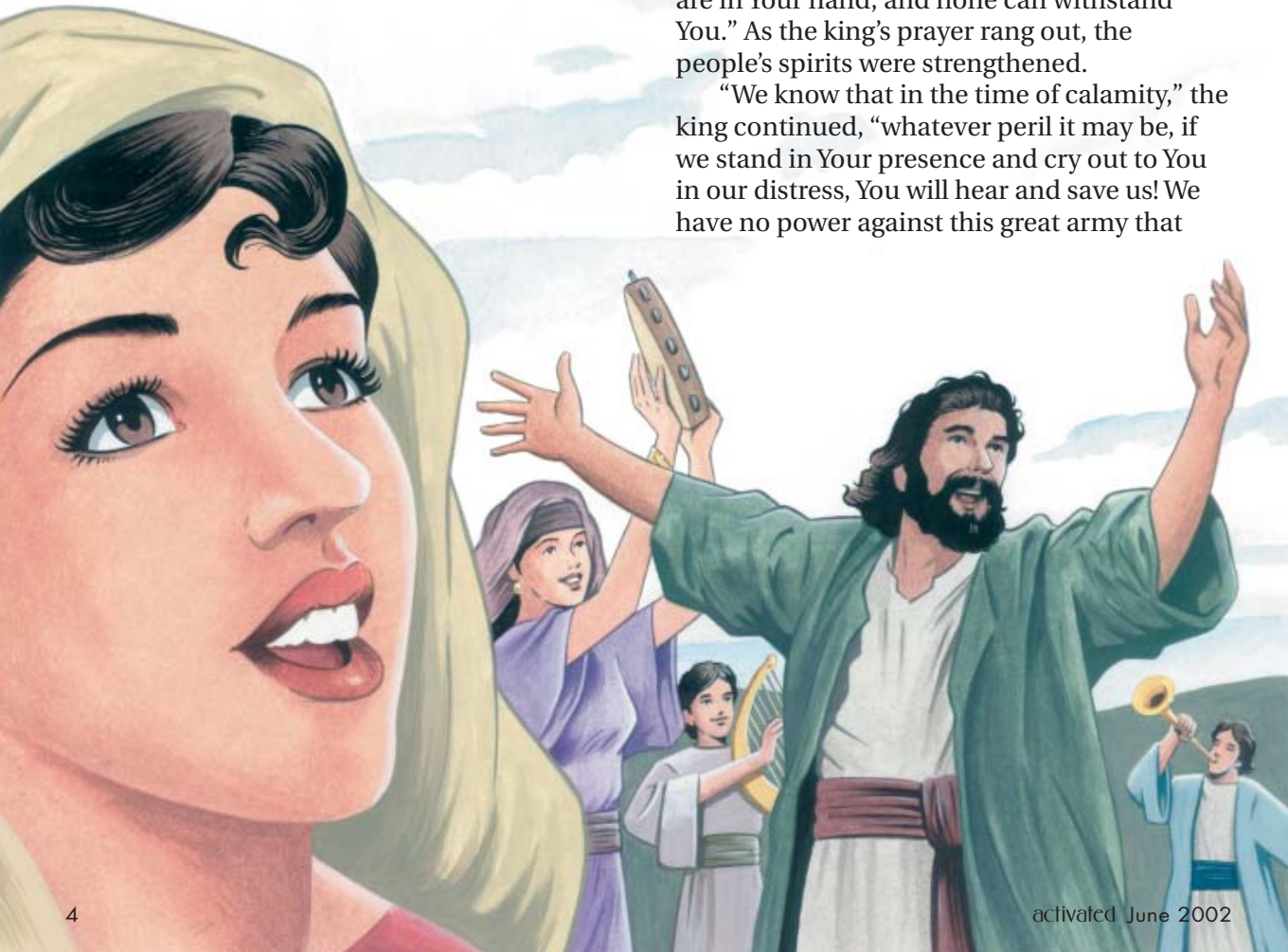
Adapted from *Treasures*

OF ALL THE MILITARY BATTLES in recorded history, this was one of the most unconventional. Whoever heard of a group of singers and musicians leading an army into battle? But sing and play they did. Here's what happened, as recorded in 2 Chronicles chapter 20...

Word was rushed to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, that a vast army was swiftly approaching. Three neighboring kingdoms had joined forces and were about to attack. Jehoshaphat turned to the Lord for help. Knowing that his own forces were no match for the mighty army of the enemy, the king proclaimed a time of national prayer and fasting. People from all over Judah poured into the capital, Jerusalem, to seek the Lord's help.

Then, in the midst of all the people, Jehoshaphat prayed. "O Lord, God of our fathers, are You not God in Heaven? You rule over kingdoms and nations. Power and might are in Your hand, and none can withstand You." As the king's prayer rang out, the people's spirits were strengthened.

"We know that in the time of calamity," the king continued, "whatever peril it may be, if we stand in Your presence and cry out to You in our distress, You will hear and save us! We have no power against this great army that



comes against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You!”

Then a young priest named Jahaziel cried out with a loud voice to all the people, “Thus says the Lord to you: Do not be afraid nor discouraged because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s.”

A feeling of relief swept over the crowd as everyone realized that God had heard and would answer their prayers. “You will not need to fight in this battle,” Jahaziel’s message continued. “Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you.”

When the message ended, King Jehoshaphat and all the people worshiped the Lord while the priests lifted their voices in praises to the Lord.

The next morning, as the troops made preparations for battle, King Jehoshaphat told them, “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; have faith in His prophets, so shall you have good success.”

After the king had consulted with the people, the idea came to appoint singers to lead the troops into battle. What a fitting way to show God and their enemies that they believed God would fight for them! “Praise the Lord for the beauty of His holiness,” Jehoshaphat instructed them.

As they took their position at the front of the ranks they sang, “Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever.” They were thanking God in advance for the victory He had promised to win.

No sooner had they begun to sing and praise, than the Lord set ambushes against the invaders and they were defeated.

The Bible doesn’t tell us what those “ambushes” were, but it does say that the soldiers of those three invading kingdoms began to fight among themselves. First the men of two of the opposing kingdoms rose up against the third army, to destroy it, and when they had finished, those two armies destroyed one another.

When the men of Judah came to a place overlooking the battlefield, they saw only dead bodies. None of their enemies had escaped.

Jehoshaphat and his men gathered so much spoil from the battlefield that it took them three days to collect it all. On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, which means praise, and blessed the Lord.

The fear of God was on all the neighboring kingdoms when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel, and the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

+ + +

What wonderful lessons of faith and prayer and praise! When greatly outnumbered, Jehoshaphat prayed desperately, confessing his own weakness and inability. Then, after receiving God’s promise that He would give them the victory, Jehoshaphat put his faith into action by having singers and musicians lead the troops, shouting, and singing praise to the Lord.—And God Himself miraculously delivered them from their enemies.

The same holds true for us today. When faced with personal battles and trials that seem too big for us to handle, if we will call on the Lord with our whole hearts and believe the promises found in His Word, we can go on the attack by praising the Lord and thanking Him by faith for the victory.

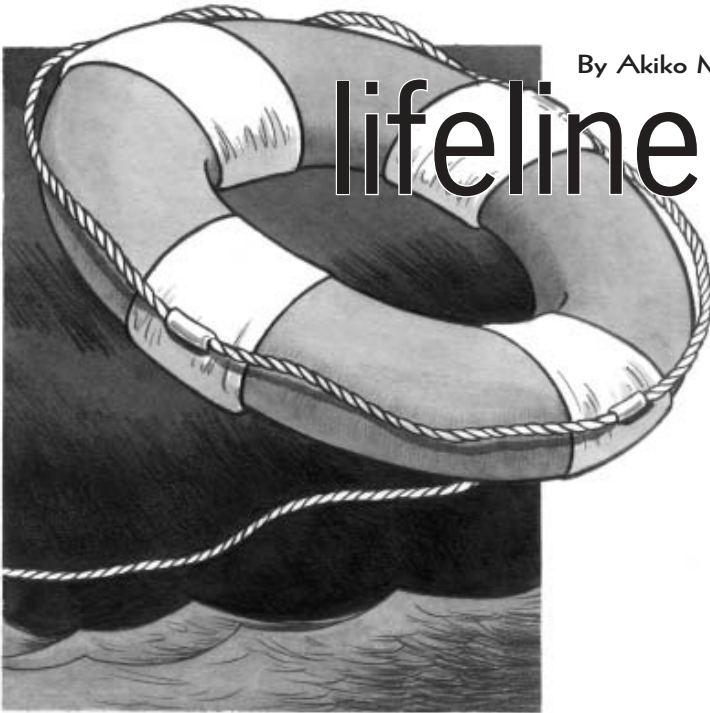
Praise is the voice of faith. If you really believe the Lord has heard your prayers, you will start praising Him for the answer, even *before* you see it.

So when the Devil tempts you to get down in the dumps and discouraged, to fret, worry, and complain about your plight, remember the power of praise. Count your blessings, and start thanking and praising God.

The Devil cannot stand it when you praise God; he hates it! So if you really want to overcome him, start praising the Lord no matter what’s happening! “Submit to God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Launch an attack by singing, quoting Scriptures, and praising God when faced with battles and trials, and Jesus will give you the victory! •

By Akiko Matsumoto, Japan

lifeline



At midnight
she had
driven to
the sea, and
was about
to throw
herself in.

KUMIKO IS 24 YEARS OLD. Her older brother was killed in a car accident a few years ago, and her parents divorced. Because these things happened, she decided not to believe in God anymore. When I met her, she was very discouraged and only talked negatively about her life and other people.

She started phoning me whenever she was having a hard time with her friends or colleagues. Most of the calls were after midnight and lasted for over an hour. Sometimes she would cry and say, "I should kill myself. There's no use in living." I would listen and try to encourage her, and tell her that no matter what others said about her, Jesus loved her and saw all her good points. I told her that someday her tender nature and other gifts would win out, so she shouldn't let them get clouded over by the seemingly bad things. I also told her that I would

pray for her, and I did. Then one night she prayed with me to receive Jesus as her Savior.

After that, Kumiko gradually changed. Eventually she told me that she had started crying out to Jesus whenever she had troubles or felt low. We saw each other again recently, and she was so different! She could laugh about her immature reactions to things that had upset her so terribly before. Then she told me something that touched me deeply: About a month earlier, she had been in the depths of despair and had decided to end her life. At midnight she had driven to the sea, and was about to throw herself in. But suddenly she thought of me, and started praying to Jesus. She changed her mind and made it safely home. I was so happy and relieved to hear that!

Often it had not been easy for me to listen to Kumiko go on and on about her problems, especially when I was really tired or trying to finish some timely work before bed. (I help translate The Family's publications from English into Japanese.) At first, she didn't seem to be changing or growing spiritually, but the Lord kept telling me that she didn't have anybody else to encourage or help her. Through this, I think I learned more than Kumiko about the greatness of Jesus' love. He is teaching me to have more love, patience, and mercy for others, especially those who are lost and looking for real love and answers for their questions. •

a promise kept

By Madlen Petkova, Ukraine

TWO CO-WORKERS AND I VISITED A COUPLE whose house had just burned down, and the wife had an amazing story to tell. Before the breakup of the Soviet Union, she was pregnant with their third child, but her husband, who was an army officer, decided that she should have an abortion. While in the hospital, she became very sick, slipped into a coma, and had a near-death experience in which she met the Lord and was told that she needed to return to earth and help children. When she came out of the coma, she told everybody about her experience. This led to her being examined several times at a mental institute. Eventually she became a believer, and she and her husband decided to start a home for street children—the first of its kind in the Ukraine. Since then, they have adopted 20 street children.

Then their house burned down and they lost everything but their lives. The main purpose of our visit had been to take them some food and supplies that we had gathered for them, and to encourage them as they set out to make a new start. The Lord had also told us to tell them that because they were taking care of His children for Him, “they would not lack milk.” That specific promise greatly encouraged the wife, who then explained that both of their cows had died in the fire.

A few days ago, a friend of ours in Italy who we had written to about this family, sent enough money for them to buy a new milk cow. The Lord kept His promise!

We continue to help this family in every way we can. All of their children have since prayed with us to receive Jesus, and the whole family is praying and eagerly waiting to see what great miracles the Lord will do for them next. •

LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

A pessimist is one who feels bad when he feels good, for fear he'll feel worse when he feels better.

If it weren't for the optimist, the pessimist would never know how happy he isn't.

“Yes, it's pretty hard,” the optimistic old woman admitted. “I have to get along with only two teeth—one upper, one lower—but, thank goodness, they meet!”

When we know that everything has two sides, let us look at the bright side only.

—Mahatma Gandhi

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Dear Jesus, You are the joy and rejoicing of my heart, the sunshine of my soul. Thank You for opening the windows of Heaven upon my life and causing Your light to burst forth. I want to always keep my eyes on You, so Your power of love can shine brighter and brighter in me, while the things of the world grow dimmer and dimmer. Jesus, You're the light of my life!

count your blessings

By David Brandt Berg



THE LORD HAD ME REVIEW MY WHOLE LIFE this morning to see how He has blessed me and taken care of me. It was like one of those near-death experiences that you hear about in which people see their whole lives in an instant, only I didn't have to almost die to see mine.

The review started when I was practically still a baby, and it included all the outstanding things the Lord has done especially for me—experiences and accomplishments and promises that He kept. He reminded me of how He has taken care of me and blessed me and helped me be a blessing to others. He had me review my life so I would stop and count my blessings and realize that things aren't as bad as they sometimes seem.

The Devil doesn't accuse me for what I've accomplished; he accuses me for what I *haven't* done or *could* have done or *should* have done but didn't. He picks at all my lacks and shortcomings and weaknesses, all my little failures. He's the accuser of the saints (Revelation 12:9–10).

He picks at any little thing he can find and tries to find fault,

just like the scribes and the Pharisees who followed Jesus around, picking at little things He supposedly did wrong. The Devil certainly must have inspired Jesus' accusers. Jesus was teaching great truths and performing all kinds of miracles. He healed thousands of people and fed thousands upon thousands. He taught wonderful lessons and told such beautiful, meaningful parables.—And what did the religious leaders do? Did they praise Jesus and thank God for all the good He was doing? When He healed the lame man, when He delivered the man who was demon-possessed, and every other chance they got, what did they do?—They tried to find some fault, some flaw (Matthew 12:10–14, 22–24; Mark 7:1–3; Luke 11:54; 23:2, 14; John 8:3–6).

The Devil nags and nags and picks and picks and tries to worry us about little things, like he did with Job and others, and like he did with me this morning: “What about this? What about that? Why don't you do this? Why didn't you do that? Why don't you get to work? Look at all the things you could be doing instead of just sitting there doing nothing!” Well, this morning I wasn't doing “nothing.” I was praying and talking to the Lord when the Devil tried to butt in and interfere and interrupt my prayer time with the Lord.

But the Lord knew exactly what I needed! He helped me count my blessings by taking me through that pictorial review of my life and showing me all the things I should be thankful for instead of letting the Devil get me to doubt and complain. It was a thrilling experience to see how marvelously the Lord has protected me and provided for me and used me. The Lord just slapped the

old Devil in the face by showing him and me pictures of what He has done for me and helped me do. The Devil had to tuck his tail between his legs and run away because he couldn't deny that it was the truth.

All those doubts and fears and accusations of the Devil were either outright lies or so petty by comparison that they didn't really matter, even if they *were* true. The Devil was trying to find a chink in my armor—some little hole, some Achilles' heel or weak spot—and then exaggerate it and blow it up out of all proportion in order to try to get me discouraged about myself. But thank the Lord, He's the antidote! Jesus always points out the *good* things.

That's the secret: When the Devil descends on you with his dark thoughts about yourself or others, let the light in! Rebuke the Devil and think positive thoughts instead. Remind yourself constantly of the good.

When I was young, I would sometimes hear a song on the radio that had a bad message or a bad spirit, and the Devil would try to bring me down by keeping that song running through my head. So what did I do?—I'd either listen to some good music, or I'd come right out and sing an uplifting song myself if I was where I could.

Fight the Devil positively. Attack! Attack! Let the light in, and the darkness will flee. There isn't room for both. You just have to be positive; you have to make a conscious effort to rebuke the Devil and think positive good thoughts instead. Quote Scriptures or sing songs about the Lord or pray. You can't do those things and have the Devil's negative thoughts run through your head at the same time. Jesus wins the vic-

Remind
yourself
constantly
of the
good.

tory every time, but you have to do your part by making a conscious effort to resist the Devil.

You have to act and attack. That chases the Devil away every time. Sing or quote Scripture out loud. It chases away the doubts and the fears. Think positively about yourself and others. It chases away those nagging little suggestions from the Devil. Don't just sit there, do something! Take some positive action.

The Devil can't resist God's Word. That's one of the most powerful weapons you can use against him. If you quote Scripture to the Devil, there's nothing he can say in return. The Devil tried to twist Scriptures and use them against Jesus, but Jesus shot the Devil's arguments full of holes with the *right* applications of other Scriptures (Matthew 4:1–11). If you've read and studied your Bible as you should, the Lord will bring appropriate Scriptures to mind right when you need them (John 14:26).

There will always be something more you could have done or something you wish you hadn't done. There will always be little things—neglects or oversights or mistakes or faults or bad habits—that the Devil can pick on if he wants to, and he sure wants to! He really tries, but you can overcome his accusations with positive actions. Quote Scriptures that deny the lie! Thank and praise God for all your blessings and all the things that are contradictory to what the Devil's telling you. Or get busy doing something positive with your hands, your eyes, your ears.

Count your blessings! Fill your mind and heart and mouth with positive things. Chase away the Devil and all his shades of night by letting the light in, God's positive

light of Scripture, the Word, prayer, praise, songs, or anything else you can use to completely occupy your mind with good things. Get busy helping somebody else! It's a kind of work therapy. It's a prayer and praise therapy! It's a Scripture therapy! It's song therapy!—And it chases the Devil away.

It also helps to call to mind a mental picture of Jesus, and to think about Him and talk to Him. The Bible promises, "You [God] will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3). When you think about the Lord and put Him in the focal point of your consciousness, this pushes the Devil and all his doubts and lies and fears to the outer fringes.

The Devil hates Scripture, he hates praise and thanksgiving, he hates songs about the Lord's goodness, and he especially hates positive work for the Lord. So get your mouth and mind and hands busy for the Lord: Sing, pray, praise the Lord, quote Scripture! Do something positive! Do something good! Count your blessings and put the Devil on the run!

When the Enemy [the Devil] comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him (Isaiah 59:19b).

And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven (Matthew 16:19).

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the Enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you (Luke 10:19).

And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly (Romans 16:20a).

Resist the Devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7b).

He [Jesus] who is in you is greater than he [the Devil] who is in the world (1 John 4:4b).

The Devil can't resist God's Word!

a little
child
shall
lead
them



What difference can one word make? One phrase? One sentence? Each of us has it within our power to affect someone else's life forever, and to bring him or her just a little bit closer to the kingdom of God.

THE SURGEON SAT BESIDE THE BOY'S BED; the boy's parents sat across from him.

"Tomorrow morning," the surgeon began, "I'll open up your heart..."

"You'll find Jesus there," the boy interrupted.

The surgeon looked up, annoyed. "I'll open up your heart as we begin the operation," he continued, "to see how much damage has been done..."

"But when you open up my heart, you'll find Jesus in there."

The surgeon looked to the boy's parents, who sat quietly. "When I see how much damage has been done, I'll close your heart and chest back up, and I'll plan what to do next."

"But you'll find Jesus in my heart. The Bible says He lives there. The hymns all say He lives there. You'll find Him in my heart."

The surgeon had had enough. "I'll tell you what I'll find in your heart. I'll find damaged muscle, low blood supply, and weakened vessels. And I'll find out if I can make you well."

"You'll find Jesus there too. He lives there."

The surgeon left.

After the surgery, the surgeon sat in his office, recording his notes. "Damaged aorta, damaged pulmonary vein, widespread muscle degeneration. No hope for transplant. No hope for cure. Therapy: painkillers and bed rest. Prognosis"—here he paused—"death within one year."

He stopped the recorder, but there was more to be said.

"Why?" he asked aloud. "Why, God, did You do this? You've put this boy here. You've put him in this pain, and You've cursed him to an early death. Why?"

The Lord answered and said, "The boy, My lamb, was not meant for your flock for long, for he is a part of My flock, and will forever be. Here, in My heavenly flock, he will feel no pain, and he will be comforted as you cannot imagine. His parents will one day join him here in Heaven, and they will know peace, and My flock will continue to grow."

The surgeon's tears were hot, but his anger was hotter. "You created that boy, and You created that heart. He'll be dead in months. Why?"

The Lord answered, "The boy, My lamb, shall return to My flock, for he has done his duty. I did not put My lamb with your flock to lose him, but to retrieve another lost lamb."

The surgeon wept.

Later, the surgeon sat beside the boy's bed; the boy's parents sat across from him.

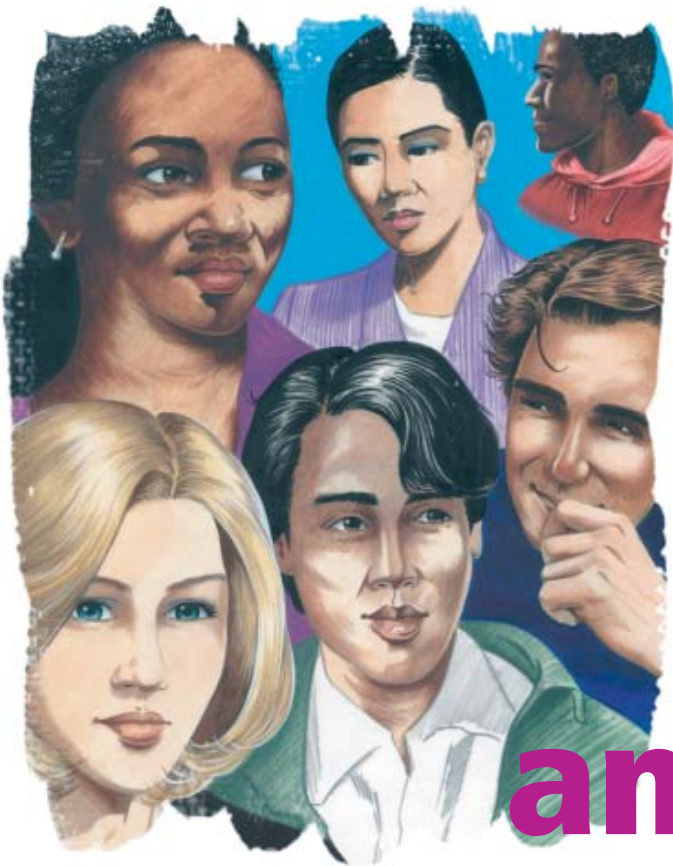
The boy awoke and whispered, "Did you cut open my heart?"

"Yes," said the surgeon.

"What did you find?" asked the boy.

"I found Jesus there," said the surgeon.

—Author unknown



Question: I feel that I was shortchanged when God created me. I'm kind of plain looking and I don't excel at anything. I get pretty discouraged when I compare myself with those around me. Why is life so unfair?

answers to your questions

COMPARING ONESELF NEGATIVELY with others is something that almost everyone goes through at some time in life. People compare their looks, their abilities, their lives, their blessings—just about everything—with others for different reasons and to different degrees. The end result is often feelings of frustration, envy, or discontent. Some people have just one “trouble area” that they struggle with—something they don't like about themselves that's a problem from time to time. Others are chronic negative thinkers who constantly battle with feeling that others are more talented, better looking, have more opportunities—and on and on it goes. Whatever the case, the Lord wants to help us overcome this mindset so we can enjoy life to the full.

God loves variety! That's why He made everyone so different. He went out of His way to make life different for us all, in every way—our looks, our feelings, our talents, and our relationships with others—to ensure that no two people turned out just alike in every way. You can learn to enjoy that variety too, if you don't already.

You also need to realize that God loves you as if you were the only person in the world. He doesn't love you more or less than anyone else. He planned your life differently from others'; the situations and circumstances you face were tailor-made for you because He wants you to have what He knows is best. You are precious in the Lord's sight, just the way you are. He doesn't compare you with anybody else, and you shouldn't either.

You will find that He will be able to use you more if you don't compare yourself with others—if you don't have your mind on what you feel you *don't* have that others *do*. Be thankful for how God made you. If you were perfect, you would have no need for the Lord or others. You would also probably be hell to live with, because no one could live up to your standard; others would compare themselves negatively with you, and that would make them unhappy. You wouldn't want that, would you?

How much better it would be if you could learn to accept and be thankful for the way the Lord made you, to be thankful for the many blessings He's given you, and to turn around and make those blessings a blessing to *others* as well.

When you're content with what you have, your spirit is at peace. You're happy, you're thankful, you're praiseful, and you're fun and easy for others to be around. You'll only hurt yourself, your friends, and your relationships with them if you become resentful simply because God has made them different or given them different opportunities. Jesus loves you for who you are and what you are. Accept, believe, and receive His love.

Contentment comes from trusting the Lord that He knew best when He made you the way you are. The only comparing or measuring you should do is to ask yourself if you're living up to your potential and doing your best to be the person Jesus wants you to be. There's a maxim that says, "It's not what you've got that counts, but what you *do* with what you've got." As long as you're loving the Lord and doing your best to please Him and love others, you're tops in His book! •

feeding reading



Think on the Good Things!

—What the Bible has to say about positive thinking

Ask the Lord to “wash” your heart and renew your mind so that you will think only His positive, good thoughts.

Psalms 51:2,10

Romans 12:2

Ephesians 4:22–24

Think on the good things.

Psalms 94:19

Philippians 4:8

Keep your heart and mind filled with God's Word.

Joshua 1:8

Psalms 1:2

Psalms 37:31

Think about Jesus.

Matthew 22:37

Psalms 104:34

Hebrews 12:2–3

Count your blessings and recount all the wonderful things the Lord has done for you.

Psalms 40:5

Psalms 103:2

Ephesians 5:20

Take a positive approach to tests and trials by seeing the Lord's hand in all He sends your way.

Habakkuk 3:17–18

1 Thessalonians 5:18

1 Peter 4:12–13

Romans 8:28

Interpreting

“Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Bible prophecy

PART 3

By David Brandt Berg

Leave yourself open!

Some people have taken my interpretations of Bible prophecy as gospel fact—incontrovertible and unchangeable—instead of the theories I intended them to be. That’s why I try not to be dogmatic and say it has to be this way or that way, because my interpretations could be wrong.

When I teach classes on Bible prophecy, I often suggest possible interpretations other than the ones I believe to be right; then I say, “But I believe such and such.” Presenting more than one interpretation helps people be better informed and causes them to think for themselves. Also, that way their faith will be less likely to be shaken if the interpretation I favored and taught turns out to be wrong.

Even if you think you can support your view by Scriptures that deal explicitly with a certain End-time event, and even if you’ve had a direct revelation from the Lord, you’d better always give Him room to clarify things as time goes on.

Don’t get so dogmatic or so set on your interpretations that you can’t change when the Lord shows you something different! You may later find out that your interpreta-

tion was wrong, as I have at times. If you don’t leave yourself open for other interpretations—especially when the ones you hold to be right are merely somebody else’s guess or theory, or your own—you are going to be stuck in a rut and resistant to any new idea or thought that God tries to give to you, and He’ll have a mighty hard time getting through to you. Leave yourself open!

What if your interpretation turns out to be wrong?

When Jesus was telling His original disciples about the signs of His second coming, He said, “This generation”—meaning the people who would see the signs He had just finished telling them about come to pass, *us* who are seeing these things happen today—“*this* generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place” (Matthew 24:34). Jesus’ original disciples apparently thought He was talking about *them*, which shows how wrong people can be if they don’t interpret things right! If they so easily got the wrong interpretation, it can happen to anyone.

So don’t be discouraged if some interpretation you held to be true turns out to be wrong, and don’t throw away your Bible or everything

Don’t be discouraged if some interpretation you held to be true turns out to be wrong.

Children
don't waste
most of
their time
arguing
over
theological
details!

you've learned about Bible prophecy. When you find a brown spot on a piece of fruit, you don't throw away the whole thing; you just cut out the little bad spot and keep the rest that's good.

I'd much rather change when God shows me something than, through pride or fear of embarrassment, refuse to change my stance on some point of prophetic interpretation. I would rather suffer a blow to my ego and be right, than to refuse to admit I was wrong and *stay* wrong! A wise man is wiser tomorrow than he was yesterday!

Is Bible prophecy the most important thing?

It is not absolutely necessary that Christians see eye to eye on every detail of Bible prophecy. It is only important that we agree on salvation through Jesus, the basic authority of God's Word, and our obligation to witness His truth to others so they, too, may experience His love and receive His gift of salvation.

A lot of people have gone astray when they got more interested in splitting hairs over interpretations of Bible prophecy than they were in evangelizing the world. Don't be led away from the simplicity of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 11:3). "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Children don't waste most of their time arguing over theological details!

Few people are won to the Lord through esoteric interpretations of

Bible prophecy, and those who are stand a much greater risk of losing faith if the interpretations they've been taught prove to be wrong. "Whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away" (1 Corinthians 13:8). You may have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, but without love it's nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2).

What is the greatest commandment?—To understand every detail of Bible prophecy?—No! The greatest commandment is to love God, and the next greatest is to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37–39). Bible prophecy is important, but if you don't have love, it's just cold, dead facts and figures. Bible prophecy is important, but love is the most important thing!

So don't ever get your eyes so much on the details, doctrines, and dogmas of Bible prophecy that you lose sight of the real goal: to reach the world with the message of God's love in Jesus!

Jesus Himself knew all about the future, but His main mission was to love the world and His main message was the Good News of God's love and salvation. And what was His last message to His disciples, just before He was arrested, beaten, and crucified?—He spoke to them all about love, that love was the most important thing (John 13:3–17, 34–35; 15:9–13, 17).

May God bless you and make you a blessing to others by helping you spread the Good News—and He will if *you* will. •

people of praise

From Jesus with Love

Oh that My people would be people of praise! Oh that they would constantly have a word or song of praise in their hearts and on their lips!

Praise is the way of My Kingdom. Praise is the opposite of the way of the world. The Devil brings his people into bondage through fear, worry, contention, bitterness, and murmuring. But I long to bring My people into freedom through praise and thanksgiving.

When you are praising, then I can envelop you in My Spirit. Praise helps to ward off the attacks of doubts, fears, and worries put in your mind by the Evil One. Praise brings great strength, because praise helps you to keep your mind on Me.

The words of praise that come from your heart and lips are the joy of My life. Speak them any time to Me. Never be ashamed or embarrassed or afraid to express how thankful you are for Me and My love.

I love each and every one of your words. No matter what you say, I understand. Even when you feel your words are inadequate, I understand. Every expression of praise and thanks thrills Me and satisfies Me.

