

**DAVID BERG
IN ACTIVATED**

By Topics

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BIBLE



YOU ARE WHAT YOU “EAT”

BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF DAVID BRANDT BERG

SOMEBODY ONCE SAID, “You are what you read.” It’s like the saying about health, “You are what you eat,” physically. Well, you are what you read, mentally and spiritually. And the same is true of movies, TV, music, and other forms of input, like the Internet and computer games. Tell me what kind of input someone enjoys most, and I can usually tell what that person’s spiritual condition is like.

God created people with a spiritual hunger for truth—insights and ideas that will feed their souls, bring them closer to Him by helping them better understand Him and His loving ways, and inspire them to live better lives. But sad to say, a lot of people today have developed perverted spiritual appetites through reading and viewing the wrong kinds of things, similar to what happens when people develop an appetite for junk food and sweets, and lose their appetite for good wholesome food.

It reminds me of the following verses from the Bible: “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what

does not satisfy? Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance,”¹ and, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life.”²

The portrayal of attitudes and actions that are contrary to the way God wants us to think and

TELL ME WHAT KIND OF INPUT
SOMEONE ENJOYS MOST, AND
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THAT PERSON’S SPIRITUAL
CONDITION IS LIKE

act really does have an effect on people, whether they like to admit that or not. Filling their

¹Isaiah 55:2

²John 6:27

minds and hearts with lies and half-truths will eat away at their spirits, even if they are only reading or viewing for relaxation or entertainment. Multiply that effect a few million times, and it has the same bad effect on society. The world today is proof of that!

DISCERN AND DISCRIMINATE

Everything that you take into your mind affects your spirit. Movies, music, books, newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, and the Internet are all mediums for conveying a message, and that message is either inspired by God and in

EVERYTHING THAT YOU TAKE INTO YOUR MIND AFFECTS YOUR SPIRIT

line with His Word, or it's not.

Much of what's out there today is what the Bible calls "cunningly devised fables"³—cunningly inspired not by God, but by the dark side to deceive people, lead them astray, and numb them spiritually to where they no longer know what is true or right.

Reading the wrong kind of books or watching the wrong kind of movies does not make people wise. It leaves them dumber and more confused and further from the truth than ever. The wisdom of this world is absolute foolishness to God.⁴

People eat junk food because it *looks* like food and is tasty, but

enough of it will eventually kill them. That's why it's so dangerous—because it's so deceptive. And the same is true of junk reading and viewing.

The Devil is a liar and the father of lies.⁵ And let me tell you, his lies are very clever! Part of what he says is always true, because he couldn't get people to believe his lies unless he told some truth along with them. He mixes in little truths, like he did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When he tempted them to disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he told them, "You will be like God."⁶ What a tempting truth that was—and they swallowed it!⁷

HOW ABOUT YOU?

It is not wrong to sometimes read or watch for relaxation, but if you aren't choosy about what input you receive, if you don't guard yourself against ungodly input, it will be more draining to your spirit than beneficial. "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."⁸

Even books and movies and other things that are mostly good can influence you adversely if you don't make a conscious effort to focus on

the positive and reject the negative, either during or after your reading or viewing. The Bible says to "eschew [abstain from] evil, and do good"⁹—a verse that applies not only to what we do, but also what we take in, since that will ultimately affect our actions.

You also need to make sure you're getting filled up with the truth of God's Word to counteract any bad influences that whatever else you've been reading or watching may have on you. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."¹⁰

There is a saying about prayer: "You believe in prayer as much as you pray." I would say the same about God's Word and worldly input: You believe the Word as much as you read it, or you believe in that other stuff as much as you take it in. I hope that you are getting *good* spiritual food, because your spiritual health and happiness depend on it. You *are* what you take in! ✨

³2 Peter 1:16

⁴1 Corinthians 3:19

⁵John 8:44

⁶Genesis 3:5

⁷Genesis 3:6

⁸Philippians 4:8

⁹1 Peter 3:11, KJV

¹⁰Proverbs 4:23



the quest for

DAVID BRANDT BERG

kinds of real characters! No two people are alike, and there are many big differences that set people apart.

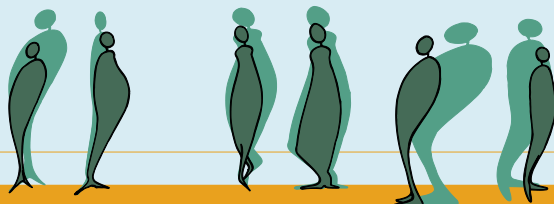
Even if everyone were to believe and apply the Word of God, the Word is *living*, so its results are different in each person's life. For example, if ten people were to read the Bible's famous "love chapter," 1 Corinthians 13, each might get something different from it. One may feel the Lord is telling him to have more outgoing love, another to be less pushy, another to be less proud, another to be less self-centered, and on and on. There is simply no way for people to become "mindless robots" or to lose their intellect or individuality as a result of living the Word!

I understand that if that *were* possible, no one would like that. It would make life boring and unchallenging. But that's *not* possible. In fact, the *opposite* is likely to happen—the closer you draw to Jesus and the more you absorb His Word, the more your own personal gifts and strengths come to the fore. The Lord amplifies and enhances your natural talents and abilities, including your brainpower

LOTS OF PEOPLE HAVE FALLEN FOR THE DEVIL'S LIE that if they read, follow, and obey the Word of God, they'll "lose their individuality." In other words, they believe that if they simply accept the truths of God's Word by faith, they will become just like everyone else and will cease to be a unique, thinking person—that they will lose their "edge," their intellect, and their ability to carry on thoughtful discussions.

If you stop to look around you, though, you'll see that there is plenty of variety, intelligence, and individuality among those who don't adopt this mindset. Within the body of believers who are all trying their best to follow Jesus' teachings, there are all

individuality



“The more of the world you take in, the more you are in danger of becoming a model of someone else’s thinking.”

(all of which came from Him in the first place, by the way), and He makes you an even *better* person—a better *you*. And I’m not just talking about your spiritual life, but your imagination and creativity, your reasoning processes, your decision-making ability, your people-handling skills, and all the rest. The closer you get to the Lord and the more attuned you are to Him, the more of an individual you will become, because He will make you into what He wants you to be, which is different from what He wants anyone else to be.

Even if you were to read all the same Bible passages and memorize all the same Scriptures as a million other people, that wouldn’t take away your uniqueness. How you apply God’s Word in your life and how that Word is manifested in your decisions, your personality, your likes and dislikes, your faith, your reactions, and so on is what makes you an individual. The commitments you make to the Lord, the experiences you go through with Him, the love you give, the ideas you get from Him, the people you influence—all

of that is what makes you who you are and defines who you are, and no one could ever be the same as you. It’s impossible!

You don’t have to reach out to the things of the world to try to establish your individuality. That’s a real trick of the Devil, because you think you’re becoming a different, unique person, but all the while his desire is to make you just like all the others who blindly go after the things of the world.

The Bible instructs us: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:15–16), and “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

Those who buy into the Devil’s lies end up conforming to the world. Gradually, as they yield their mind and thoughts and choices to the indoctrination of the world, they lose their uniqueness and become just like billions of other people who are in bondage to the darkness. That’s hardly

being an individual!

The more of the world you take in, the more you are in danger of becoming not who the Lord created you to be, but a model of someone *else’s* thinking. Instead of a solid, loving Christian who knows where he’s going and is secure in God’s love, you’ll end up a poor lost wanderer spiritually.

What makes you an individual is not having beliefs that no one else has, but letting your belief in truths held in common with millions of other believers educate, inspire, motivate, and cause you to do things that are unique. The individuality is in what you *do* with your life.

So you have a choice: You can take God’s Word and all that the Lord shows you through your personal connection with Him and become the beautiful individual and unique expression of God’s love that He wants you to be, or you can go the other route and resist the Lord’s instruction, refuse His help, and miss becoming what you could have been. It’s up to you. That’s your freedom of choice, your freedom of thought. □



WHERE'S THE PROOF?

By David Brandt Berg

AFTER ALL THOSE MILLIONS OF YEARS of evolution, you'd think Earth would be ten feet deep in missing links and you'd find them every place you dug a hole, but it's not and you don't. There's no conclusive evidence of evolution having happened.

Those who believe in evolution say, "It had to have happened because the only alternative is that God created things, and we don't believe that. We can't see Him, and we don't believe in Him anyway—it's irrational." Well, they can't see any evidence for evolution either, unless it's some of the various hoaxes they've concocted and wild ideas they've dreamed up—that's what's really irrational!

On the other hand, there's plenty of evidence for Creation—the Earth and everything in it! The beauty, the majesty, the complexity of life, the Earth, and the heavens could only have come from the Creator, not from random chemical interactions over millions or billions of years. ▣

IF LIFE HAD EVOLVED INTO ITS WONDROUS PROFUSION OF CREATURES LITTLE BY LITTLE, then one would expect to find fossils of transitional creatures which were a bit like what went before them and a bit like what came after. But no one has yet found any evidence of such transitional creatures. This oddity has been attributed to gaps in the fossil record which gradualists expected to fill when rock strata of the proper age had been found. In the last decade, however, geologists have found rock layers of all divisions ... and no transitional forms were contained in them.¹

—Paleontologist Niles Eldredge

THE REASON FOR ABRUPT APPEARANCES AND GAPS can no longer be attributed to the imperfection of the fossil record as it was by Darwin when paleontology [the study of ancient life by means of the fossil record] was a young science. With over 200,000,000 catalogued specimens of about 250,000 fossil species, many evolutionist paleontologists ... argue that the fossil record is sufficient.²

—Lawyer W.R. Bird

THE UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE OF PALEONTOLOGY is that while the rocks have continually yielded new and exciting and even bizarre forms of life ... what they have never yielded is any of Darwin's myriads of transitional forms. Despite the tremendous increase in geological activity in every corner of the globe and despite the discovery of many strange and hitherto unknown forms, the infinitude of connecting links has still not been discovered and the fossil record is about as discontinuous as it was when Darwin was writing the *Origin [of Species]*. The intermediates have remained as elusive as ever and their absence remains, a century later, one of the most striking characteristics of the fossil record.³

—Biochemist and molecular geneticist Michael Denton



PERSPECTIVES

ADAPTED FROM DAVID BRANDT BERG

TWO types of clocks make a good illustration of the way people tend to see things versus the way God sees things. The digital clock tells the hour, minute, and sometimes the second or even fraction of a second in easy-to-read digital format. That's like the way people often see things in terms of the present only. A clock with hands—what is now commonly called the analog clock—shows the full time cycle, similar to how God sees the whole scope of eternity.

The digital clock is like seeing one tree, whereas the analog clock is like seeing the whole forest. On the digital clock you can't see the forest for the tree; past and future are obscured by the present. But on the analog clock you can see that tree in relation to all the others; you can see at a glance how long it's been since any moment in the past, as well as how long it will be till you're at any moment in the future.

Relying on a digital clock is like driving on a winding road or on a dark road at night; all you can see is what is immediately in front of you. What you have passed is only a memory, and you can't see the future beyond the next

moment. You don't really see where you're going. Relying on an analog clock, on the other hand, is like driving with the aid of a map. At any given point, you can not only see where you are, but you can also see your progress, how far you've come and how much farther you have to go.

The Bible can be compared to an analog clock. Just as the analog clock gives you a better picture of where your day stands by putting the moment in perspective with time spent and time remaining, the Bible gives you a better perspective on your life by putting it in perspective with the big picture—Creation to eternity.

The analog clock is more complicated than the digital, but it's also more comprehensive. It takes more time and effort to learn to read an analog than it does to learn to read a digital, but it's a good investment because the analog tells you so much more. It takes study to understand the Bible. That takes a certain commitment and requires more effort than simply taking each moment as it comes, but it's a much wiser approach to life. ☞

The apostle Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."¹ In other words, we have to look beyond the problems that we're going through today to the long-term goal, the happiness and heavenly rewards that are promised us if we make the right choices and live our lives as God would have us live them.

—*Maria Fontaine*

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:19, KJV

Faith

The Title Deed

IN THE KING JAMES VERSION of the Bible, Hebrews 11:1 says, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The word translated as “substance” here is the Greek word *hupostasis*. When the New Testament was translated into English from Greek nearly 400 years ago, the translators were puzzled by this word *hupostasis*. It seemed to be some kind of business terminology not found in classical Greek literature, and all they could determine was that it meant something fairly substantial. So they translated it as “substance.”

Hundreds of years later, archaeologists uncovered the charred ruins of an old inn in northern Israel. There they found a small iron chest apparently containing the valuable papers of some Roman noblewoman who had owned real estate in the area. Most of the papers in the chest had written in large Greek letters across the top: *hupostasis*. They were all title deeds to her properties! Before her apparent visit, this Roman woman had per-

haps never seen her properties, but she knew they were hers and could prove her ownership because she had the title deeds.

So what is faith? It’s the title deed! Had those translators known what we know now, that verse might instead read, “Now faith is the title deed to things hoped for.”

If you’ve asked the Lord for something but haven’t seen the answer yet, don’t worry. If you have real faith, then it’s like having the title to it in your hands, with your name written on it. It’s *yours* and you *will* see it eventually.

—David Brandt Berg

Faith
is the
title
deed
to
things
hoped
for.

Prayer for the day

Dear Jesus,

When I am sick, You are ever at my side, attending to my every need and whispering words of gentle reassurance: “The miracle which you call health is just around the corner. You’ll hold it dearer after this.” Together we’ll hang on. When I am weary, You mop my brow and give me magical strength and courage. Together we’ll go on.

CREATION

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. ☞





The Miracle of Creation

By David Brandt Berg

People can't help but believe in God if they just look at creation. All they have to do is look at the creation to know Somebody had to design it, pattern it, put it together, and make it work like it does. God's beautiful creation works so beautifully, so systematically, so perfectly, it's obvious that all that didn't just happen by accident. Creation, so-called

Nature, is not just natural. It's God-created. It's supernatural. It's miraculous!

If you don't know whether God exists, just look at the sea, the sky, the clouds, the mountains, the valleys, the trees, the flowers—everything. They're all virtually shouting, "There is a God! Look what He made! Look what a beautiful world He made for you to live in!"

The greatest proof of God's existence is His creation. The Bible says that God's "invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Romans 1:20). The existence of our invisible God is proven by His visible creation. It's "clearly seen" through the beautiful world He made.

Evolutionists try to explain away creation by saying that it just happened by accident and God had nothing to do with it, that it somehow just threw itself together. Dr. Robert A. Millikan, winner of the 1923 Nobel Prize for physics, had a good answer to that: Just as there had to be a watchmaker behind the synchronized perfection and order of every watch, so there had to be a Creator behind the synchronized perfection of the universe.

Yet evolutionary doctrine has become the general theme of modern science and is now referred to as the "great principle" of biology. But a principle, according to the dictionary, is a foundation truth or fact; the basis of other truths—and evolution has never

been proven to be either a truth or a fact, much less the foundation or basis of other truths.

There is no proof for evolution. It has to be believed; therefore it's a religion. Even the founding father of this false faith, Charles Darwin himself, confessed, "The belief in natural selection [evolution] must at present be grounded entirely on general considerations. When we descend to details, we can prove that no one species has changed, nor can we prove that the supposed changes are beneficial, which is the groundwork of the theory."

So evolution is really a religion of unbelief in God. That's its whole purpose: to eliminate faith in God and to foster the false belief that the creation created itself; God had nothing to do with it, so there doesn't need to be a God.

The first verse of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible says, "In the beginning, God"—not chaos, not some nebulous cloud of gases—"created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). And a few verses later, "God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female" (Genesis 1:27). God formed man out of what?—Previous life forms?—Apes?—Beasts? "And God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). This is the truth of God's Word!

Even if you don't believe the Bible, reasonable scientists concede that if the world's two or three million species of animal and plant life came about by evolution, we would be ten miles deep in fossils of evolutionary "missing links." Instead, the evolutionists search the world over trying to find one! Nearly every one of those fossils that evolutionists claim to be missing links have now been debunked, and some are confessed fakes, like Piltdown Man.

Evolution has no foundation in fact whatsoever. There's no evidence for it. No discovery has been made to prove it. As one of its foremost proponents, Margaret Mead, wrote in her introduction to her textbook on anthropology: "We as honest scientists must confess that science has yet to discover one single iota of concrete evidence to prove the evolutionary theory!"

Do you believe in God?—Look at the world; look at the beautiful trees; look at the flowers; look at the sea; look at the sky. Does God love you?—You can see it and feel it in the beautiful world He made for you.

God created this wonderful world for you to live in and enjoy, and He is the only One who can give meaning to the universe and purpose to the planets and love to our hearts and peace to our minds and health to our bodies and rest to our spirits and happiness to our lives and joy to our souls. □



SCIENCE AND

MIRACLES

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

THE WORD “MIRACLE” COMES from the Latin word *miraculum*, “object of wonder.” So a miracle is something out of the ordinary that causes astonishment. We are astonished because it doesn’t follow the natural course of events that we are accustomed to, but everything God does is natural to Him. It’s miraculous to us, but it’s natural to God.

And the word “science” comes from the Latin *scire*, “to know” or “to discern.” You could say that science is the knowledge of God’s miracles, since everything God created is a miracle, far beyond our power or understanding. True science is knowledge that causes us to look at God’s creation and glorify God.

Knowledge that people have gained from observation of God’s miraculous creation is called scientific knowledge. Maritime knowledge is an example of this—knowledge of such things as tides and the flow of the oceans. This is simple science.

Scientists have discovered God’s natural laws of physics, chemistry, engineering, electronics, aerodynamics, and so on, through scientific experimentation, and then tried to put them into some useful form with inventions such as the telephone, the television, airplanes, automobiles, lasers, etc. Then many of those scientists praise themselves and take all the credit to themselves for having made whatever it is they made, when all they actually did was use God’s natural laws and materials and put them together. Well, they deserve some credit

for figuring out those things, because it’s often quite a job!

“Invent” is derived from the Latin *invenire*, “to come upon,” which comes much closer to the truth than the modern meaning of invent: to create something new. People don’t actually create anything; they just discover, or “come upon,” things that God has already created or laws He has put into operation, and figure out how to use them to their advantage.

Some people use the term “scientific miracle” when something is such a scientific wonder that it causes them to look at it in amazement, but that doesn’t mean it is supernatural; it is merely science using God’s natural laws to accomplish a so-called miracle.

Take the airplane, for example. People have simply learned how to use God’s laws of aerodynamics to counteract His more apparent law of gravitation. But to someone who has never seen an airplane, it’s a miracle. The first time my grandmother saw an airplane, back in the early days of aviation, she shook her head and said, “There’s got to be a string attached to it somewhere!”

Television is another scientific marvel. Some very smart people figured out how to capture, broadcast, receive, and reproduce images and sounds via a combined electronic audio and video signal. Most people don’t understand how a TV works; they only know how to use it. So since it’s beyond their understanding, it’s a wonder to them, a so-called miracle.

People usually think of things that are beyond their comprehension as supernatural or miraculous, but they are not supernatural to God. They're also not supernatural to the scientist who knows how to use God's natural laws to make something wonderful.

Everything is natural to God. It's like saying there is nothing impossible with God (Luke 1:37). A lot of things God does are beyond our power and grasp of things and what we consider natural, so when they happen we say they are supernatural. But with God nothing is impossible, so nothing is supernatural to Him!

When someone gets healed of an incurable disease, for example, we call it a miracle because we're seeing the evidence or manifestation of some of God's laws that we know nothing about. To God, on the other hand, it's simple! He knows how to undo whatever damage the disease may have done and thereby creates what to us is a miracle—a supernatural act that is beyond our capabilities. We can only pray for *Him* to do it, and marvel at His power when He does.

The same is true of the miracles that are recorded in the Bible. When the Red Sea parted for Moses and the Israelites, it says, "The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind" that parted the waters and dried the naturally muddy seabed so they could walk over on dry ground. "And the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left" (Exodus 14:13–31; Hebrews 11:29). That was some wind!

That was contrary to what we consider natural laws, but it was nothing for God. He can do such things easily because He can use laws that He doesn't ordinarily use to supersede or overcome some of His other laws and bring about the desired outcome.

God doesn't usually call into effect those laws that seem supernatural to us. He seems to reserve those for emergencies and extreme circumstances: to save and protect His people, to heal them, to supply their needs, and to care for them in other ways they may not even be aware of.

Science has to first of all discover God's natural laws, such as the laws of motion or aerodynamics or electronics or whatever, and then make machinery to harness those natural laws and do seemingly supernatural things. But God doesn't need any machines; He just does it!

People have to go to a lot of work to transfer a picture from a broadcasting source to a TV, but God can send a picture by His own natural laws—supernatural to us—by just thinking the picture and transferring it to our minds or even our natural vision.

I get a lot of solutions to practical problems that way. I often go to sleep thinking about a problem, wondering how I'm going to solve it, and then get the solution in the form of a dream or picture in the night. Sometimes I even get pictures in broad daylight. When I'm thinking and praying about a problem, I see God's answer in the form of a picture.

It's amazing what prayer can do when you get in tune with God. He sees it all and knows it all, and He can easily show you where some lost item is, or how to fix something or do something, or whatever you need. So turn on your receiver and look to the Lord for the answer, and He will give it. And of course He is also ready, willing, and able to work a miracle of healing, supply, protection, or whatever else we may need when we ask Him to in faith and claim the promises from His Word. To us that's a miracle, but it's nothing unusual for Him! ◇





God's

SPACE

By David Brandt Berg

eating as many bugs as they can. And they're very clever, acrobatic fliers. It amazes me how they can fly at full speed through a tiny hole or crack and into their nests.

It's also wonderful to be able to look up and see the sky. Everything going on up there is God's doing—the clouds and the air currents and the changes in temperature and atmospheric pressure that cause the clouds to form and flow and eventually empty to revive the earth, the birds in flight, the sun by day, and the moon and the stars by night—so many wonders of God's creation are in the sky, and very few of man's. Airplanes are like intruders into God's space.

Have you ever noticed how sometimes doves will drop out one by one from flight? One or two of the younger or weaker ones will drop out when it gets to be a little too much for them. Then, as though on a given signal, they'll *all* swoop low and flutter their wings and come to rest together on a roof or wire.

God's creation continually amazes me! The view out my window is like a magnet that draws me to it! It's so attractive, I can hardly leave it!

Watch the doves circling beautifully. You can tell they're really enjoying that. They're all enjoying living, so why shouldn't we? That's the way God intended for us to live, like those doves, happy and carefree as we enjoy God's creation and each others' company.

Doves are a symbol of God's love, of the Holy Spirit, and of His tender loving care. They are also a wonderful example of how we should be, enjoying God's beautiful creation, nesting in His love and care, and creating and caring for more little doves for Him. The doves do no one any harm. They just make the world beautiful and fill it full of peace and love and beauty and thrill our hearts with the beauty of God's creation. Let's do the same. ▣

“EVERYTHING IS BEAUTIFUL in its own way, like a starry summer night or a snow-covered winter's day!” as the old Ray Stevens song goes. It's inspiring to watch God's beautiful creation and creatures from the window, to see how well organized the Lord's creation is, how peaceful and beautiful. It helps you trust in Him. When we realize what good care God takes of all His creation, you know He'll take good care of you too.

Two swallows are sitting side by side on a wire outside my window. They must have a nest nearby. It's wonderful how the Lord takes care of them and how they help take care of themselves. We don't do a thing for them. All we do is admire them from a distance. They feed themselves and take care of their babies, they build their own nests, and they help us by doing a good job of



IT PAYS TO BE AS A LITTLE CHILD. In fact, Jesus said, “Unless you ... become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 18:3) and, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). We’re to be like little children—loving, sweet, simple believers, in childlike faith believing and receiving all that the Lord has for us.

Children are samples of the citizenry of Heaven, like little angels dropped from the sky. They’re so fresh from Heaven that they understand prayer and other spiritual matters better than most adults. They talk to God and He talks to them. It’s that simple. They have no

problem at all getting His ear with their pure, simple, childlike faith. It is given to children to be rich in faith. Faith just comes naturally to them. They have faith to believe anything God says, and with them nothing is impossible.

The problem with many grown-ups is that they know too much. They’ve been educated out of their childlike faith. But there are others of trusting childlike faith who are daily doing things that doubting intellectuals say can’t be done. So be like a little child, and anything wonderful can happen! •

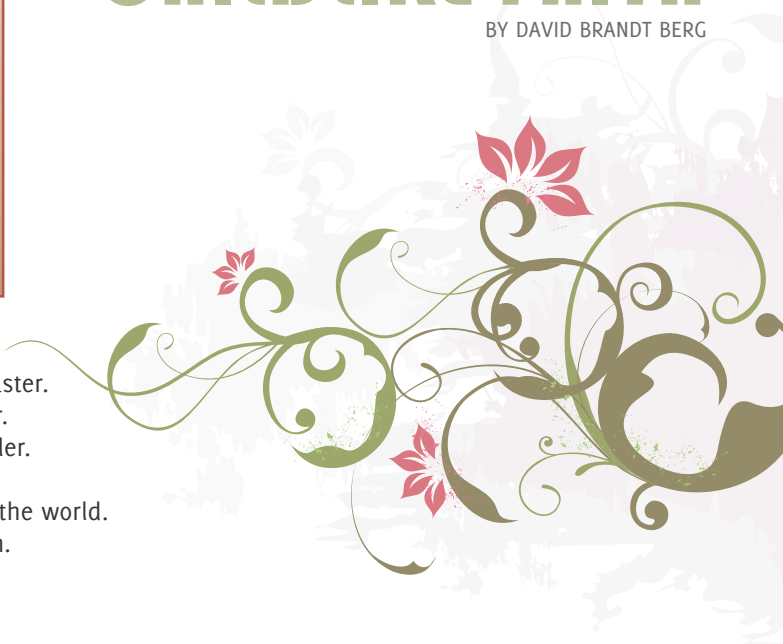
CHILDLIKE FAITH

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

PARADOX

Jesus had no servants, yet they called Him Master.
He had no degree, yet they called Him Teacher.
He had no medicines, yet they called Him Healer.
He had no army, yet kings feared Him.
He won no military battles, yet He conquered the world.
He committed no crime, yet they crucified Him.
He was buried in a tomb, yet He lives today.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

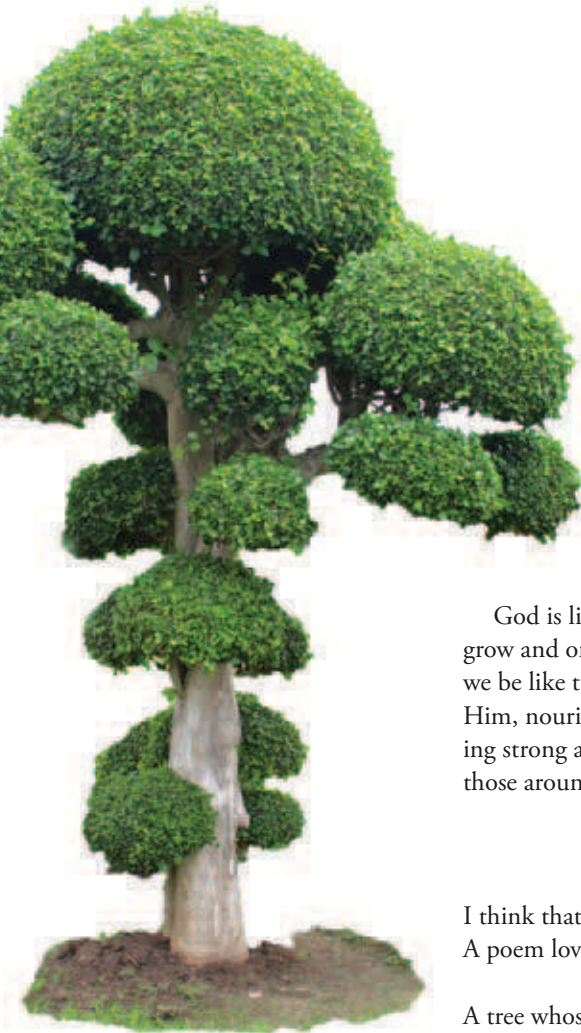


Trees

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

I WAS LOOKING AT A TREE OUTSIDE MY WINDOW AND THINKING HOW BEAUTIFUL AND PERFECT IT IS, producing exactly what God designed it to produce, fruitful and flowering, strong and beautiful, fulfilling its mission in life. A tree is a vision of the perfection of God's creation. Even if a tree is struck by lightning, toppled in a storm, or cut down, the root will send forth new shoots, new life. Isn't that beautiful?

Did you ever notice that a tree is full of smiles? Every parting of the branches is a smile with the corners turned up. You might think it's a big hodgepodge of branches, but it's not. Every single branch has to be perfectly designed and grow at the right place, in the right direction, with the right weight and length on all sides so that the tree won't tip over. Despite weighing tons, look at how it balances on its trunk, like a ballet dancer en pointe.



I don't think the world could get along without trees because of the food and shelter they provide. And if it weren't for the shade from trees, a lot of the brush and shrubbery wouldn't grow, animals wouldn't find a habitat, and the soil would wash away and become a barren desert, as has happened in a lot of places where too many trees were cut. Trees are an absolute necessity to life of both man and animals.

God is like the earth in which we grow and on which we depend. May we be like trees, firmly planted in Him, nourished by His Word, growing strong and fruitful, a blessing to those around us.



I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing
breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

—*Joyce Kilmer (1886–1918)* ■

Note: For photos of some amazing trees and the stories behind them see: <http://listverse.com/2011/07/30/10-magnificent-living-trees/>

CHRISTMAS

Christmas Angels

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

FOR THE CHRISTIAN, EVERY DAY CAN BE CHRISTMAS! Jesus showers His love down on us every day of the year. But sad to say, it's not that way for so many poor folks who haven't yet found the real meaning of Christmas.

So many people are lost, lonely, downtrodden, weak, and weary. Some are weak in their bodies, others are weak in their minds, and yet others are weak in body, mind, and spirit.

There are those who are trampled on: the poor, the persecuted, the hungry, victims of war and crime and exploitation; those nobody wants or cares about, those who have so little in the way of worldly goods, those

who lack even the basic necessities.

There are those who wear a smile, yet ache inside.

Then there are others who do have material goods and who appear to "have

it together" in the eyes of others, but who are lost and lonely prisoners of their own selfish desires. They are weary and heavy laden with problems, stress, fears, and phobias.

There are those who wear a smile, yet ache inside; those who are



engulfed in a sea of emptiness; those who suffer from pain, guilt, bitterness, and condemnation; those who feel remorse over the past or fear the future.—So many lost and desperate folks in the world today!

It reminds me of the words to that old Beatles song, "All the lonely people, where do they all come from?" Well, I'll tell you where they come from—all the lonely people come from selfish living.

All the lonely people, the lost and the forlorn, come from a society where people look to their own needs and not to the needs of others. That's where all the lonely people come from—from a dog-eat-dog society, from a lot of wrongful living. They're products of the Devil's own doctrines of "do your own thing" and "to each his own." That's where all the lonely people come from. All those lonely



people are the product of a world that has forgotten its Creator. They're victims, the sad result of what happens when people's lives aren't ruled by love.

Deepening darkness

It's getting darker and colder all the time, and many people can feel it. They may not understand it, and they don't always want to admit it, but it's happening. The sun is setting, the darkness is falling, and the world is looking for hope, for some ray of light.

Event after event has left the nations questioning. "Why this and why that? Why all the pain and strife in the world? Why the slaughter of the innocents? Why troubles and sorrows?" These questions are being raised in people's hearts and minds, and those whose foundations have

been built on the sand, or others who had no foundations to begin with, have no answers. Never has the world been hungrier for true love and real answers than now!

It's reminiscent of that famous Christmas carol "O Holy Night": "O holy night, the stars are brightly shining! It is the night of our dear Savior's birth. Long lay the world in sin and [sorrow] pining ..."

There's never been a time in all of history when the world has been in such sin and sorrow as it is now. There's so much talk about the "advancement" and "betterment" of mankind—advanced medicine, modern technology, new inventions, better governments to

Never has the world been hungrier for true love and real answers than now!



make it a better world to live in—so much talk of progress, when in reality things are regressing all the more. Look around! Today people are lying in sin, sorrowful and pining away on the inside. Never before has there been so much confusion, so many voices saying, “This is the way to go,” so many false claims deceiving the people. Never in all of history has the world needed to hear the truth like they do today!

Angels arise!

How does the rest of that song go? “A thrill of hope! The weary soul rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!” Never before has the world needed a ray of hope like they do now! Never before have people so needed to hear about the new and glorious morning that is just around the corner.

The refrain is also very significant: “Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angels’ voices!” Just like the shepherds heard the angels announce the birth of Christ, the Lord wants the people of the world to hear those angels’ voices today.

And I’ve got news for you: *You* can be one of those angels. You can be one of those Christmas angels sent from Jesus Himself to proclaim the good news to the lost and lonely of the world, to give them the ray of hope they have been waiting for. Who better for Him to use than His own children who have the Words of life, who know His truth, and who He’s made rich in faith!

In this day of hatred and hardness of hearts, of confusion and deception, of scheming and sly words, of false fronts and cover-ups, there is a great need for His love to shine through. As

the darkness falls and the cold winds blow, you must hold up the light. You must hold it up steady and firm for all to see.

If you will shine His light on people, He’ll do all the rest. He’ll cause it to accomplish His purpose in their lives and hearts and minds.

Love in action

Not only does the world need to *hear* the truth today, but never before has the world been in such great need of *seeing* the truth. People not only need to *hear* about true love, they need to *see* it. They need to see love put into action!

It’s just human nature to sometimes be confused by the words you say, but there’s no confusion when they see it put into practice. It’s like that poem by Edgar A. Guest, which says: “I’d rather see a sermon, than to hear one any day. I’d rather one would walk with me than merely tell the way.” For most people to accept the truth, they not only need to *hear* the *sermon*, but they need to *see* the *sample* as well.

Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one toward another” (John 13:35). Why do you think He said that? Wouldn’t it have been enough for you to simply *tell* others about the love of Jesus? Couldn’t the Lord just as well have said, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you preach My message”? Wouldn’t that have been enough?

Evidently not, because the Lord said that all men would know that you are His if you have *love* one for another. And if you have love one for another, you’re certainly going to show it throughout the day in obvious, tangible ways that others can see.

It's not good enough to just talk about love. Jesus said you have to *have* love, you have to *live* love. The Lord knew that there would be no denying that sample.

What can you give Him?

This Christmas and throughout the coming year, give the Lord the gifts that He's most pleased with—gifts of love! Give your love! Give of yourself! Shine forth the love and sweetness of Jesus through the light of your eyes, a loving look, kind speech, and kind deeds. Be like Jesus for others. Be the living sample of the message, the living proof that it works!

What better way to live Christmas each and every day of the year than to continually give to those around you, to truly live as He taught us, to show His love in all the little ways throughout the day, to show the world living proof that the love of Jesus works!

Back to the carol: "Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love, and His Gospel is peace!" He's entrusted you, His child, with His law, which is love. Now He's trusting you to follow it, to make it work, and to live in love, that by this all men may know that you are His disciples.

And the next line of the song? "Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother, and in His name all oppression shall cease." Praise the Lord! Love is powerful!

So if you want to know what to give the Lord this Christmas, what to give the One who has everything, then give your love not only to Him, but reach out and give your love to others. His Gospel is love. Will you live it? Will you give it? You might not feel equal to the task, but *God* is, and He'll help you if you try.

Pray and ask the Lord to help you live Christmas each and every day of the year by helping you to follow His great commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. This is the real meaning of Christmas. This is the reason for it all. This is the reason Jesus came down at Christmas in the first place—so we could have life eternal, yes, but also to teach us to love, so we could turn around and give that life to others.

Give of yourself! Give others your love, your prayers, your time, your attention, your care. Love God by loving your neighbor! Expand your love this Christmas, and together we'll all sing the rest of this carol with our whole hearts, as we proclaim His power and glory!

"Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we. Let all within us praise His holy name! Christ is the Lord! Oh, praise His name forever! His power and glory evermore proclaim! His power and glory evermore proclaim!"

Will you praise His name forever? Will you go out and proclaim His power and glory forevermore? How can you do that? The best way you can tell of His power and glory is by showing love to others, by giving love!

Your life will tell it all, because you'll be the living proof. As you live in His love, it will bring down His power upon you. And as He pours out His power upon you, His power and glory will be made known to all the world forevermore—the power of love! "Christ is the Lord! Oh, praise His name forever! His power and glory evermore proclaim!"

Let others see Jesus in you! That's what Christmas is all about! Merry Christmas! 🎄

*Give others
your love,
your prayers,
your time,
your attention,
your care.
Love God
by loving
your neighbor!*

THE ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS GIFT

ADAPTED FROM DAVID BRANDT BERG

THE BIBLE TELLS US, “GOD IS SPIRIT”¹ AND “GOD IS LOVE.”² HE IS THE GREAT SPIRIT OF LOVE WHO CREATED YOU AND ME, THIS BEAUTIFUL WORLD, AND THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE. Then, to show us His love and to help us understand Him, He sent us His Son, Jesus Christ, in the form of a man.

Although He was predestined to be the King of kings, Jesus was not born in a palace. Instead, He was born on the dirty floor of a barn and laid to sleep in the animals’ feed trough.³ His arrival received no official recognition from the rich and powerful of His day. Instead, He was visited by

a few poor shepherds who had heard the news from a band of angels. “There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”⁴

When Jesus began His life’s work at the age of 30, He not only preached His message, but He lived it among the common people, as one of them. He ministered to their spiritual needs, but also spent a great deal of time tending to their physical needs, healing them when they were sick and feeding them when they were hungry. He loved without partiality, even at the cost of His reputation.⁵ He befriended drunks, prostitutes, and sinners, the outcasts and downtrodden, and proved that no one was beyond the reach of God’s love and forgiveness. Salvation was so simple, He said, that all it took was the faith of a little child.⁶ And right living came down to just two things: loving God, and loving our neighbors as ourselves.⁷

In Jesus, God shared His love with the whole world. But He also loves each of us individually. God loves *you* so much that He gave the most cherished thing He had, His only Son, so you could have everlasting life.⁸

Would you like to know beyond a shadow of a doubt if Jesus Christ really is the Son of God and the way of salvation? You can. All you have to do is ask Him to come into your heart. You can do that this very moment by praying this prayer:

Jesus, thank You for coming into my world so I can experience the Father’s love and forgiveness. I open my heart and invite You in. Amen.

1. John 4:24

2. 1 John 4:8

3. Luke 2:7

4. Luke 2:8–14

5. Philippians 2:7

6. Matthew 18:3

7. Matthew 22:37–39

8. John 3:16

"WHAT SHALL I GIVE THEE, MASTER?"

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

WHEN CHRISTMAS COMES, I'M ALREADY REFLECTING ON THE PAST YEAR, WHAT I DID OR DIDN'T GET DONE THAT I MEANT TO OR SHOULD HAVE, AND I'M ALREADY THINKING ABOUT MY GOALS FOR THE NEXT YEAR, HOW I CAN AIM HIGHER OR DO BETTER. That's when the message of an old song comes back to me:

What shall I give Thee, Master?
Thou who didst die for me!
How can I give less than give of my best,
When Thou hast given all to me!¹

Jesus is the Master, and Christmas is His birthday. Putting the song in that context and thinking ahead to next year, the question becomes: What goal for the new year can we present to Jesus on His birthday?

He taught that whatever we do to help someone in need, in essence we do it to Him.²

Giving to the poor is giving to Jesus. Giving people comfort when they are heartbroken is giving to Jesus. Giving people love and understanding and forgiveness is giving to Jesus. Giving people solutions to their problems and answers to their questions about life is giving to Jesus. Giving people the good news of salvation in Jesus is giving to Jesus. There are so many ways we can give back to Him.

Let's give Him our best. Let's love others for Him.

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994) WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

THE GIFT OF GIVING

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

A Christmas Carol, written by Charles Dickens and first published in 1843, has been retold in numerous versions and forms. A timeless story, it is much more than an account of a mean, miserable old man—Scrooge—who changes his ways after a Christmas Eve visitation by three spirits. It is a reminder that it is only when we give to others that we truly celebrate the spirit of Christmas. Giving may be material, like a beautifully wrapped present or a monetary gift to someone in need, but true giving is more than that; it extends to sharing ourselves. Why not make your celebration of Christmas extra special this year by sending a card, making a call, visiting, or sending a gift to people you know who are particularly lonely? Perhaps there is someone at work who will be spending Christmas alone. Or perhaps you have a neighbor who would appreciate some extra kindness. Isn't this what Christmas is all about?

1. Homer W. Grimes

2. Matthew 25:40

**DECISIONS
AND
LISTENING
TO
GOD**



TURN ON AND TUNE IN

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

GOD IS LIKE a broadcasting station, broadcasting all the time. Just like the radio waves that are unseen in the air all around you this very minute, God's Spirit is ever present, waiting for you to make contact. And much the same as a simple little radio, you have been designed by your Creator to receive those signals. God's power is always on. The message is always there. But in order to receive it, you must turn on your spiritual receiver and tune in to God's frequency.

Compared to the tremendous power and complex operations of the broadcasting station, you, the operator of the receiver, need not have much power and only the simplest of skills. Prayer is the hand of faith that flips the switch and turns on what little power you have. And then the hand of hope tunes with expectancy, feeling for the frequency upon which God is broadcasting, and suddenly His great broadcasting station booms in with tremendous positive volume and power, and the messages come through loud and clear.

If you concentrate and wait with faith and patience, without distraction, you'll receive some of the most powerful, thrilling, and amazing messages that will stir you to action. The messages you receive from Him minister faith, joy, hope, love, and praise. The vibes you get from the Lord are all *good* things. They just totally renew you and give you new vision, fresh inspiration, new strength, rest and peace and joy! You'll dance to His tunes; you'll move according to His signals, His directions; and you'll know you're fulfilling His will, the purpose for which you were created. ☞

FEEDING READING

Hearing from God

The Holy Spirit connection

Mark 13:11

John 16:7,13-14

1 Corinthians 2:9-10,14

*The Lord will guide and
instruct*

Psalms 25:8-9,12

Psalms 32:8

Jeremiah 33:3

Isaiah 30:21

Isaiah 42:16

Daniel 2:20-22

*Get quiet and take time to
listen*

Psalms 4:4

Psalms 143:8,10

Biblical examples

Numbers 9:8

1 Samuel 3:9-10

1 Kings 19:11-12

Jeremiah 1:9

Ezekiel 3:27

Luke 2:26

Acts 10:19-20

God still speaks

Malachi 3:6

Amos 3:7

Acts 2:17

Hebrews 13:8

Stop! ... Look! ... Listen!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

PEOPLE WOULD MAKE better decisions and arrive at them a lot easier if, instead of trying to reason things out themselves, they would pray. God has all the answers. Prayer is not just getting down on your knees and speaking your piece, but more importantly, letting God speak His. If you'll do that, He'll tell you what to do.

If you really want to hear the Lord, He will talk to you. But in order for Him to get through, you're going to have to get quiet by yourself, somewhere, somehow, sometime. He says, "Be still, and know that I am God."¹ "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."² How many "quiet times" do you have?

You don't have to be down on your hands and knees, praying frantically, to be heard by God. Prayer should be something you're doing all the time, no matter what else you're doing. Quiet times are important, but you can't always wait until conditions are perfect or you're through doing this or that to pray. Sometimes you have to pray as you go. It's like thinking on your feet.

If you're confused, worrying, fretting, and fuming, then you're not trusting; you don't have the faith you ought to have. Trusting is a picture of complete rest and peace of mind, heart, and spirit. You may have to continue working, but your attitude and spirit is calm.

When you truly trust the Lord, you can have peace in the midst of storm and calm in the eye of the hurricane. It reminds me of an art contest that was held in which the artists were asked to illustrate peace. Most of the contestants handed in paintings of quiet, calm scenes of the countryside—absolute tranquility. Well, that's a form of peace, but the hardest kind of peace to have was illustrated in the picture that won the award. It depicted the roaring, foaming torrents of a storm-swollen river, and on a little tree branch overhanging the rapids was a nest where a tiny bird sat, peacefully singing in spite of the raging river. That's when your faith gets tested, in the midst of turmoil.

Look at all the people in the Bible who had to learn to hear from God and to wait for Him to





You cannot do the Master's work without the Master's power, and to get it, you must spend time with the Master

work—David, Moses, Noah, Abraham, the apostle John, and Jesus Himself, to name a few.

David spent 24 years working under blunderbuss King Saul, and the Lord really taught him a lot from Saul's bad example. Saul often became impatient and tried to do things in his own strength, and he found he wasn't strong enough. David learned that he had to let God do everything, and wait for Him.

When Moses was a smart young man, 40 years of age, he really thought he knew how to do the job—but he made a terrible mess out of it and had to run for his life! It took God 40 years to straighten Moses out and show him that he had to depend on Him.³

Later, Moses had several million people sitting out in the middle of the desert, waiting for him and wondering, "What are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? Where are we going? What are we going to do?" And what did Moses do? He climbed to the top of a mountain and stayed there alone with the Lord for 40 days!

What if he had been fretting all the time, "What if something happens? I have to get back. What if Aaron makes a golden calf?"—which he did! And when Moses did get upset, he broke the stone tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments and had to go back up the mountain and get quiet for another 40 days to receive them from God again.⁴

It took Noah 120 years to build the Ark. I wonder how much of that was spent in prayer. He must have taken some time with the Lord, or he never could have gotten all the precise instructions on how to build the vessel. God probably gave him the exact specifications for every part of that boat. Noah just went calmly about his business, building the Ark. He could have panicked and hastily slapped it together, thinking rain was coming any minute, but he didn't. Many of us would probably think we were spending a lot of time preparing for something if we just spent 120 days on it, but Noah spent 120 years hearing from the Lord and building the Ark. Noah had faith!⁵

Think of the years Abraham, "the father of faith,"⁶ spent out in the fields watching flocks. No wonder he heard from the Lord; he had time to listen.

Jesus spent 30 years of His life in preparation and only a little over three years in His public ministry. On the eve of His ministry, He went out and spent 40 days and nights in the wilderness, being tested by the Devil. He had to defeat the Devil first.⁷ If you don't get alone with the Lord and beat the Devil first, you won't get far.

¹Psalm 46:10

²Isaiah 30:15

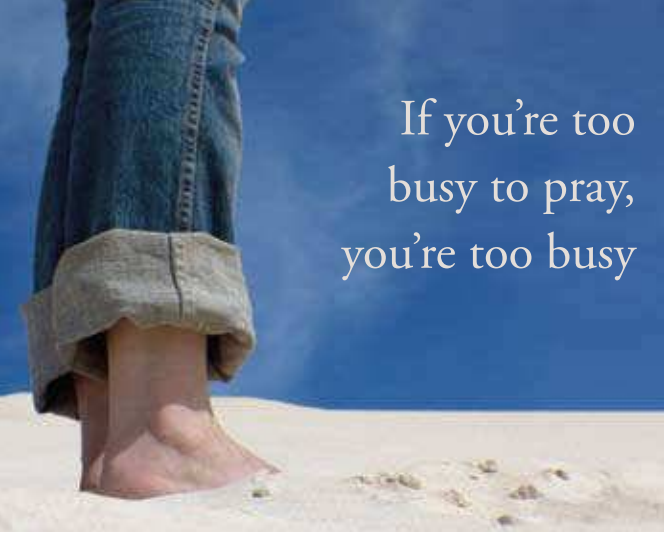
³Exodus chapters 2 and 3

⁴Exodus 24:12–18, and chapters 32 and 34

⁵Genesis 6:11–22 and chapter 7; Hebrews 11:7

⁶Romans 4:11,16

⁷Matthew 4:1–11



If you're too busy to pray, you're too busy

The apostle John wrote the Gospel of John, and it must have taken some time with the Lord to do it. However, John's greatest masterpiece, the book of Revelation, was virtually written by the Lord Himself while John was banished on the Mediterranean island of Patmos. John's biggest work was just letting the Lord do all the directing, the speaking, the revealing—everything!

Farmers need a lot of patience and faith. They can't expect everything in one day, but must patiently wait for the plants to grow and the animals to produce. God does the biggest part of the job: He sends the sun and rain and makes the crops grow, and He's the One who causes the animals to produce. About all the farmer can do is trust the Lord and not worry about it. We should take a lesson from the farmer.

Some people have to be in motion all the time; they've got to be doing something. But if you're too busy to pray, you're too busy! If you're too busy to get alone with God and pray, you're too busy! It's as if a servant told his king, "I'm sorry, I can't come and listen to your orders today because I'm too busy serving you." The most important job you have is listening to the King of Kings.

It's not up to the king to go chasing after his subjects, screaming and hollering at them to try to get them to follow his instructions. Rather, his subjects should come to him with quietness and respect, present their petitions and then wait silently for the king's answer. You need to respect and reverence the Lord, and treat Him like the king He is.

You show that you have faith by stopping your own activity and waiting for God to work. "Be still and know that I am God."⁸ "Study to be quiet."⁹ "Let all the earth keep silence before Him."¹⁰ There will even be silence in Heaven on one occasion.¹¹

But the world is always in a hurry. That's the Devil's own plan: Speed up the world—anything to make everything move faster. The earth has hardly varied in its speed since God created it. God isn't in a hurry. He hasn't sped up the days or seasons, but man is speeding up things—and the result is a world hell-bent for destruction.

So let's try to slow things down. Relax! But most of all, stop, look, listen ... and wait. Warning signs like this are posted at dangerous places such as railroad crossings—places of crisis where there is an interruption of your routine, your way, your road—otherwise you might drive across the tracks when a train is coming and get hit.

"But," you say, "I don't have time to stop, look, and listen!" Well, if you don't, you may never make it. Which is easier, to try to beat the train, to try to plow through the train, to jump over the train, or to stop for a few minutes and watch it go by? It will soon be gone, and you can go peacefully on your way.

Trying to force the situation just won't work! It doesn't pay to rush around trying to get someplace or to do something when you're supposed to be waiting on the Lord to find out where He wants you to be and what He wants you to do.

If you're hurrying and rushing around, fretting and impatient, you'll never be able to focus your full attention on the Lord and get His solutions to your problems and His answers to your questions, and thereby make the best decision in each situation. You must stop, look, listen, and wait in communion with Him until you get His answers. When you have learned to do that, you will have learned how to make Spirit-led decisions.

He gives the very best to them who leave the choices up to Him! ❧

⁸Psalm 46:10

⁹1 Thessalonians 4:11 KJV

¹⁰Habakkuk 2:20

¹¹Revelation 8:1

THE BEST WAY TO FIND GOD'S WILL

IS TO SAY "I WILL" TO GOD!

By David Brandt Berg

God may give us our choice, but He alone knows what's best. He also wants only what's best for us and others, so the smartest thing we can do is learn to always ask Him what to do.

The first requirement for finding out what God wants is to have no will of our own. We need to surrender our body, mind, and will to Him, so He can override our previous mindsets and help us see things as He does. Then and only then will we know "what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1–2).

If you're God's child and you're letting Him do the choosing, what's He going to choose for you? He's going to choose what's best—the unbeatable choice!

*He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing His truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice with Him.*

HOW TO FIND THE WILL OF GOD

The prerequisite—submit your will to the Lord:

Luke 22:42
John 5:30
John 6:38
John 7:17
Romans 12:1–2

The first place to look for God's will is in His Word:

Psalms 119:105
Psalms 119:130
2 Timothy 3:16

God sometimes reveals His will through prophecy and revelations:

1 Kings 19:12
Ezekiel 3:10–11
Acts 10:19–20

God sometimes reveals His will through dreams:

Job 33: 15–17
Genesis 15:12–16
Genesis 20:2–7
Genesis 31:22–24
Matthew 1:20–21

Seek godly counsel:

Proverbs 11:14
Proverbs 15:22
2 Corinthians 13:1

Consider obvious circumstances:

2 Samuel 5:22–25
1 Kings 17:1–9
Mark 14:12–16

Ask for confirming signs:

Genesis 24:14
1 Samuel 14:8–10

feeding reading

To be faithful until death ...

... Just be faithful today!

One of the best verses that you could claim for the coming year—and for the rest of your life, for that matter—is: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

Some people teach that this is referring to salvation. They say, “Well, if you always do the right thing and don’t make any mistakes, if you’re perfect, if you ‘keep the faith,’ *maybe* you’ll make it to Heaven.” That’s *not* what that verse

is talking about at all!

The Lord isn’t talking about salvation; He’s talking about your faithfulness in *service*—if you faithfully do your best to please God and obey His Word from now until the day you die.

The secret of being “faithful until death” is to be faithful one day at a time. You can only live one day at a time; you can only be faithful one day at a

time. So don’t worry about whether you were faithful yesterday or not, or whether you’re going to be faithful tomorrow. Just do your best to be faithful today. The Bible tells us to forget the past (Philippians 3:13), and tomorrow will take care of itself (Matthew 6:34)—or the Lord will take care of it. Just be faithful today. Don’t worry about your whole life! Don’t keep asking yourself, “Am I going to be faithful until the day I die, so I can be sure to get a crown of life?”

Just be faithful every day, one day at a time, and you’ll be faithful until death and receive an eternal crown of life. I believe that it is going to be some sort of an actual halo or shining crown that will enable us to shine like the stars (Daniel 12:3). So that’s my prayer for you, that you will be faithful every day, just one day at a time until the day you die or the Lord returns, and that you won’t worry about the future.

If you think about trying to be faithful for the rest of your life, that scares you, that worries you. That’s just too overwhelming, and you feel that you’ll never make it. But what about today? Weren’t you pretty faithful today? Surely you did a lot of things faithfully today.

I dare say that you were probably faithful today. Give the *Lord* a little credit! I’m trying to get you to



appreciate yourself a little bit, and to thank the Lord for how long He has kept you faithful *already!* You have probably worried about lots of days and events that are now passed. You have probably had *many* worries, nearly all of which never happened. And here you are—still faithful!

Look at all the time that you wasted wondering about whether you were going to be faithful or not, or whether you were going to succeed or not, and whether you were going to still be doing your best for the Lord. All that time you worried about it was time wasted, because here you are, still loving and following the Lord, still faithful. Be thankful for that! You have been faithful—not yet “until death”—but this far!

So quit worrying about the future! Quit worrying about whether you’re going to make it tomorrow or not. Jesus said, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:34). Don’t try to live the coming year in advance, and the year after that. “I wonder if I’m going to make it through tribulation, and I wonder if I’m going to be ready when the Lord comes, and I wonder if I’m going to get any reward or crown?” Quit worrying about that! Just keep busy today. Do what you’re supposed to do today. Be faithful *today!*

The *Lord* has kept you faithful today, and you ought to thank Him for that! Too many people think that being faithful is some kind of a “good works” thing that they have to work up on their own. But that’s not where faith comes from. Faith comes from the *Lord*. He’s “the author and finisher of our faith”



(Hebrews 12:2). He gives us faith as we take in His Word (Romans 10:17).

If you’re faithful, you’re full of faith. Do you still have your faith today? Then you are full of faith. Do you still believe in Jesus today? Then you’re full of faith. Do you believe you’re saved? Then you’re full of faith. My goodness, you’re so full of faith, I don’t see how you can hold it all!

You’ve been faithful today; you’ve been full of faith today. So why worry about whether or not you’re going to be full of faith tomorrow? You may have trials and tests, you may get discouraged, you may get tired, you may make mistakes, but so what? You’ll still have your faith, so you’ll still be



So don't
worry about
the future.
Don't worry
about
tomorrow.
Don't worry
about even
the next
hour.

more full of that than anything else, right?

Stop trying so hard! Stop worrying about it. We just have to depend on the Lord to keep us faithful, and trust Him that our faith won't fail, because our faith comes from *Him*. Faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).

Only the Lord can keep you faithful. Of course, you have to give Him a little cooperation. You have to pray and listen to Him, you have to read His Word, and you have to try to do what you know He wants you to do, but that's the easy part. It's *His* job to keep you faithful—full of faith, filled with faith that comes from Him. And if you don't have enough faith, all you have to do is read and listen to the Word. That's the source of faith. If you do that, He'll give you all the faith you need. Just keep reading the Word and trusting the Lord and don't worry.

You don't have to have faith for tomorrow. You don't have to have faith for next week or next month, and certainly not for next year or many years from now. You don't have to have that faith *now*. You'll get it when the time comes. The only faith you need now is for today.

You made it through another year, so what were you worrying about? Before long, you will have made it through this day—another day of faithfulness—and then you can go to sleep and not worry about tomorrow. Rest in the Lord. “Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on *His* faithfulness” (Psalm 37:3).

You don't even have to have faith for a whole day. Just have faith for this

moment—right now. Just have faith for one moment at a time! When you wake up in the morning, you don't need to worry, “Have I got faith for today?” Just get up and have faith for each little thing that you do throughout the day. That's all you have to have faith for. If faith no larger than a grain of mustard seed can move an entire mountain (Matthew 17:20), then it shouldn't even take a microscopic speck of faith to keep you doing all the things that you need to do in a day!

So don't worry about the future. Don't worry about tomorrow. Don't worry about even the next hour. God will give you grace when the hour comes. He not only gives power for the hour, He gives power for the second or the split second—the instant! That's all you need. The only faith you need is what you have right now, for right now.

“Be faithful until death,” Jesus says, “and I will give you the crown of life.” You're going to get a special crown, a shining crown, a crown that you can be proud of. Of course, you're going to fall down before the Lord and cast your crowns before Him, like the 24 elders do in Revelation 4:10. Every time you start praising the Lord, you're going to forget all about that crown and it's going to tumble off at His feet. When you bow down and give Him the glory, you'll cast your crown at His feet! But since the Lord gave it to you, you'd better pick it up again and wear it. Your crown will show what you have done for the Lord, and the Lord wants the world to see it! He wants everyone to see the badge of your faithfulness—a crown of life!

God bless and keep you faithful throughout the New Year and all the years to come, until you join Him in Heaven and receive your crown! ○





faith

By David Brandt Berg

IT'S EASY TO HEAR FROM THE LORD. You just have to have faith. When you ask the Lord for an answer to a question or problem, expect an answer and take the first thing that comes. If you want the Lord to answer and really believe He can and will, you won't be disappointed. What you see or hear with the eyes or ears of your spirit, that's the Lord answering. It will be such a comfort to you. Expect God to answer. Just open up your heart and let it in.

Hearing from the Lord is your spiritual nourishment. You've got to be able to hear from Him in order to grow spiritually. A baby is a good illustration of this principle: When you're asking the Lord to speak, you're like a baby crying for food—in this case, the spiritual food you need to live on.

When a baby is crying for his mother, she wouldn't think of refusing him. That little baby has more faith than a lot of adults do when they pray, because the baby expects someone to hear him when he cries. He knows—God put it in him to know—that if he calls, his mother will answer. He expects an answer, and he gets it. If he asks for milk, his mother is certainly not going to deny him or give him something else (Luke 11:11–13). She's going to give him what he needs. Just so, when you ask God to speak to you, you must believe that the next thing

that comes into your mind or heart is from the Lord.

Shutting your eyes helps you to see in the spirit and to become less conscious of the things and people around you. It helps you get your mind on the Lord and in a relaxed position where nothing distracts you. When you ask the Lord to speak to you, believe that whatever you hear or see is a message or vision from Him. When you are asking Him to speak, you are like a baby crying for food—in this case, the spiritual food you need to live on.

When a mother picks up her child to nurse him, what does she do? She reveals herself to him. If he's a tiny baby, she also has to bring the nourishment to him. She has to show him where it is; she has to place the nipple in his mouth. As he gets older, he automatically knows where to find the milk and he can reach out for it himself. It's the same with hearing from God. The longer you practice receiving nourishment from the Lord, the better you know where to find it. You just open your spiritual eyes and see it and reach for it.

Faith is the hand of the spirit that reaches out and receives. It is the part that you do, your spiritual effort. After the nipple is in the baby's mouth, he automatically starts nursing. When you ask God for spiritual nourishment, He puts it there for you, but if you don't start sucking, you'll never get it. You have to have the faith to begin to receive. You literally have to draw God's nourishment. If you don't suck, you won't get anything. The child sucks because

Faith is the hand of the spirit that reaches out and receives.

God has put that automatic reaction in him to do it. A lot of times he has to suck for a while before he gets anything, but if he doesn't give up, eventually he will get something.

Faith is a type of drawing power. It is you drawing power from God. What is it that draws the mother's milk? How is this explained in scientific terms? When the baby sucks, he creates a vacuum inside his mouth, which pulls the milk out. Similarly, you have to create a vacuum in your spirit: "Lord, here is an empty space. Please fill it!"

When you reduce the pressure in one area, what fills that vacuum? In the case of the feeding baby, it's the milk. All the baby does is create the vacuum. He reduces the pressure inside his mouth, which then becomes lower than the pressure inside his mother's breast, so the milk flows out into his mouth. That sucking on the part of the baby is his effort; the mother does all the rest.

In prayer, you create a vacuum and the Lord's pressure fills it. Every time you open up your spirit, every time you create a low-pressure area, His Spirit will flow in, in all His power!

What if the baby took one big suck and got discouraged? "Well, I didn't get anything, so I'll just quit!" Sooner or later he would get so hungry that he would start sucking again and not give up. When you start sucking for dear life and really desire that spiritual nourishment with all your heart, you'll get it.

You have to believe that when you create that vacuum in your spirit, the first thing that comes into your mind is from the Lord, and you must go on from there. If the baby didn't swallow the first mouthful, he couldn't get any more! His mouth

can only hold so much at once. He gets a mouthful and swallows it, and then he gets another mouthful. He's got to swallow each mouthful as it comes, or he won't get more—and it's the same with receiving messages from the Lord.

He gives you a little to start with, but then you've got to expect and make room for more. In this case you empty your mouth, you "swallow," by believing the first words or Scriptures that He gives you, and repeating them out loud or writing them down—and you've got to keep swallowing. The Lord's not going to squirt milk out into the thin air where it will be lost, or into some baby who won't swallow it. You only get one mouthful at a time, and if you don't swallow that mouthful, you won't get another!

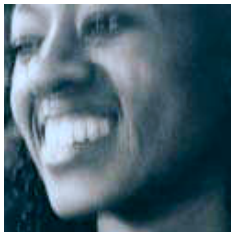
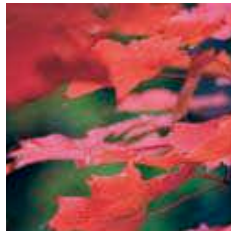
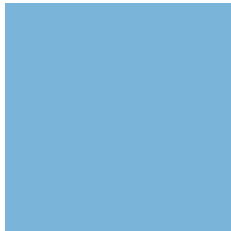
Likewise, when you ask the Lord for a vision and you begin to see something, you need to start describing it. Describe what you see, and then the Lord will give you more. What do you do when you watch a movie? You have to keep drinking it in, scene by scene. You couldn't possibly get it all in one picture. You have to keep "swallowing."

Unlike the mother, God has unlimited capacity to give. What you get is only limited by your capacity to receive. The Lord will keep on feeding you until your vacuum has been filled, your "stomach" is satisfied, and your spirit is content.

The Lord is always there, ready, willing, and able to speak to you if you're willing to listen, but He won't force you. The mother can place the nipple in the baby's mouth, but if the baby takes one gulp and doesn't like it and quits swallowing, he's not going to get any more. You have to be willing to receive what God gives! •

The Lord is
always
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willing, and
able to
speak to
you.

How do
I tell the
difference
between the
flowers and
the weeds?



MUSIC—THE RIGHT KIND of music—can have a positive effect on your mind and spirit, but the wrong kind of music can be dangerous! Music is a highly spiritual medium; it has a psychological and spiritual effect on the listener.

It works almost like a touch-tone telephone: A combination of musical notes are like tone signals that work their way along the circuits and relays of your nervous system, into your mind and spirit. Certain notes played in the right sequence will prompt a certain response.

When I was a boy, I listened to classical music for hours at a time. My mother would come into the room and be amazed to find me weeping because the music got through to me so. I couldn't control the emotion or restrain the tears. I was lifted into another world, the realm of the spirit.

Music links the heart of the listener with the heart of the composer. Music transports the listener into the world of the spirit, where the composer is guide. Their spirits are united, in a sense, and both experience the same things. The spiritual world is far more real than the physical, and music is a vehicle to take us there.

Some composers were divinely inspired when they wrote their best music. They were as human as any of us, but when they tuned in to the Lord in the spirit, they were able to hear His music and capture it for us.

What kind of music composers write depends on whose channel they're tuned to, as well as their own mood—whether they're in a positive, believing mood and tuned to the Lord, or they're in a doubting, despondent mood and tuned to the Devil and his signals. When com-

MUSICALKEY

By David Brandt Berg

posers are inspired, when they really tune in to their source, whether it be the Lord or the Devil, they get the music with its underlying spiritual message. And if the listeners are tuned in, they get the spiritual message too, even subconsciously.

Thousands and thousands of musical notes make up a symphony. When they're all put together, they paint a picture that can be gorgeous or horrific or anything in between, depending on the source. They can convey a heavenly message or a hellish one, and therefore have that effect on the audience, be it individuals or whole nations—like the effect Wagner's music had on Hitler's Germany.

Wagner's music was inspired, but I'm afraid that most of the time it seems to have been inspired by the Devil. Hitler was practically hypnotized by Wagner's music, and he got the message. Hitler added the words and bombs and bullets to Wagner's tunes, and brought hell on earth! But other composers who were inspired by the Lord give us God's music and God's message, like Handel did when he wrote his oratorio *Messiah*.

If it's effective music, whether good or bad, it will inspire you to action; it will move you. It will create emotions that put you in motion to do something. God's music makes you want to love Him and His and do the kinds of things that are pleasing to Him. The Devil's music makes you attracted to him and his kind, and fascinated by their evil works.

So how do you decide what kind of music you should listen to? You can tell about music the same way you can tell about anything else—by the effect it has on your spirit. Is it inspiring or oppressive? Is it beautiful or ugly?

A boy once helped me clean up a garden, and he asked, "How do I tell the difference between the flowers and the weeds?" "I'm not a horticulturist," I answered, "but I can tell the difference between what is ugly and what is beautiful. If it's pretty, leave it. If it's ugly, pull it."

The Lord through the Holy Spirit gives us enough sense to know the difference between what's good and what's bad, between flowers and weeds, but then He leaves the choice to us—in this case the choice of what kind of music we're going to subject our spirits to.

Jesus said, "Every tree is known by its own fruit" (Luke 6:44). So if you want to know the difference between good music or bad music, spiritual food or spiritual poison, you can tell by whether its effects on your spirit are good or bad.

Does the music draw you closer to the Lord and inspire you to be good and do good things, to be loving and helpful and constructive? Or does it oppress you and make you feel rebellious, hateful, angry, and destructive? Does it lift your spirit, or drag you down? Is it so sad and depressing that it makes you want to quit, or is it so happy and inspiring that it makes you want to make others happy too?

Whether it's a simple lullaby, a love song, a sad sweet song that touches your heart and helps you feel another's heartbreak and sympathize, or the most intricately beautiful symphony, God-inspired music makes you want to be good and do good; it inspires you to higher things.

What kind of music are you listening to? Whose voice are you hearing? What does it do for you? What does it do *to* you?•

If it's
effective
music,
whether
good or
bad, it will
inspire you
to action.

The camel's nose

ACCORDING TO A BEDOUIN FABLE, an Arab and his camel were crossing the desert. Night came and the temperature dropped. The Arab put up his tent, tied his camel to it, and went to sleep.

The temperature dropped further, and the camel asked the Arab for refuge from the cold.

The Arab was adamant. "There is only room in the tent for one!"

The camel was quiet for a few minutes, but soon asked again. "Please, Master! Just my nose. If I could just put my nose in your tent, it would keep me from freezing out here."

The Arab reluctantly agreed.

The camel's nose became warm, but after a while the temperature went down even more. The camel woke the Arab and asked, "Please, can I just put my forelegs in the tent? They are very cold!"

Again the Arab reluctantly agreed.

"Only your forelegs, nothing more!" So the camel nudged his forelegs into the tent and they became warm.

After some time, the camel woke the Arab again. "Master, I must put my hind legs in the tent. Otherwise I fear that they will freeze and I won't be able to finish our journey tomorrow. What good is a camel with frozen hind legs?"

So the Arab agreed once more, and the camel moved his hind legs in. But since there was only room in the tent for one, the Arab was forced to move out into the cold, where he barely survived the night.

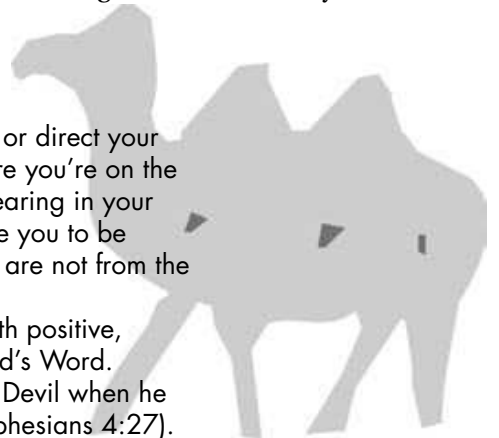
Depression is like that camel. It just needs a small opening to get started—usually a thought that seems to have some basis in truth or reason—but if you entertain that thought, pretty soon it and a whole lot more like it move in and take over. Don't let the camel get its nose inside your tent. •

WHO ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

THE LORD IS NOT THE ONLY ONE TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION or direct your thoughts, so you must learn to watch your thoughts and make sure you're on the Lord's channel. "Test the spirits" to make sure that what you're hearing in your mind or spirit is from the Lord (1 John 4:1). If your thoughts cause you to be discontent, bitter, dissatisfied, unhappy, or critical of others, they are not from the Lord but from the enemy of your soul, the Devil.

One of your best protections is to fill your mind and heart with positive, encouraging, strengthening, and faith-building thoughts from God's Word. Memorize Scriptures and quote them to yourself and even to the Devil when he tempts you with negative thoughts. Give no place to the Devil (Ephesians 4:27).

—DAVID BRANDT BERG (D.B.B.)



BY DAVID
BRANDT BERG



Seven ways to find God's best

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS GO ABOUT MAKING DECISIONS? When we're faced with having to make a decision, what are we trying to find?—The will of God! So the real question is this: How do we find the will of God?

IF YOU'RE
LETTING
HIM DO THE
CHOOSING,
HE'S GOING TO
CHOOSE THAT
WHICH IS BEST
FOR YOU, THAT
WHICH WILL
MAKE YOU
HAPPIEST IN
THE LONG RUN.

A good Scripture on the subject is found in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

So what is the most important requirement in finding God's will?—Having no will of your own! Surrender your will, your body, and your mind to the Lord. Everybody has free will, of course, but as Christians we're supposed to have already chosen to surrender our will to Jesus Christ. We're supposed to let Him make the decisions. Here is one of my favorite little poems on the subject:

*He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing His truth can dim!
He gives His very best to those
Who leave the choice with Him!*

If you're His child and you're letting Him do the choosing, what is He going to choose for you? He's going to choose that which is best for you, that which will make you happiest in the long run.

Some people say, "Yes, my will is surrendered to God. I have yielded my life to the Lord, I am trusting the Lord, but I still haven't been able to find His will. I'm still confused. I can't even understand the problem, much less the answer!" It's a dilemma most of us face at some time in our lives.

So how do you find the will of God? What does He require, according to the Scripture in Romans chapter 12?—Yield your mind, body, and will to God. Then you'll know! You'll soon find out, because then you're in a position for God to show you—and He will, probably through one or more of the following:



1. THE WORD

The first place we look for the will of God is in the Word of God, the Bible. This is the known, sure, absolute, revealed will of God. There's no doubt about it. This is it! If God never tells you another thing than what He has already written, if you operate according to the Bible, you'll get along great!

If you never have a revelation, if you never hear a heavenly voice, if you never receive a prophecy, if you never have the gifts of knowledge or wisdom or discernment or healing or perform miracles, if you'll just operate according to the Word of God, you'll accomplish a whole lot—and eventually you'll probably receive many of these spiritual gifts as well!

Some people don't study their Bibles as they should. They've got to have the answers spoon-fed to them. They don't know how to dig them out for themselves. Some things you've got to work for! "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).



2. THE VOICE OF THE WORD

The second way to know God's will is by the voice of His Word. God speaks not only through His Word, but He speaks through the voice of His Word. The Psalmist says, "Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His Word, heeding the voice of His Word" (Psalm 103:20).

Have you ever been reading a passage of Scripture when all of a sudden a verse or phrase or even a single word comes alive and hits you between the eyes? "That's

for me! That's the answer!" Or perhaps you've been praying about a certain situation when the Lord reminded you of a verse or passage that was exactly the answer you needed. It was so loud and clear that God couldn't have spoken any more emphatically if He'd yelled it out! That is the voice of His Word, speaking through His tried-and-proven written Word. It may have been originally given for somebody thousands of years ago, and yet, all of a sudden, it speaks to you personally.

So the first way to find God's will is through His Word, the Bible. Then there is the voice of the Word—a specific verse, phrase or passage from the Bible, which speaks to you personally.



3. DIRECT REVELATION

What do you think would be the third surest indication of the will of God?—A direct revelation: a prophecy, dream, vision, or voice.

For example, when God speaks to you in prophecy, it may come in the form of one or more Bible verses or fresh new words not found in the Bible. When I ask God for an answer to a problem, I have found that He usually gives me a Scripture—an answer that He's already given somewhere in the Bible.

Be sure that any direct revelation you receive does not contradict the Word of God. You have to measure your revelation against the Word. "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Make sure it is according to His Word!



4. GODLY COUNSEL

Fourth on the list is godly counselors. "In the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). "Without counsel purposes are disappointed; but in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22, KJV). Godly counselors are people who not only believe the Bible, but who are practicing it the way they ought to. They are not only hearers of the Word, but doers also (James 1:22).

A godly counselor is someone who loves the Lord, and whose life shows the good fruit of living close to Him (Matthew 7:15-20). If I wanted to learn how to play the piano, I wouldn't go to business college; I'd go to a pianist who knows how to play well. If I wanted to learn how to cook, I wouldn't go to a computer technician, but to somebody who knows how to cook, whose meals I've enjoyed. So godly counselors are people that you can trust because they bear good spiritual fruit in their own lives.

5. OPEN AND CLOSED DOORS

The fifth way to determine the will of God is through circumstances and conditions. These are generally a poor means of finding the will of God, but sometimes they are an indication. Some people call finding God's will through circumstances "open and closed doors" (1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Revelation 3:7-8).

For example, many years ago the board of my church decided that my family and I could not go to a certain country as missionaries, and they gave several reasons: The country that I wished to go to was closed to any new missionaries; there were severe food shortages there, and I had been unable

to raise our fares. I looked at all those "closed doors" and agreed that that country wasn't the place for us to go. Then right about that time, the Lord opened the door to another place of service where there were millions of people who needed to hear the Gospel!

Open and closed doors: Which way does God seem to be leading? Where do you have open doors of service? Where have you got a possibility of a job? In which direction does it seem that God is providing the way and the means? That's one way to find out the will of God—the circumstances and conditions, the open and closed doors.

6. BURDENS (THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT)

That leads us to number six—the witness of the Spirit—a certain intuitive conviction that gives you faith. You just know that a certain course of action is the will of God! The Lord may not tell you in an audible voice or give you a visible sign, but you know from that still, small voice in your heart (1 Kings 19:12) that inner conviction.

Some people refer to this as "burdens." I don't like to go by feelings, because sometimes feelings can be wrong. They can be the wrong feelings from the wrong spirit. Nevertheless, some feelings are put there by the Lord, as one indication of His will for you. The Spirit of God speaks to your heart about a decision you face, and gives you an inner conviction about what God wants you to do.

Sometimes the witness of the Spirit may be a warning not to do certain thing—that it's not God's will. Your heart or spirit hears a voice saying, "Stop, don't do that! Watch out!" The Holy

Spirit doesn't even have to use words, but you get the message!

So that's the sixth way to find God's will: the witness of the Spirit.

7. FLEECES

And finally, what is the seventh way to know the will of God? Sometimes you can ask for a specific sign. This we call a fleece, a term taken from the story of Gideon in the Old Testament (Judges 6:36-40). Gideon wanted to know the Lord's will about a matter, so he spread out a fleece of wool on the ground one evening and said, "Now Lord, if tomorrow morning the fleece is wet from the dew and the ground all around it is dry, then I will know that You have been talking to me and I'm supposed to do such-and-such." But even when the Lord met that condition, Gideon still wasn't sure, so he asked the Lord to do the reverse. "Now Lord, tomorrow if the fleece is dry and the ground is wet, I'll believe that You want me to do such-and-such — and the Lord did it! So if you resort to fleeces, check and double check.

I like to get a sign from the Lord, a confirmation that I'm on the right track and that's one way I'll ask for a sign, I'll put out a fleece, by asking God to meet certain conditions.

God doesn't necessarily follow any particular order when revealing His will through these means. He may speak to you through a prophecy first, and then you may confirm that prophecy by the Word. Or He may speak to you through the voice of His Word, and then you search other Scriptures and see what the Lord generally has to say about the subject. We can't put God in a box and say He's got to speak to us in this or that way or in this or that order. But these are ways we know He works, not only from

our own experience, but also from what He has said in His written Word.

CONCLUSION

So how do you find the will of God? Surrender your all to Him and "do not be conformed to this world"—or worldly ways of doing things—"but be transformed by the renewing of your mind; that you may prove"—there will be no doubt!—"what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Sometimes to find out what God's will is, we have to first find what it *isn't*. If, after trying all these ways, you still aren't sure you have found the will of God, take the first step in the direction you *think* He is leading you. A boat has to be in motion before the rudder can take effect. Take one step, then stop and ask God to confirm that you're going the right direction. Then if the answer's not clear or you're still not sure, give it some time. God may be waiting for certain circumstances to be right before He can show you any more than He has.

In the meantime, keep busy for God right where you are. You don't find God's will by just sitting around doing nothing. I once knew someone who did that. He said that he had been called by God to be a missionary, but he had since been sitting around, doing little or nothing, for many months. He said he was "waiting on the Lord" (Psalm 130:5). Well, while this man was waiting on God to do something to get him started, God was waiting on him to get busy! While you're waiting for God to reveal His will, keep busy doing the things you *know* He wants you to do: Love and praise Him for His goodness, study His Word, and be a blessing to others in your present situation.

May God help us all to not only find His will, but to do it! •





CHOICE

By David Brandt Berg

(Written to an individual who was faced with a life-changing decision—a marriage proposal.)

whatever is not done in faith is sin (Romans 14:23). If you're truly convinced in your heart and persuaded by God's Word that a certain thing is God's will, you should do it, no matter what anybody else says; if you're convinced that something is *not* God's will, you *shouldn't* do it, no matter what anybody says; and if you're not *sure* that a thing is God's will, then the best thing to do is to wait until the Lord reveals His will to you one way or the other.

In the meantime, don't let anybody else tell you

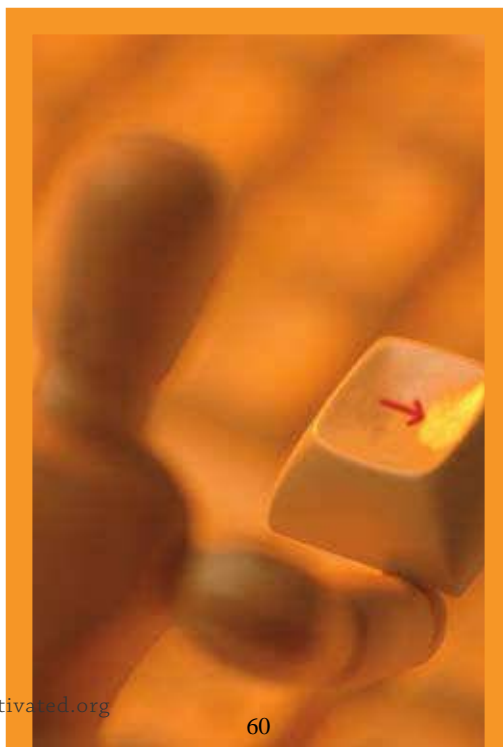
that some course of action is "of the Lord" and that it is okay to proceed, if He has not confirmed this to you personally. If anyone asks, just say that you're waiting for the Lord to show you His will. Anything is possible, for with God nothing is impossible, and "all things are possible to him that believes" (Luke 1:37; Mark 9:23). However you must be personally sure, and not merely swayed by others. It must be your own personal decision, what you truly have faith for, in which case, if it were in accordance with God's Word, it would be "of God."

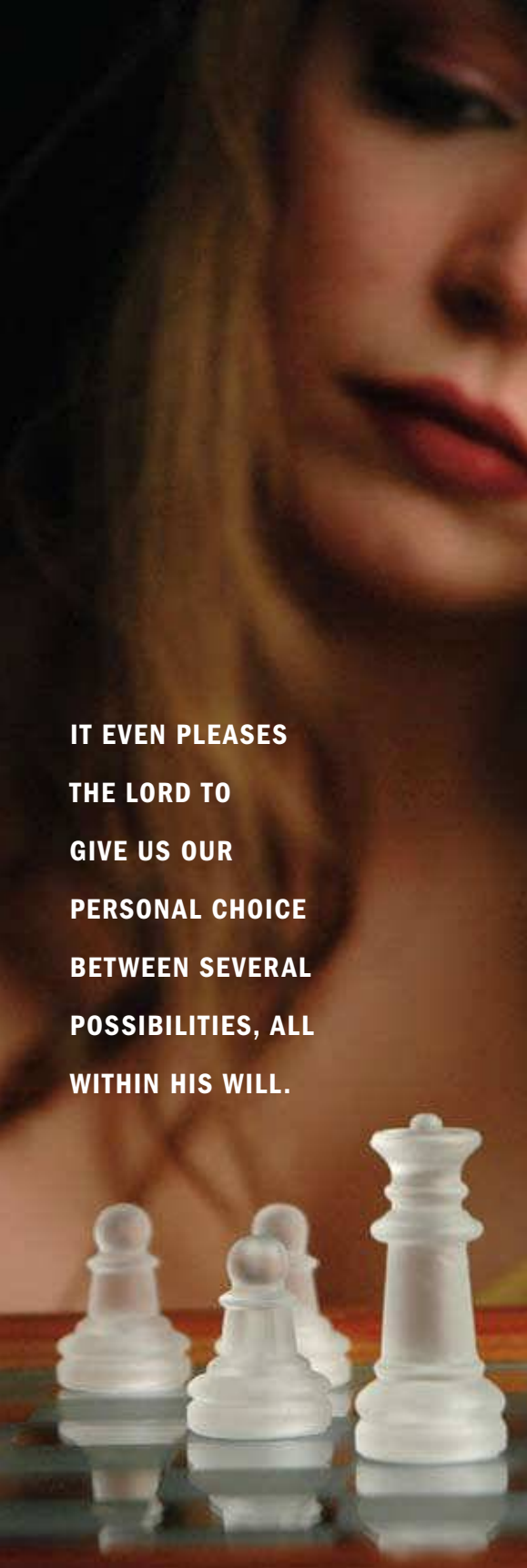
When making a major, life-changing decision such as you are doing, time is often the great tester. I'd certainly advise you to wait until you're sure in your own mind and heart of God's will. As Paul says, "Let each be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5).

In affairs of the heart, I do not believe in acting merely out of a sense of duty. There must be a great deal of genuine love, personal love as well as love for God. If it's God's will, He gives us this kind of love,

IT MAY SURPRISE YOU to know that God likes you, His child, to make your own choices within His will. As long as you delight yourself in the Lord most of all and want to do His will, it is His delight to also give you the desires of your heart, because He's the One who puts them there when you're pleasing Him! His Word says, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). If you love the Lord with all your heart, your personal desires are usually the right ones, because you want most of all to please Him. So your personal desires in the matter have a great deal to do with God's will. He gives us what we want and have faith for.

As my mother used to say, "When in doubt, don't." The Bible warns us that





**IT EVEN PLEASURES
THE LORD TO
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PERSONAL CHOICE
BETWEEN SEVERAL
POSSIBILITIES, ALL
WITHIN HIS WILL.**

real love. Any relationship that does not have such love will likely result in heartache, and some people getting hurt—including you! But if it is real love, God’s love, it will survive anything. So if I were you, I would wait until I was sure.

In this matter of marriage, God may know you both need a companion, comforter, encourager, inspirer, and example—the kind of genuine helpmeet that God designs for His own. It could be that you have both found the will of God.

You must make your own choice. If you truly love this person and this person loves you, and if it is God’s will, nothing short of this will ever satisfy you. But the decision is up to you, and you alone. No one else can make it for you.

This is one of the mysteries of His will and His plan: He has bestowed upon each of us the power to choose. And strange as it may seem to some, it even pleases the Lord to give us our personal choice between several possibilities, all within His will. It is similar to how we sometimes let our children choose a toy to buy or an activity, as long as it’s safe and good for them, and doesn’t harm others. This is one thing people don’t seem to understand about God: As our loving heavenly

Father, He really likes to give us *our* choice.

If a previous choice did not work out well, it could be that you made a mistake at that time, perhaps because you let others overly influence your choice. Don’t let that happen again. This time, make your own choice. God will give you whatever you want, if it’s good for you, because He loves you. “No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11). If it is good for you and the others involved, He will be more than glad to give it to you. However, if we insist on making what He knows will prove to be a bad choice, He often lets us suffer the consequences. He may give us the desires of our heart, but emptiness to our souls (Psalm 106:15).

So, contrary to common misconception, God does not usually choose for us! We have to choose for ourselves and find His will for ourselves. We have to find what is best for us through our knowledge of His Word, personal experience, and asking Him. This is what He put us here to learn: how to make the right decisions through our personal contact with Jesus, our knowledge of God’s Word and His will, and our love for Him and others. We must do what we know is right.

It comes back to the scripture, “Let each be fully convinced in his own mind” (Romans 14:5). Be sure you’re right, then go ahead and do what you know is right, no matter what anybody says. Do it because you are personally convinced it’s God’s will, it’s according to His Word, and you have confirmed it through several other means. Best of all, pray and ask the Lord. He likes for you to seek His will and find it, so you will know without a doubt that it’s right when you do it.

Until then, don’t! As long as you’re doubtful about a decision, don’t let anyone else pressure you to act upon it, one way or the other. He wants to give you the desires of your heart, but they must be the desires of *your* heart and not someone else’s—your choice and not another’s.

May God bless and keep you and continue to make you a great blessing, and may He give you every desire of your heart as you delight yourself in Him and His love. “Do not fear ... for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). *Your* will be done in Him. That’s what He wants to know: that you’re making your own personal choice in the matter. •

FEEDING READING

Choice and Decision-making

FOR THE BEST RESULTS,
PRAY FOR GOD’S GUIDANCE.

Psalm 37:5
Proverbs 3:6
Proverbs 16:3
James 1:5

OUR OWN THOUGHTS AND
REASONING CAN LEAD US
ASTRAY.

Proverbs 3:5,7a
Proverbs 14:12
Proverbs 19:21
Isaiah 55:8–9
Jeremiah 10:23

GOD ALWAYS HELPS US
MAKE THE BEST CHOICE.

Psalm 25:12
Psalm 32:8
Psalm 84:11
Jeremiah 29:11

SOUND DECISIONS ARE
BASED ON GOD’S WORD.

Psalm 119:105
Psalm 119:24
Psalm 119:133a
Matthew 7:24–27
2 Timothy 3:16

THE FINAL TEST FOR
DECISIONS: IS IT LOVING?

Romans 13:10
1 Corinthians 16:14

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

hEaRiNg God'S VOICE

Q: *A lot of people say God speaks. I have been praying earnestly for God to speak to me, but I have never heard Him. Does His speaking come as a thought, or is it in an audible voice that I should hear with my physical ears?*

A: If you have established a personal connection with God by accepting Jesus as your Savior, and if you have asked God to speak to you, He will. Jesus promised, “Ask and it will be given you” (Matthew 7:7). In fact, God has probably already been speaking to you; you just need to learn to recognize His voice.

God speaks in a number of ways. As you read the Bible, He will often cause a particular passage to stand out to you and show you how it applies to your situation or how it answers a question you may have. He may speak to you through vivid dreams or visions. He may speak through godly counselors, people who are strong in faith and knowledge of God’s Word and ways, who He inspires with advice that He knows will benefit you.

God is also able to speak to you directly. Under special circumstances, some people hear God speak in an audible voice, like the child prophet Samuel did (1 Samuel chapter 3) and as appears to have been the case when He spoke to the prophet Elijah through a “gentle whisper” when Elijah was desperate for God’s guidance (1 Kings 19:11–12). Usually, however, He speaks in our minds at those times when we get quiet, clear our minds of other busy thoughts, ask Him to speak, and then wait for an answer. Sometimes He may not even use words; He may just give you an impression or inner conviction, a sort of intuitive knowledge about a particular situation.


David Brandt Berg explained hearing from Heaven this way: “It’s easy to hear from the Lord. When you ask the Lord for an answer to a question or problem, *expect* an answer and take the first thing that comes. If you want the Lord to answer and believe that He can and will, you won’t be disappointed. What you see or hear with the eyes or ears of your spirit, that’s the Lord answering.” ←

TURN ON AND TUNE IN

Quotes by David Brandt Berg

God is like a broadcasting station, broadcasting all the time. Just like the radio waves that are unseen in the air all around you this very minute, God’s Spirit is ever present, waiting for you to make contact. And much the same as a simple little radio, you have been designed by your Creator to receive those signals. God’s power is always on. The message is always there. But in order to receive it, you must turn on your spiritual receiver and tune in to God’s frequency!

You’re going to have to get quiet by yourself—somewhere, somehow, sometime—if you’re going to hear from the Lord. You can’t solve your problems on your own. You’ve got to be desperate for God’s solutions, and then you’ve got to stop everything else and listen. ←



Squeeze!

—don't **JERK!**

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

ONE DAY MY WIFE AND I WERE IN A HURRY TO GET HOME, but instead we sat down on a lovely rock wall to enjoy the view for a moment—and we got this inspiration:

There is hardly anything that can be enjoyed in a hurry—not a glass of wine, a walk, a talk, a ride, a view, a meal, or an embrace. God is hardly ever in a hurry! It takes Him time to make a baby, a flower, a tree, a sunset, or even a blade of grass.

It's a funny thing, but thoughts like this used to come to me when I was a little boy. Sitting on a hill, I used to think about what everything in creation meant. I always felt that it was all an illustration of something; everything *said* something.

Speed kills. Haste makes waste. Patience takes faith. If you're in a hurry, you miss things, lose things, forget things, and wear out quickly. You may live it up, but you might not be able to live it *down*. You may marry in haste but repent at leisure! You may save a minute but lose a life! You may be penny-wise but pound-foolish.

If you go slow, you get there quicker—at least you *get* there. Better late than never; better safe than sorry! If you stop to look before you leap, you may not have to leap at all. A miss is as good as a mile! It takes time to aim straight.

When I was in the army, we often had target practice at the shooting range. Some of the targets were moving, while others appeared for a moment and then disappeared. Many of the other soldiers were in such a hurry to shoot for fear that the target would disappear, that they jerked the trigger so quick and hard that it jerked the whole rifle, which caused them to miss the target. But I took time to rest my elbow firmly, hold my rifle securely, aim accurately, and squeeze the trigger slowly. I learned to wait until I was sure I could hit the bull's-eye, and then fire. I got so good at this that I was rated as a sharpshooter, an expert rifleman with nine out of ten bull's-eyes in competition. I was neither



hasty, nor did I forget to fire altogether. I took reasonable time to aim straight and *squeeze*, not jerk! Squeeze, don't jerk, or you'll miss something!

Rome wasn't built in a day. Once when I was in a big hurry to do something, the Lord spoke to me with the following illustration:

It takes *time* to build a house. First, you must lay the foundation solidly, then build the walls, brick upon brick and stone upon stone, firmly joined with mortar, each piece fitting accurately—and you cannot do this in a *hurry*, or your wall will crumble. Then the roof must be laid securely, beam upon beam, rafter upon rafter, roofing tile upon roofing tile. Then come the plasterers; then the finishers to hang windows and doors, lay the flooring, and finally paint. Then at last, you have a building fitly joined together—a well-made structure built slowly and well to *last*.

But I've seen some buildings thrown up in a hurry that were, as some crooked contractors used to joke, "strong enough to get out of them before they fall!"—And it's this kind that collapse in storms and kill their occupants! I saw thousands of buildings demolished by a hurricane once. Hundreds of people were killed because of faulty, hasty construction that could not stand the wind of adversity.

You can have peace even in the midst of storm if you know you are secure and at rest in a safe building—strong, solid, well built, immovable by the wildest gale. A *good* building doesn't get up and run away. It's not blown away by the storm. It just sits tight until the storm blows over.

We are to wait on the Lord. "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31), instead of wearing out. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3). Those who believe enter into rest (Hebrews 4:3).

Rest in the Lord! Patience takes faith. Tribulation teaches patience (Romans 5:3,



KJV), because it *compels* you to trust the Lord, to have faith in God for the outcome.

"He sins who hastens with his feet" (Proverbs 19:2). "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. ... 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked'" (Isaiah 57:20–21). They are tossed to and fro, and they cannot rest. But "there remains a rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9).

Squeeze, don't jerk, or you'll miss something—and missing the mark of God is sin!

When Moses was in a hurry to deliver the children of Israel, he killed an Egyptian and had to flee for his own life, alone. But after 40 years of patiently, humbly tending sheep in the wilderness, with time to listen to the voice of God instead of his own impulses, he was finally ready for the slow, laborious, patient work of the Exodus—slow, but sure!

Then he spent 40 days and nights on the mountain and heard from God, but in one split second of anger, he broke all Ten Commandments and had to go back up and spend

another 40 days there. His haste cost him twice as much time (Exodus, chapters 32–34.)

In Aesop's fable, "The Tortoise and the Hare," the hare never made it, but the tortoise did!

My wife used to say to me on the way to some meeting or appointment, "Now, Honey, we don't have time for any of your shortcuts!" She knew what usually happened when I started cutting across country trying to find a quicker way: We'd get lost and wind up later than ever!

Sometimes my wife gets very impatient with me because I don't answer her immediately when she asks me a question; but it takes time to think and pray, to be sure I give the right answer. Anybody can reply immediately, but are they really saying anything? Be slow to speak and slow to anger (James 1:19). Go slow. Take your time. You'll enjoy things more, and you'll get more out of life.

My father used to sing a funny little ditty: "Never let yourself get worried, hurried, or flurried,

or else you'll find yourself getting harried, married, or buried!"

"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise" (Proverbs 6:6). But it takes time even to study the busy little antics of the ant, to learn anything from her. Don't be slothful, but be diligent in business (Romans 12:11). The sloth hangs there on the limb all day with his eyes shut, sleeping, scarcely moving, till he looks like part of the tree. He's not just slow; he acts like he's *dead!*

Be "temperate in all things" (1 Corinthians 9:25). "Let your moderation be known to all men" (Philippians 4:5 KJV). Don't run too fast, lest you stumble, and don't just sit there. Do something, but be circumspect, be prudent (Ephesians 5:15).

Squeeze, don't jerk, or you may miss the mark—and that's a sin!

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994) WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

the Upward look

RETOLD BY ABI F. MAY

THERE WAS ONCE A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR who sprinkled his lectures with personal reflections that invariably began with, "As I was walking in my garden, it occurred to me that..." Over and over he passed on to his students thoughts that his garden had inspired.

One day he invited two of his most promising students to visit him at home, and over a cup of coffee the students asked to see his garden. To their amazement it was only a narrow strip, barely wider than the walkway, with the house on one side and a high wall on the other.

"Is this really the garden where you have all those inspiring thoughts, Doctor?" one of the students asked.

"Yes," came the professor's reply.

"But it's so small!" protested the student.

"Ah, yes," said the professor, a twinkle in his eye as he gestured toward the sky, "but look how high it is!" ■





TIGHTROPE TANDEM

Decision Making in the Teen Years

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG, ADAPTED
BY THE TIME CHILDREN REACH THEIR EARLY TEENS, they have grown to nearly the physical stature of adults, but often still think and behave like children. That's the age when a lot of young people do wild, crazy things and get into trouble, and of course if they start going that direction and no one is there to help turn them around, things are likely to go from bad to worse.

Teens are at the age of decision, and that's a troubling, perilous time. They're trying to find their place in life, where they fit, and it worries them. They can be pretty difficult to live with, and they even find it difficult to live with themselves, because they are in a quandary, in a state of flux. They can be very idealistic, and at the same time very critical of their parents and other adults who aren't perfect.

Making the transition from childhood to adulthood can be like walking a tightrope, a high wire, and teens need someone there, a parent or other strong role model, to help them find their footing and steady them as they cross over.

Teenagers may not act like it, but they actually *want* leadership, they want direction, and they know they need it. They want help,

but you've got to win their confidence. They've got to know that you love them and are trying to help them.

When children become young teenagers, they start wanting to make their own decisions and run their own lives. That's a natural part of coming into adulthood. Of course, by that time their parents should have taught them how to make *right* decisions, and if they haven't, things are likely to go haywire. When that happens it may seem like it's too late, but better to start late than not at all—and it's never too late, with God's help.

When my first four reached their teens, I tried to guide them through the decision-making process, but then I'd get them to make their own decisions. I'd say, "*You* know what's right and what's wrong. What do *you* think you ought to do?"

They'd often try to get me or their mother to make the decision for them, so they wouldn't have to take the blame if things went wrong. Or they'd try to persuade us to say yes to them doing something that they knew they shouldn't do, so we'd be guilty and not them.

But I would tell them, "Don't ask me. You know what's right and wrong. What do *you* think you should do?" Afterwards they were usually glad that we made them decide, because they knew that was the way it was supposed to be and it helped them feel trusted and respected, which is a very important thing at that age.

Most of the time they knew what was right, and they wound up making the right choices. Even after they had made a wrong choice or two, they usually turned around and made the right one after a little wisely presented advice. I believe that most teens will do the same, if shown enough love and patience and understanding.

Parenting or mentoring teens is a difficult, sacrificial, and sometimes scary job, but it also has thrills and rewards that are all its own. ■



An audience with Jesus

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

Jesus said, “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life!”¹ God’s Word, the Bible as well as Bible-based devotional and inspirational material like this *Activated* magazine, nourishes our spirit and keeps us alive and healthy spiritually. Just like we have to eat in order to have physical strength, we have to feed from the Word to have spiritual strength.

The challenge that many of us face when we sit down to read is that we’re too easily distracted by the thoughts of the day. Sometimes the answer lies in simply putting forth a little more effort. This spiritual exercise may help.

Next time you sit down to read God’s Word, imagine that Jesus is sitting next to you. Instead of merely reading the words on the page, imagine that Jesus is personally telling you these things face to face, in a personal audience with you. He *is* always with you in spirit,² but if He were with you in bodily form, if you could see Him, you would surely be hanging on His every word.

That’s how you should look at your time reading God’s Word, as a personal audience with Jesus, the King of all kings, during which He is presenting you with special words of wisdom, instruction, guidance, inspiration, and encouragement.

—
“Your [God’s] words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.”—*Jeremiah 15:16*

¹John 6:63

²Hebrews 13:5

START YOUR DAY OFF RIGHT

—HEAR FROM JESUS!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

You ought to try a little prayer time every day, early in the morning before beginning your day’s work, asking Jesus to help you. When you first wake up, before you do anything, talk to Jesus. Get your orders from Him for the day, and you’ll be amazed at how He’ll solve or prevent a lot of your problems before the day even starts.

But if you go plunging into all your problems and troubles and your day’s work without stopping to talk to Jesus and get your directions from Him, you’ll be like a musician who decided to have his concert first, and then tune his instrument. Begin the day with the Word of God and prayer, and first of all get in harmony with Him.

Don’t ever think that it’s too hard to pray or that you don’t have time to pray. The busier your day, the more reason you have to pray and the longer you ought to pray. If you’ll spend a little more time praying, you will find that you’ll spend a lot less time working to get things done later. If your day is hemmed with prayer, it is less likely to unravel. It’s that simple!



JESUS SAID, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”¹ God’s love is all-powerful, but He won’t force it on you. Instead, He sends His Son, Jesus, to knock at the door of your heart and then wait for you to open the door and invite Him in.

Jesus wants to give you eternal life and become a very real part of your life here and now, but He can’t do either unless you want Him to. He stands meekly and patiently at your heart’s door—perhaps He has been standing there for years—waiting for you to hear Him knocking and open. He wants to be your Savior and will come in as soon as you ask Him to, but He has left that choice up to you.

Will you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? If you

Perhaps He has been standing there for years—waiting for you to hear Him knocking

haven’t already or if you’re not sure that you’re saved, you can make sure right now by sincerely praying this prayer:

Jesus, please forgive me for all my sins. I believe that You died for me. I open the door to my heart and I invite You into my life. Please fill me with Your love, help me get to know You, and guide me in the way of truth. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer and meant it, Jesus has already come in. You *have* eternal life and have just embarked on this life’s greatest adventure—experiencing God’s love in Jesus and growing in His ways and wisdom. ✝

HE LIVES

He lives! He lives!
Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me,
And talks with me,
Along life’s narrow way.

He lives! He lives!
Salvation to impart.
You ask me how I know He lives,
He lives within my heart!
—Alfred H. Ackley

FACT, NOT FEELINGS

Sometimes people don’t get any evidence when they pray to receive Jesus as their Savior, and they’re disappointed because it wasn’t manifested by some supernatural or physical experience right then and there. But it doesn’t matter how you feel; from the instant you asked God for the gift of salvation, you have had it. You know you’re saved because God promised it, because of what He said about it in His Word. Your faith is built on fact, not feelings.

—David Brandt Berg

¹Revelation 3:20

FAITH AND TRIALS

Faith

The Title Deed

IN THE KING JAMES VERSION of the Bible, Hebrews 11:1 says, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The word translated as “substance” here is the Greek word *hupostasis*. When the New Testament was translated into English from Greek nearly 400 years ago, the translators were puzzled by this word *hupostasis*. It seemed to be some kind of business terminology not found in classical Greek literature, and all they could determine was that it meant something fairly substantial. So they translated it as “substance.”

Hundreds of years later, archaeologists uncovered the charred ruins of an old inn in northern Israel. There they found a small iron chest apparently containing the valuable papers of some Roman noblewoman who had owned real estate in the area. Most of the papers in the chest had written in large Greek letters across the top: *hupostasis*. They were all title deeds to her properties! Before her apparent visit, this Roman woman had per-

haps never seen her properties, but she knew they were hers and could prove her ownership because she had the title deeds.

So what is faith? It's the title deed! Had those translators known what we know now, that verse might instead read, “Now faith is the title deed to things hoped for.”

If you've asked the Lord for something but haven't seen the answer yet, don't worry. If you have real faith, then it's like having the title to it in your hands, with your name written on it. It's *yours* and you *will* see it eventually.

—David Brandt Berg

Faith
is the
title
deed
to
things
hoped
for.

Prayer for the day

Dear Jesus,

When I am sick, You are ever at my side, attending to my every need and whispering words of gentle reassurance: “The miracle which you call health is just around the corner. You'll hold it dearer after this.” Together we'll hang on. When I am weary, You mop my brow and give me magical strength and courage. Together we'll go on.

EACH OF US WHO HAS ANSWERED Jesus' call to follow His example and bring His light to others is engaged in a war of the worlds.

We are fighting together for our faith, for truth, and for freedom. Freedom from want, freedom from bondage, freedom from pain, free-

By David
Brandt Berg

defiance of His laws of love and faith and peace and harmony. These laws are basic to the faith of every true believer in God and His love.

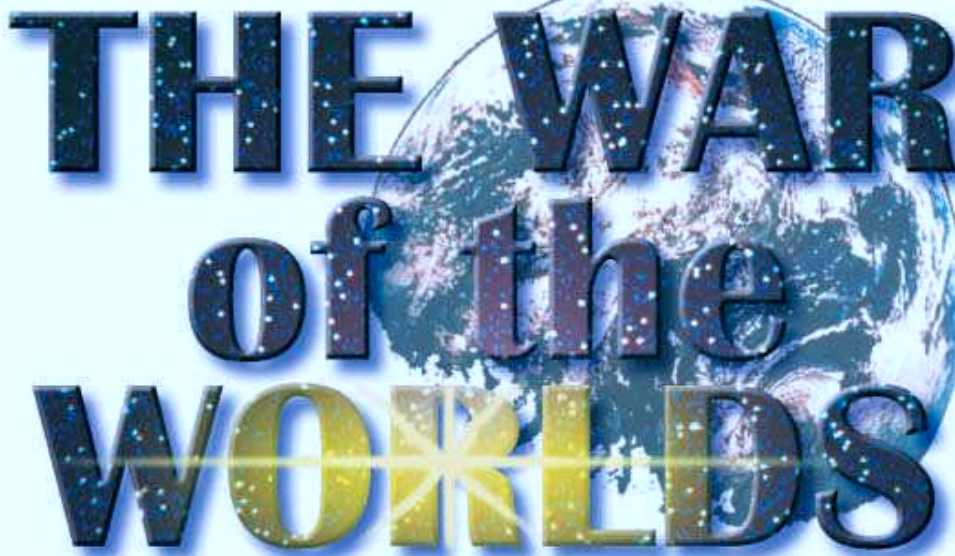
Ours is a war of the *spirit*, in *faith* and *love*, to win the minds and hearts and to save the souls of men.

Ours is a war to free men from the evils of the spirit and mind and heart which cause them to be selfish, unloving and cruel to each other. Man has little knowledge of the love, faith and power of God, or of the loving laws that God designed for our eternal happiness.

Ours is a war to free men's minds

and hearts and spirits from the bondage of evil and the soul-slavery of the Devil, which bring misery upon us. Ours is a war between good and evil, God and the Devil, goodness and wickedness, love and hate, life and death, joy and misery. Ours is a war of the universe between the good spirits of Heaven and the evil spirits of Hell, which are contending for our souls as well as our bodies, not only on this earth but also in the world of the spirit.

We must free people from fear with faith; we must free them from



THE WAR of the WORLDS

dom from evil and freedom from fear—these are some of our common goals. Mankind cannot be happy when suffering from hunger, malnutrition, disease and ill health. Mankind cannot be fulfilled when enslaved by oppression and tyranny, or overworked and exploited. Mankind cannot be satisfied when suffering from the horrors of war and constant strife and the nightmares of perpetual fearful insecurity.

We believe that all of these evils are caused by people's lack of love for God and each other, and their

A call to
action for
all those
who truly
wish to
change the
world!

hatred with love; we must free them from sorrow with joy; we must free them from war with peace; we must free them from poverty with plenty; and we must free them from death with eternal heavenly happiness!

We must inspire people to believe in God and His love and His plan for the glorious future of mankind in the soon-to-come kingdom of God on earth, run by the righteous, in which there shall soon be no more sorrow nor crying nor pain nor death, but all shall be light and health and happiness and peace and plenty for everyone. (See Revelation 21:1-4.)

We must teach people the loving, life-giving Word of God, the Bible, that they might have His life and love and happiness forever. Mighty empires of the sword have come and gone, but His words of love and life endure and continue to give joy and peace and love and life and hope to billions for generations. Alexander, Caesar, Genghis Khan, Napoleon and others like them have come and gone, but the words and ideas of the prophets of God live on forever.

The Word of God knows no boundaries, no nation, no race, no empire. Neither is it bound by time or space, nor limited by people or war or force of arms. It embraces all mankind and unites their minds and hearts and spirits in faith and love of God and each other for the good of all.

We cannot change the world without changing people's minds,

The Word of God knows no boundaries, no nation, no race, no empire. Neither is it bound by time or space, nor limited by people or war or force of arms.

and we cannot change their minds unless we change their hearts, and we cannot change their hearts without the inspiration of God's Spirit to save them, body and soul.

We must work to save the *entire* person, not merely their body and their environment. No one will ever be happy with a heavy heart, a troubled mind, a discouraged spirit and an unsaved soul. We must work to save the whole person, not just part of them. We must work to save the whole world, not just part of it. We must work to save people for *eternity*, not just for this present time. Only the power and life and light and love and Words of God can do this.

We must tell everyone, even though not all will listen or respond nor be saved. We owe the message of God and His life of love to everybody. Feed the hungry, give sight to those who long for light, and love the unloved now.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but [God's] Words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35 NIV).—So *use* them and spread them and His love in word and deed and by every means at your command, to give people light and hope and life and love and peace and plenty and contentment and heavenly happiness forever!

You are no fool to give a life you cannot keep for a love you will never lose! •

(The above was excerpted from David Brandt Berg's article by the same title.)



“Endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” [2 Timothy 2:3].

FIGHTERS

Many people, when they receive Jesus as their Savior, assume that all their problems will be immediately and forever solved. They think they’ll never have any more difficulties, but this usually isn’t the case.

When discussing the tests and trials that new Christians often face, especially those who are witnessing their newfound faith to others, my mother used to say, “The Devil doesn’t start shooting until you ‘go over the top!’” She was alluding to the trench warfare of World War I. The soldiers on both sides often spent days or weeks huddled in their trenches, during which time they held their fire. But whenever one side ordered an offensive and their soldiers climbed over the top of the trenches to attack their enemy’s territory, the other side would immediately start shooting at them with all their big guns!

It reminds me of the story about Sam, a Christian who was the servant of a wealthy, unbelieving plantation owner. One day Sam’s boss asked him, “Why is it, Sam, that you’re a Christian, and yet you have all sorts of problems and tribulations? I don’t even believe in God, and I don’t have nearly as much trouble as you do!”

Sam replied, “Well, boss, I guess I’ll have to think about that one before I can answer you.”

A few days later, Sam’s boss went duck hunting, and took Sam along to help him.

After Sam’s boss had shot several ducks, he shouted to Sam, “Bag the live ones, Sam! Bag the live ones! Leave the dead ones lay!”

By David Brandt Berg

With God you
cannot lose,
because
you're on the
winning side!

(When hunting ducks or other fowl, some are killed outright. Others are only wounded and will sometimes revive enough to fly away if the hunter doesn't quickly grab and "bag" them.)

When Sam returned with the ducks, he said, "Boss, I think I have the answer to the question you asked me the other day. I'm a *live* one!" And he went on to explain, "The Devil's afraid I'm going to get away, so he tries to bag me first. You're a dead one! He's not a bit worried about you. He's already *got* you!"

The Devil is out to stop each new Christian the best he can. He can't get us back once we're saved, because we can't lose our salvation; we're the Lord's forever. The battle for our souls is won, and it's a permanent victory (John 6:37; 10:28–29).

Although the Devil can't get us back, he can still give us a lot of trouble. He will especially do all he can to try to keep us from serving God and winning others into the Lord's kingdom. Every person won to Christ is a threat to the Devil. Every new Christian is potentially capable of winning hundreds of others away from him, so the Devil tries to destroy their usefulness to the Lord.

In the face of such opposition, some Christians ask, "Well, what did receiving Jesus do for me, anyway? I'm having these horrible trials now!" Christians who complain like that need to stop and think about what Jesus has done for them. They're *saved*; that's the main thing. They've got eternal life; they're not going to Hell; they don't have to worry about death anymore.

Where's their gratitude? Where's their love and loyalty? Isn't the love of their Savior worth fighting for? Aren't their new Christian brothers and sisters worth fighting for? Maybe they don't want to go through all these trials and tribulations just for themselves, but shouldn't they be willing to fight for the sake of others?

They also need to remind themselves that there are all kinds of benefits to being a Christian. They've got all the promises in the Bible on their side now. Yes, "many are the afflictions of the righteous," but the second half of that verse promises, "but the Lord *delivers* him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19). Even if they have to make some sacrifices, the Lord's going to repay them a hundred times over in this life (Mark 10:30). They can also have peace of mind, contentment of heart, and a feeling of genuine accomplishment for all they do for the Lord (Isaiah 26:3; John 14:27; Romans 5:1; Philippians 4:7).

They have the greatest power in the universe—God Himself—on their side. They can rest assured that no matter what happens, they're going to win in the long run. Regardless of how difficult the day-to-day battles may be or how heavy the fighting may get, they're going to win the overall war. The final victory is already theirs. They cannot lose because they're on the winning side!

They need to keep their eyes ahead on the eternal goal, as is brought out in the "faith" chapter, Hebrews 11: "By faith, by faith, by faith..." It says that all the great patriarchs of the Bible looked forward, through the eyes of faith.



They weren't satisfied with being a citizen of this world; they looked for a heavenly country, a heavenly city, made by the Lord. They were willing to go through trials and tribulations and be strangers and pilgrims here—people without a country—because they knew they had one coming and they knew it was worth fighting, living, suffering and sometimes even dying for! (Hebrews 11:13-16). Paul wrote, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

New Christians need to realize that there's a war going on—a war of the worlds between the Devil's dominion and the kingdom of God—and they need to be prepared to fight in that war. They need to understand that they've joined the Lord's army and it's engaged in battle with the Devil and his evil works. It's a fight! After all, that's what armies are for—to fight battles. They're on the winning side, but they've still got to fight!

In the Lord's army, He often lets His soldiers go through some of the heaviest tests in the very beginning,

just like boot camp in the army, where new recruits experience some of the toughest training in order to weed out all those who just can't make it. The Lord allows the Devil to test the "recruits" to see if they can take it.

Serving the Lord is often a struggle, but we learn to like it because we know we're on the right side, the winning side, and we've got the right Commander, Jesus, who we're proud of and happy to live for and serve. We like the battle, just as an athlete likes the athletic trial. We like to fight the Devil and defeat him in the never-ending battle for the souls of men. We like the fight, the excitement and the exhilaration of victory on the battlefield.

The Lord says, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). It reminds me of a story that was supposed to have taken place during the early days of Communist Russia, when Christians suffered terrible persecution. A platoon of soldiers rounded up some Christians and forced them to strip naked. Then the soldiers forced the Christians at gunpoint to go out onto a frozen lake. The

"Be faithful unto death, and I [Jesus] will give you the crown of life" [Revelation 2:10].

soldiers told them that if any of them wanted to save themselves from freezing to death, all they had to do was renounce their faith.

So the Christians froze and dropped one by one, until only one was left alive. He finally could not endure it anymore and stumbled across the ice toward the guards, screaming that he would deny his faith. As he approached the soldiers, one of them suddenly ran out onto the ice to meet him.

“Here, take my uniform! Take my gun!” exclaimed the guard. “I’m going out there to die in your place! I was watching all of you, and as each one dropped dead, I saw a crown placed on his head! But just as the hand was coming down from Heaven to place a crown on *your* head, you broke and ran. So here, take my uniform and my gun. I want

to take your place! I want that crown!”

There’s no crown without a cross, no testimony without a test, no triumph without a trial, no victory without a battle! Remember, that’s what you joined the army for—to fight and to *win!* So let’s get on with the battle! As long as you keep fighting, you’ll keep winning.

Take a lesson from John Paul Jones, the 18th century naval captain. His ship had been shot out from under him and was sinking. Half his men had been killed and many others had been wounded, including Jones himself. When the enemy captain called upon Jones to surrender, Jones screamed back, “Surrender? Hell no! We haven’t even *begun* to fight yet!” He refused to surrender and kept on fighting—and he eventually won the battle. That’s the kind of soldier who wins victories—the kind that refuses to stop fighting.

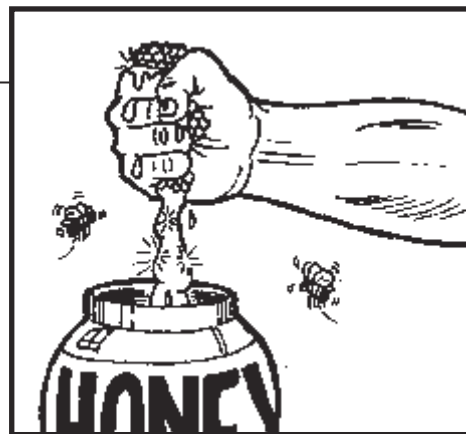
May God raise up soldiers who like to fight for the Lord with the weapon of His Word, who enjoy defeating the Devil, who know they can’t lose—conquering heroes who like to live and fight and sacrifice for Jesus and their brethren and the truth! That kind of soldier can’t be conquered. Even if they die fighting, they can’t lose, because they’ll get a crown of glory.

The Apostle Paul said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:7–8). Will *you* be able to say the same? ■



By David Brandt Berg

BEAUTY FOR ASHES



We used to sing a little song about the Lord:

*He gives me joy in place of sorrow,
He gives me love that casts out fear,
He gives me sunshine for my shadow,
And beauty for ashes dear.*

WE CAN'T
APPRECIATE
JOY UNTIL
WE'VE
KNOWN
SORROW.

In order to bring forth the sweetness, there has to be some suffering. To bring about the beauty of the flame, something must go to ashes.

Blessings come from suffering—"beauty for ashes" (Isaiah 61:3). This is borne out so well in Hebrews 12:11, which says: "Now no chastening seems joyful for the present, but painful: nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

It's like a giant hand taking a honeycomb and squeezing it—and out comes the honey. Or it's like when Moses smote the rock: The rock received a fierce blow, but out came the water (Exodus 17:1–7). The heart of stone has to be broken before the water [of God's Spirit] can flow out to refresh the people. It's like a beautiful flower that's pressed and crushed, but out comes the perfume. Or like the beautiful music that comes from the throat of the bird,

almost as though it's in pain, yet it comes forth with song. Even though the bird's song may be sad, it's so sweet. The groans are not murmurs, but songs of praise and thanksgiving to God—a sad, sweet song! As the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley once wrote, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts!"

Praise is the voice of faith!

We could never appreciate the light unless we had once been in darkness. We couldn't appreciate health unless we had been sick. We can't appreciate joy until we've known sorrow. We can't appreciate God's mercy until we've known the Devil's justice.

(Prayer:) Lord, help us not to quench that beautiful song, even if it's sad, to thank You in spite of the sorrow. Help us to be willing to go through whatever we need to in order to give forth Your sweetness, Your fragrance, Your beauty, Your song, Your refreshing waters. Out of what seems like defeat come some of Your greatest victories!

"[God] comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:4).•

The mind is the great battlefield where **relentless** spiritual **war** is waged—the war for the control of people’s **thoughts** and, through their thoughts, their **actions**.



MOST OF THE THINGS THAT BRING PEOPLE DOWN start in the mind: pride, jealousy, selfishness, hatred, covetousness, bitterness, worldliness, self-righteousness, unbelief, etc. They begin in the mind, take root in the mind, and fester in the mind—all through putting on the mind of man and the mind of the world instead of the mind of God.

The Bible has much to say about the need to guard our thoughts, about finding and putting God’s will above our own will, and about putting on the mind of Christ:

- “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).
- “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).
- “Do not be conformed to this

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

- “To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).
- “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

It is through the mind that Satan gains entrance, through the mind that he tries to influence people, through the mind that he works to recruit the lost of the world to his side, and it is through the mind that he controls and manipulates his own.



*It is through
the mind
that Satan
gains
entrance.*

And the Devil doesn't stop with his own, of course. He also attacks God's children, trying to hinder their happiness and well-being and usefulness to God by interjecting his negative thoughts into their own. But when they choose the Lord's light over the Devil's darkness, when they allow Jesus to control them by asking Him to give them His thoughts, anything good is possible.

How close we stay to the Lord and how much He is able to bless us as a result is determined in our mind, because this is where our will is set. This is where we choose Him and His ways, where we choose to believe His word above the Devil's, where we are able to put on the mind of Christ.

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), the Bible tells us, and one of the best prayers we could continually pray is for the Lord to direct our thoughts and rid our minds of the Devil's input, because for the Lord to bless and use us as much as He would like, He needs full control.

His thoughts cannot coexist with our natural minds, which are at odds with His mind. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). Our natural minds are easy prey for the Devil's doubts and lies and propaganda, and can stifle the Lord's Spirit.

This is the crux of the matter: If we're going to be the kind of Christians the Lord wants us to be, we must be wholly His, and in order to be wholly His, we must put on His mind; we must more fully think His thoughts. How do we do this?—By

putting *off* the mind of man, the mind of the world, the thoughts of Satan, the propaganda of Satan, the vanity of the carnal mind.

We must "gird up the loins of our minds" (1 Peter 1:13). That means to put up barricades to shield us from the Devil's attacks through our thoughts. It means to allow Jesus full control. When we do, He is able to live in us and work through us like never before! □

HUDDERSFIELD

THERE WAS ONCE A RICH LAND-OWNER who decided to buy the entire village of Huddersfield, and over time he bought every piece of land in the area—every piece, that is, except one little plot. One stubborn old farmer refused to sell his tiny piece of land, and nothing would change his mind. The landowner even offered the farmer much more money than his property was actually worth, but the farmer was so fond of his land that he absolutely refused to sell. When the landowner finally gave up, he tried to encourage himself by saying, "What difference does just one little plot of land make? I've bought everything else, so Huddersfield is *mine*. It belongs to me!"

But the stubborn old farmer overheard him and said, "Oh, no it doesn't! *We* own Huddersfield. It belongs to you and *me*!"

Don't let the Devil be able to say that of you to God! "Aha! Look, God! Even though he belongs mostly to You, a little bit still belongs to me!"

>> DAVID BRANDT BERG (D.B.B.)

ATTACK YOUR FEARS!



what to do when fear strikes

>> BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

FEAR!—WE DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH OF IT IS SUBCONSCIOUS until we analyze it and try to put it into words, yet we're often afraid to talk about our fears or even confess to ourselves that we're afraid because that would expose our innermost selves.

The fear of failure is probably one of the greatest fears people have—the fear of failure in life, love, labor, and—for Christians—failing the Lord. For the Christian, the fear of failing God is perhaps second only to the fear of failing others, because we know that God will forgive us, but others sometimes find it hard to forgive. The fear of hurting others because of our failure, the fear of letting them down, disappointing them, disillusioning them, discouraging them—the fear that because of our failure, others will also fail—this is hardest to bear.

But whatever your fears are, it pays to face them and to draw a line of distinction between the truth and the lie, between reality and the imaginary, between fact and fear.

An incident from my childhood illustrates this principle: As a boy, I delivered papers and handbills door to door, and I frequently encountered big dogs that would chase me and nip at my heels. Occasionally they actually bit me, but most of the time their bark was worse than their bite. I soon discovered that if I turned my back on them and tried to run from them, they were more apt to bite me than if I faced them.

Once when I was about 12 years old, I had gone into a certain yard to deliver a handbill, when out from the back yard came a huge Great Dane, barking and growling furiously. He was coming at me full speed, leaping and bounding, and I thought, *This is it!* I knew I didn't dare turn my back on him or he would bite me for sure! Thank God I remembered to pray for the Lord's help. I suddenly jutted out my hand toward him and yelled, "I rebuke you in Jesus' name!"—And did he put on the brakes! He skidded to a stop and looked absolutely startled, turned tail, and ran!

He was coming at me full speed, leaping and bounding, and I thought, This is it!

***You have to
differentiate
between
reality
and the
imaginary,
the truth
and the lie.***

It not only pays to face your fears, acknowledge and confess them, but to take a positive stand against them, especially in the power and Spirit of the Lord, claiming the promises from His Word. It wouldn't have done me a bit of good to try to take the "positive thinking" approach and say, "Big old dog, you just don't exist, so I'm going to ignore you!" He would have promptly finished me off to prove that he *did* exist!

You have to differentiate between reality and the imaginary, the truth and the lie. It doesn't do any good to just shut your eyes and hope the problem will go away, or hope that when you open your eyes again you'll find out it didn't exist, that it was just your imagination.

That big dog *existed*, and he was coming right for me, and it wouldn't have done a bit of good to shut my eyes and hope he would go away, or to tell myself that he was just a figment of my imagination. He was *there*, as real as you or *me*, and he was headed for me! In that situation, the best thing I could have done was to face him and take action to eliminate the danger, and I did so by launching a counterattack by the power of the Spirit. At first he was on the offensive and I was on the defensive, but the Lord helped me turn the tables. Suddenly he was put on the defensive, and that's when he turned and ran.

As any military strategist knows, it's impossible to win a war as long as you stay on the defensive. Defensive warfare is doomed to defeat. To win a war you have to launch an attack; you have to take the initiative!

So it pays to face your fears, recognize they're there, decide between

the real and the unreal, the truth and the lie, and then to go to the *attack* to dispel the vaporous fiction of the fairytale and to drive away the genuine reality of real threat!

Fear is the exact *opposite* of faith. Just as "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10), fear of Satan is really the beginning of death. The Hebrew word translated as "fear" in this verse is *yirah*, which means "reverence." So to fear God is to give Him the respect He deserves. It's a form of worshipping God. Therefore, to fear Satan and his devices is to give him just the kind of worship that he wants. God's Word says about other kinds of fear that "fear involves torment" (1 John 4:18). Fear of the Devil will wear you down and wear you out. It is damaging and disastrous to your spirit if you harbor it.

So you must rebuke that kind of fear just as Jesus did when the Devil tried to get Him to worship him on the mount of temptation. Jesus put the Devil in his place: "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him *only* shall you serve'" (Luke 4:8).

The Lord promises "perfect peace" to those whose minds are fixed on Him, to those who trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3). So if you are troubled by a spirit of fear, put your trust in the Lord. Just tell Satan, "Be gone Devil! Get out of here! I'm putting my trust in God, in Jesus!" The Bible says that if you submit yourself to God and resist the Devil, he will *flee* from you (James 4:7). □

(The above was excerpted from David Brandt Berg's article by the same title. For the full version and six other articles by David Brandt Berg, order *Greater Victories* from one of the addresses on page 2 of this magazine.)

The camel's nose

ACCORDING TO A BEDOUIN FABLE, an Arab and his camel were crossing the desert. Night came and the temperature dropped. The Arab put up his tent, tied his camel to it, and went to sleep.

The temperature dropped further, and the camel asked the Arab for refuge from the cold.

The Arab was adamant. "There is only room in the tent for one!"

The camel was quiet for a few minutes, but soon asked again. "Please, Master! Just my nose. If I could just put my nose in your tent, it would keep me from freezing out here."

The Arab reluctantly agreed.

The camel's nose became warm, but after a while the temperature went down even more. The camel woke the Arab and asked, "Please, can I just put my forelegs in the tent? They are very cold!"

Again the Arab reluctantly agreed.

"Only your forelegs, nothing more!" So the camel nudged his forelegs into the tent and they became warm.

After some time, the camel woke the Arab again. "Master, I must put my hind legs in the tent. Otherwise I fear that they will freeze and I won't be able to finish our journey tomorrow. What good is a camel with frozen hind legs?"

So the Arab agreed once more, and the camel moved his hind legs in. But since there was only room in the tent for one, the Arab was forced to move out into the cold, where he barely survived the night.

Depression is like that camel. It just needs a small opening to get started—usually a thought that seems to have some basis in truth or reason—but if you entertain that thought, pretty soon it and a whole lot more like it move in and take over. Don't let the camel get its nose inside your tent. •

WHO ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

THE LORD IS NOT THE ONLY ONE TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION or direct your thoughts, so you must learn to watch your thoughts and make sure you're on the Lord's channel. "Test the spirits" to make sure that what you're hearing in your mind or spirit is from the Lord (1 John 4:1). If your thoughts cause you to be discontent, bitter, dissatisfied, unhappy, or critical of others, they are not from the Lord but from the enemy of your soul, the Devil.

One of your best protections is to fill your mind and heart with positive, encouraging, strengthening, and faith-building thoughts from God's Word. Memorize Scriptures and quote them to yourself and even to the Devil when he tempts you with negative thoughts. Give no place to the Devil (Ephesians 4:27).

—DAVID BRANDT BERG (D.B.B.)



{Why suffering?}

Why suffering

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT TO GO ON?

Answers to one of life's
most troubling questions

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

IF GOD IS LOVE AND HE LOVES US, AS THE BIBLE SAYS, WHY IS THERE SO MUCH SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

A: God is not to blame for all the suffering in the world. He's not some kind of monster that enjoys making people suffer. It's not *God* who causes the pain, death, and heartache. The truth is, much of what we suffer is caused by people's selfishness and destructive attitudes and actions.

Take wars, for example, which have

caused untold suffering throughout history. The Bible says, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 4:1 KJV). *People* are to blame for the suffering caused by war, because of their own selfishness, greed, pride, and competitive spirit—the destruction of others for selfish gain.

WHAT ABOUT POVERTY? WHAT ABOUT THE MILLIONS WHO DIE OF STARVATION AND DISEASE IN SOME OF THE IMPOVERISHED NATIONS OF THE WORLD? SURELY THEY HAVEN'T BROUGHT THAT UPON THEMSELVES!

Believe it or not, man is largely responsible for poverty as well. Global warming is increasing, rainforests are disappearing, deserts are expanding, and seas are dying. These combined ills are having a disastrous effect on food supplies, especially in already impoverished regions, and all are largely the result of the haves relentlessly striving to have more at the expense of the have-nots. For example, indiscriminate logging for fast money in some developing countries is bringing about ecological disasters and population displacement.

In addition, civil conflicts, driven by political greed contribute to famine and poverty in many nations. Can God be blamed for this? Again it's a case of people bringing suffering on others through selfishness, lack of love, and lack of foresight and concern for future generations.

BUT THE SHORTAGE OF FOOD IS NOT CAUSED SOLELY BY DESERT EXPANSION, FOREST DEPLETION, AND WAR. THERE ARE OFTEN NATURAL

FORCES BEYOND MAN'S CONTROL THAT CONTRIBUTE TO EXTREME POVERTY AND STARVATION. ISN'T GOD TO BLAME FOR THAT?

It's true that some factors are beyond man's control, but ironically, while millions are undernourished, in other parts of the world there are huge surpluses of food. No one needs to go hungry; God's earth provides more than enough. But unfortunately, while many rich Western countries spend hundreds of millions of dollars on storing or destroying their surpluses, even paying farmers *not* to grow certain crops, the poor of the world starve.

Another example of manmade misery and suffering is the pitiful squalor of the poor in the huge cities of some developing countries. God never intended for people to live in crowded, filthy, dehumanizing slums. In most cases those people would have been better off if they had stayed out in the country where the air is clean and there is more food and fewer people—healthful country living as God intended.

In some countries, the poor crowd into the cities to escape civil war, guerrilla activity, or criminal activity in the countryside—more suffering brought on by others' greed and oppression of their fellow man.

Others, unfortunately, are responsible for their own predicament. They see the material success of the middle class and rich in the cities and think that would make them happy. They are drawn to the cities, but often find their economic state worse than before. Modern cities and the suffering they bring are not God's fault; they're a manmade curse.

Also, most of the rich don't share their wealth or lands as they should,

and many don't pay the poor fair wages for their labor or fair prices for their produce. If they did, there would certainly be enough to go around. The Bible repeatedly advises and even commands the rich to share with the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7–8; Psalm 41:1; Matthew 5:42). God doesn't want the poor to suffer!

Science has also proven to be a two-edged sword. God has helped man learn more about the world in which we live, which has led to many beneficial discoveries, but much of this knowledge has also been misused, culminating in horrific weapons of war, polluting factories and refineries, cancer-promoting substances, etc. These death-dealing and destructive inventions bring on untold pain and suffering, but they are *not* God's fault.

IS MAN, THEN, SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THE PAIN IN THE WORLD TODAY?

No, a lot of it is the work of Satan, also known as the Devil—the powerful spirit being and archenemy of God, whose relentless goal is to make people suffer. In fact, one of the Devil's main objectives is to turn man away from God by pinning the blame on God for his own dirty deeds!

IF GOD IS LOVING AND ALL-POWERFUL, WHY DOESN'T HE STOP THE DEVIL AND THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FROM INFLICTING ALL THIS SUFFERING? IF GOD IS NOT DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE, WHY DOES HE ALLOW IT TO GO ON?

The Bible speaks of a great war in the spirit realm between the forces of good and evil (Ephesians 6:12). God and His angelic forces *do* often stop

Science
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sword.

the Devil from wreaking even more havoc and destruction, but in some cases God allows the Devil to perform his destructive work as a judgment on those who have rebelled against God or refused to follow His natural and spiritual laws.

But as far as God stopping people from perpetrating suffering and evil, if He were to do that, He would have to put an end to our free will and majesty of choice, whereby we can choose to do good or evil.

WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN BETTER, THEN, IF HE HAD CREATED US ALL TO BE GOOD?

If God had wanted robots, yes, He could have made everybody do only what is right and good. But He purposely limited His own power by creating us with a free will so we could *choose* to both love Him and do what is right—just as parents want their children to love them of their own free will, not because they're forced to. We were put here to make a choice between good and evil, between doing things God's way or our own.

This is the main reason there is so much suffering, misery, pain, ill health, wars, economic troubles, and other woes in the world today—because instead of choosing to love and obey God, many people have decided to rebel against His loving rules, which He made for our health and happiness. Most people want to do things their own way and so must suffer the consequences of their own wrong choices. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12, NIV).

BUT WHY DOES GOD ALLOW BAD THINGS TO HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE? NO ONE IS PERFECT, OF COURSE, BUT

WHY DOESN'T HE REWARD THOSE WHO GENUINELY TRY TO DO GOOD AND MAKE RIGHT, LOVING CHOICES BY SPARING THEM FROM SUFFERING?

He does, for the most part. We're all acutely aware when things go wrong, but we often don't see or appreciate what *could* have gone wrong but didn't because of God's loving intervention on our behalf.

Nevertheless, good people do sometimes go through difficult times. That's when it's important to remember—and this can be difficult to grasp—there are *benefits* from suffering. Difficult times shape our character and teach us important lessons. Often more is learned from failure than from success. Also, suffering often brings out the best in those who choose not to become embittered or hardened, and engenders love, tenderness, goodness, and concern for others. The Bible says, “We comfort others with the comfort that we ourselves are comforted with [by] God” (2 Corinthians 1:4). Often those who turn to God for comfort and strength in their suffering later want to point others to the One who can also ease their sufferings and help them solve their problems—God and His love, personified in Jesus.

And the best news is that one day soon, God's Word promises, all suffering will come to an end for those who love God. Jesus is going to return to rescue His own from all suffering and whisk them off to Heaven, where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, for all these things will be passed away (Revelation 21:4). •

(THE ABOVE ANSWERS ARE BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF DAVID BRANDT BERG.)

But as far as God stopping people from perpetrating suffering and evil ... He would have to put an end to our free will and majesty of choice.

TRUST *God* ANYHOW

THE LORD LETS US GO THROUGH TESTS SOMETIMES, as it's through such difficulties that we grow and mature; they make us stronger and can teach us invaluable lessons. It might even appear as though He is being a little too hard on us, and sometimes we're tempted to think, "How could God let us suffer like this? How can He let that sort of thing happen?" The Devil is always around to try to make you doubt and even criticize the Lord, like he did with Job.

God said about Job, "There is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8). But the Devil challenged God, "Well, You just let me work him over and we'll see!" So God allowed the Devil to put Job through many tests and afflictions. Job lost his family, his wealth, and his health—and that's when his sin came to the fore. The Devil had been right about that. Job's sin was self-righteousness, self-perfection. His sin was that he didn't think that he had any sin, and he couldn't understand why God was doing all this to him.

It wasn't until he hit rock bottom, sitting in a heap of ashes, scraping boils from his body with a piece of broken pottery, that he finally confessed he wasn't as righteous as he had thought he was—and then God delivered him! Job learned his lesson, the Devil gave up, and God gave Job a new family, restored his health, and made him even more prosperous than before.

Satan almost triumphed, but the Lord won a great victory out of what had looked like a terrible defeat in the making. When things couldn't have been going worse for Job and his future couldn't have looked darker, he declared, "Though [God] slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). That's one of the most glorious testimonies in the Bible of sustaining faith in the face of great suffering, defeat, and discouragement.

One thing is certain: God knows what He's doing. So whenever we don't understand why He allows something to



If you haven't yet received Jesus, you can right now by praying the following prayer.
Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for the wrong things I've done, come into my heart, give me Your free gift of eternal life, and teach me more about Your love. Amen.



PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

happen, we just have to wrap our questions in a little bundle of faith and tuck it away till some day He reveals why. I've had some things happen to me that I couldn't understand, except that they kept me humble, taught me lessons, and eventually furthered the Lord's plan for my life.

We don't always know right away why God did or allowed certain things to happen, and in some cases we may not know till we get to Heaven. I have a whole lot of questions that I'm going to ask when I get there. We've just got to trust Him anyhow!

One of the great questions of this life is why God allows seemingly bad things to happen to people, and specifically to believers. We probably won't know the complete answer to that till we get to Heaven. I think that's going to be part of our continuing education in the

afterlife—learning why. Like Paul wrote: "Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12 NIV).

We don't know all the whys and wherefores, but we do know that the Lord loves us, that He knows best, and that if we don't understand something now, we will later. In the meantime, we've got to trust God no matter what. "Though I have had a tough time and I don't know why, I will still trust Him! Though He let this or that happen, I will still trust Him!" That's the greatest victory of all, when you seem to be defeated and you still trust the Lord because you know He's ultimately in control of the situation and will work it for your good in some way, as the Scripture promises: "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28). ■

Problems are to be expected; they're part of life.

Psalms 34:19

1 Corinthians 10:13

1 Peter 4:12

When we understand that the Lord often allows problems for our good, this helps us to rise to the challenge.

Romans 8:28

James 1:2-4

1 Peter 1:7

Problem situations drive us closer to the Lord and make us more dependent on Him.

Matthew 11:28-30

Psalms 107:13

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Problems and troubles are also often tools by which God fashions us for better things; they make us stronger.

Job 23:10

Psalms 139:23-24

Romans 5:3-4

2 Corinthians 4:16-17

1 Peter 5:10

No matter how great the problems, the Lord promises us power to overcome them.

Deuteronomy 33:25b

2 Chronicles 32:8a

Isaiah 40:31

Isaiah 41:10

It is faith that overcomes problems.

Matthew 17:20b

Mark 9:23

Mark 11:23

1 John 5:4

With God's help, no problem is insurmountable.

Job 42:2a

Mark 10:27

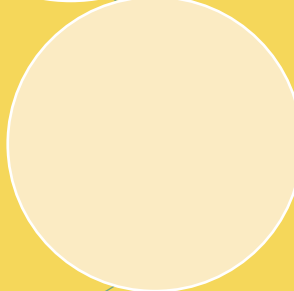
Luke 1:37

Luke 18:27

1 Corinthians 15:57

2 Corinthians 2:14a

Philippians 4:13



UPHILL GAINS

By David Brandt Berg

LIFE CAN BE A STRUGGLE AT TIMES. It takes faith and courage and a lot of fight. The trouble with some people is that they stop trying in trying times. They give up mentally and they give up spiritually. But the Bible tells us, “Men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1), and, “Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Galatians 6:9).

It’s amazing what faith can accomplish, especially if you’ve got not only faith but a lot of gumption and get-up-and-go. You’ve got to put some gumption into it. You’ve got to put some real “umph” into it! It’s been said that triumph is 10% “try” and 90% “umph!” The will is powerful. “The spirit of a man will sustain him ... but who can bear a broken spirit?” (Proverbs 18:14).

Strong faith and a strong will have many times overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles and handicaps. When you’re weak and incapable and insufficient, then Jesus has a chance to be strong and capable and sufficient in you. He says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Jesus always has the victory for you if you’ll keep going to Him for help. So don’t give up too soon. Don’t quit just before the victory. Anything wonderful can happen in that little margin of time when you don’t give up but keep on believing and keep on praying.

It’s thrilling to look back and see your progress—to look back down that rugged mountain road you’ve just come over and to see that you’re really getting somewhere—but it’s even more exciting to look forward and up to heights you’re soon to attain and views you’re soon to thrill to if you keep climbing and don’t quit! □



FEEDING READING

Personal growth

WE MUST DESIRE TO LEARN AND APPLY OURSELVES.

Proverbs 2:1–5
Proverbs 18:15
Matthew 5:6
1 Corinthians 9:24–27

GOD’S WORD IS OUR SCHOOLMASTER.

Deuteronomy 6:6–7
Joshua 1:8
Job 22:21–22
Psalm 119:9
Psalm 119:98–100
Proverbs 6:22
2 Timothy 2:15
1 Peter 2:2
2 Peter 1:2–4

WE SHOULD PRAY ABOUT THE LESSONS GOD HAS BROUGHT OUR WAY.

Lamentations 3:40
Matthew 7:7–8
James 1:5

WE NEED TO PUT OUR LESSONS INTO PRACTICE.

Matthew 7:24–25
James 1:22–25

GODLY INSTRUCTION IS A SHORTCUT TO LEARNING.

Proverbs 4:13
Proverbs 9:9
Proverbs 19:20

LEARNING TAKES TIME, SO BE PATIENT.

Proverbs 4:18
Philippians 1:6
James 1:2–4

Spiritual Power

POINTS TO PONDER

Power from God makes possible things that are beyond our human capabilities. This power can manifest itself in many ways: a miraculous healing from physical affliction; an easing of stress and emotional pressure; a change in circumstances that couldn't be brought about through human effort; insight that transcends earthly wisdom, knowledge, and experience; the capacity to love sacrificially and unconditionally, as God loves us. From simple solutions to outright miracles, all come from a force outside of us. It is the power of God.

There is tremendous power in God's love. It forgives sins, changes hearts, renews spirits, restores health, gives hope to the despairing and strength to the weary, and brings sunshine where there is darkness.

God is all-powerful, and all things are possible for those who tap into His power through faith and prayer. With faith no bigger than a mustard seed, anyone can cast mountains into the sea (Matthew 21:21), heal the sick, raise the dead, and give new life to the desperate and needy (Matthew 10:8).

Do you think millions of people throughout the ages would have believed in prayer if it didn't work? Discover the power of prayer for yourself. It's no secret.

God knows each person's heart and innermost needs, feelings, and fears, and it's in His power to give each person exactly what he or she needs.

The secret of spiritual power and victory and overcoming and fruitfulness and fire and life and light—the secret to everything good—is found in God's Word!

God has unlimited power, but to tap in to that power you need a conduit, a line. Faith is like a cord that carries God's power from the source to the appliance.

We've all seen superhero movies like *Superman* where people had supernatural powers. Though they lived in the physical world, they had powers that enabled them to defy its limitations and to do things that were impossible for mere humans. That's how it is in the spirit. God's Spirit in you gives you power to break out of the problems and despair of life by bringing you happiness, hope, courage, and new strength that is unquenchable and unstoppable.

Including God in everything adds a whole new dimension to life. It's like stepping into a new world where even things that used to be mundane can become extraordinary. ←

GOD ENGINEERS EVERYTHING

DAVID BRANDT BERG

GOD HAS THE WHOLE WORLD TO THINK ABOUT, yet somehow He manages to keep everything under perfect control and ultimately going the direction He wants it to go. Everything is planned; everything is ordered in “decency and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40), and nothing can happen without His will. Whatever happens is what ought to happen or what God allows to happen for a reason. Everything is in His hands and nothing happens without His will, especially to His children whom He loves and to whom He wants to be good.

God engineers every situation and has a good purpose for everything—even our troubles. “We know that *all* things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28). So the next time you find yourself in a situation that doesn't look so good to you, take another look. It may not be immediately apparent, but sooner or later God will turn your “bad” to good! ←



RUN THE RACE

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

A BIBLE STUDY ON HEBREWS 12:1

“**W**HEREFORE SEEING WE ALSO ARE COMPASSED ABOUT WITH SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which [does] so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1 KJV).

Like the rest of the Bible, the original text of this epistle was not divided into chapters. So you’ve got to keep in mind the preceding chapter in order to understand what “great cloud of witnesses” Paul is talking about. It is Hebrews chapter 11, of course, which some people refer to as the “Faith Hall of Fame,” and Paul is referring to great men and women of God who lived in Old Testament times. They’re not only watching us, they’re also praying for us. They are like our cheering section in the heavenly stadium, cheering for their team—you and me and everyone else who is serving the Lord. Whenever one of us scores a goal, they really cheer!

Whenever one of us wins a soul, all the angels in Heaven rejoice (Luke 15:10).

Think how wonderful it is that there are millions of witnesses up there in Heaven, all watching and praying for us. Sometimes the Lord even has them come down here to help us. *This* life is where the real action is, where the big tests and battles are taking place. Once you leave this life there are other things in store for you, but this life provides the primary tests. This is what the whole universe is watching, the big game, the World Cup! So since they are all watching us, what should we do? Paul explains:

“Let us lay aside every weight.” What are the weights?—The things that slow us down, that hinder us from getting the job done. God allows us to wear those weights for a while, to strengthen us. Sometimes runners wear weights while training, in order to build up their muscles. Then, when they take the weights off, they feel

like they can almost fly! So sometimes God allows us to wear a few weights to test us and strengthen our spiritual muscles. But when they have served their purpose, then it's time to lay them aside and run the race.

"And the sin which does so easily beset us." What is sin?—Not doing the *most* important thing God wants us to do, the way He wants us to do it—not hitting the bull's eye, the center of His will. So, "let us lay aside the weights and the sins"—anything that holds us back from doing our best to be what God wants us to be.

Then, after laying aside all these weights and distractions and sins, what are we supposed to do? "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." You have to *do* God's will; you have to *do* God's work! As long as you are doing the job He has for you, as long as you're doing His will, you're running the race.

You can only "run with patience" if you have faith and are trusting the Lord. If you didn't have patience, you would lose heart and quit, wouldn't you? You'd say, "I'm tired of doing all this hard work, especially when people never thank me and don't appreciate me and don't realize what a hard job this is!" If you didn't have patience, you couldn't do it. In another epistle, Paul encourages us: "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9).

It's a race that some are going to do better in than others and therefore receive greater rewards for having run. Even if they never had the opportunity to do what others might consider great things for God, they did the best they could with what they had, and they tried to love and help others. I think that some of the people who do the seemingly smallest jobs in the Lord's service are perhaps going to get rewarded the most one of these days.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THEY WILL GET EVERYTHING THAT THEY DESERVE, AND THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS GOING TO HEAR ABOUT THEIR FAITHFULNESS TO JESUS!

They are the ones who will step forward to receive their medals, rewards, and crowns from Jesus. For the first time, they will get everything that they deserve, and the whole universe is going to hear about their faithfulness to Jesus!

Picture this: At the sound of a drum roll, a woman steps forward to receive her reward. "Who is that? I never heard of her!"

"Don't you know? That is one of the volunteers who helped make a wonderful outreach ministry possible."

Dum-ta-dum-ta-dum! Out step some others. "Who are they?"

"Those are printers who donated their services. If they hadn't, a lot of Gospel literature would never have been printed."

Dum-ta-dum-ta-dum! "And who are all those people?"

"They operated and maintained the computer systems that furthered the Gospel, repaired the Christian volunteers' cars for free, organized relief work, taught children about Jesus, sponsored volunteers, and did countless other jobs."

So we're to "run with patience the race that is set before us," which is serving the Lord however and wherever He has called us. And the only way we can have the patience we need to run and win this race is by doing what? "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). So keep your eyes on Jesus! ●

PACKAGE PRAYER

—A Spiritual Exercise

“Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you” (Psalm 55:22).

Soft background music may help set the tone. Begin this exercise by closing your eyes, and breathe deeply and slowly for a minute. Now mentally articulate one by one the concerns and worries on your mind today, such as things you need to take care of, or situations at work or with your children, or health issues.

As you bring up in your mind each thing that you’re concerned about, imagine yourself packaging it up and placing it in Jesus’ hands. As you do, thank Jesus for how He’s going to deal with that problem in the way He knows is best.

Take as much time as you need to unload all of your cares in this specific, methodical way.

Discipline your mind to focus on each problem only as long as it takes to call it up in your mind and picture yourself handing it over to Jesus. Once it’s in His hands, don’t dwell on it any longer or let your thoughts wander to the details, but move on to the next problem.

When you have finished going through your list, thank and praise Him for His unfailing love, His unlimited power, His concern for you, and His help in working out your problems. •



REACTING TO THE TESTS OF LIFE

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

God allows disappointing incidents and circumstances in order to strengthen us. He tests us to see how we’re going to react. Even disappointment and things going wrong don’t have to keep you down and discouraged, because your faith and attitude can determine the way the circumstances affect you. Often faith and trust in God can even change circumstances completely, as He works on your behalf. It’s all in how you look at it, how you take it.

Circumstances and events don’t have to control you. With God’s help and a positive attitude, you can go through any changes, any disappointments, any circumstances, and come out happy. It’s often life’s tests that bring out the best in you, if you let them.

The Lord has all the power and strength you need for any situation. All you have to do is look to Him, draw on His strength, and ask Him to change things. If, due to other people’s choices, He can’t change the circumstances, then He can help you to change how you feel about things. •

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994),
FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY
INTERNATIONAL.

FEEDING READING

GETTING THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES

Don’t be afraid of sorrows; they will pass.

Psalm 30:11 ♦ Psalm 126:5 ♦ Matthew 5:4

Seek God’s help in your time of trouble.

Psalm 50:15 ♦ Psalm 91:14–15
Lamentations 3:24–25 ♦ Romans 10:13

The Lord is a close companion to all those who call upon Him.

Psalm 73:23 ♦ Psalm 145:18 ♦ Isaiah 41:10
Matthew 11:28 ♦ Hebrews 13:5b

Hold on to your hopes; tomorrow is a new day!

Psalm 30:5b ♦ Psalm 119:147 ♦ Lamentations 3:22–23



IT PAYS TO BE AS A LITTLE CHILD. In fact, Jesus said, “Unless you ... become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 18:3) and, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). We’re to be like little children—loving, sweet, simple believers, in childlike faith believing and receiving all that the Lord has for us.

Children are samples of the citizenry of Heaven, like little angels dropped from the sky. They’re so fresh from Heaven that they understand prayer and other spiritual matters better than most adults. They talk to God and He talks to them. It’s that simple. They have no

problem at all getting His ear with their pure, simple, childlike faith. It is given to children to be rich in faith. Faith just comes naturally to them. They have faith to believe anything God says, and with them nothing is impossible.

The problem with many grown-ups is that they know too much. They’ve been educated out of their childlike faith. But there are others of trusting childlike faith who are daily doing things that doubting intellectuals say can’t be done. So be like a little child, and anything wonderful can happen! •

CHILDLIKE FAITH

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

PARADOX

Jesus had no servants, yet they called Him Master.
He had no degree, yet they called Him Teacher.
He had no medicines, yet they called Him Healer.
He had no army, yet kings feared Him.
He won no military battles, yet He conquered the world.
He committed no crime, yet they crucified Him.
He was buried in a tomb, yet He lives today.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN



Breathe deep

A spiritual exercise

God is like the air we breathe—all around us, invisible, and vital to our health and happiness. Just as we need to breathe clean, fresh air to be strong and healthy physically, we need to partake of God's Spirit to be strong and healthy spiritually. Under normal circumstances, breathing is an unconscious, involuntary act. God would like our relationship with Him to be that natural, and He created us with all the necessary equipment. But unlike breathing, for most of us, making that connection with God doesn't come so easily; it requires a conscious effort on our part. Actually, it's easier than it seems, and with a little practice it becomes even easier. Try this:

Go outside, preferably to a natural setting. Take long, deep breaths. Imagine that you are inhaling God's energy, light, love, and peace. Then exhale slowly and imagine that you are expelling stress, worries, negative feelings, or whatever may be troubling you. Look around at God's creation, and continue to breathe deeply as you think about His infinite love and care. Turn your worries and concerns over to Him, and thank Him in advance for working everything out.

A few minutes of that and you will feel rejuvenated. ■

faith factor

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

Fear, tension, and hatred all produce various psychological and nervous diseases. Physiological diseases like heart trouble, arthritis, and stomach ulcers can also be made worse by worry, fear, bitterness, hatred, or a negative attitude toward life. Science has proved that all of these negative attitudes and feelings can cause an actual buildup of poisons in the body that contribute to illnesses. In other words, the wrong state of mind can actually poison your body.

That is why faith is such a marvelous cure. Knowing that your heavenly Father loves you and is going to take care of you and yours eliminates fear and gives you peace of mind, contentment of heart, and a feeling of spiritual well-being that brings rest to your vital organs, and that in turn actually causes the elimination of poisons from your body. Faith in God's love is the best medicine! ■

BELLY BREATHING

"Slow, deep breathing is probably the single best anti-stress medicine we have," says James Gordon, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the Georgetown University School of Medicine. "When you bring air down into the lower portion of the lungs, where oxygen exchange is most efficient, everything changes. Heart rate slows, blood pressure decreases, muscles relax, anxiety eases, and the mind calms. [Belly breathing] is extremely therapeutic."

Deep diaphragmatic breathing has also been found to significantly reduce symptoms of severe PMS, as well as relieve anxiety, depression, and other forms of emotional distress, end heart arrhythmias, improve digestion, increase blood circulation, and improve sleep and energy cycles.

The abdomen should expand during inhalation to provide the optimum amount of oxygen needed to nourish all the cells in the body.

When I receive my heavenly crown someday, I will know that I didn't earn it by myself; I was aided in my fight of faith by a "great cloud of witnesses,"⁵ the invisible armies of heaven. On that glorious day I will want to meet my angel of comfort and the other dear ones who walked with me and lifted me up when I was weary. On that day, I will thank them face to face.

MISTY KAY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN TAIWAN. ☞



PERFECT PEACE

By David Brandt Berg

When you truly trust God, you can have peace in the midst of storm and calm in the eye of the hurricane. It reminds me of an art contest that was held in which the artists were asked to illustrate peace. Most of the contestants handed in paintings of quiet, calm scenes of the countryside—absolute tranquility. Well, that's a form of peace. But the hardest kind of peace to have was illustrated in the picture that won the award. It depicted the roaring, raging, foaming rapids of a storm-swollen waterfall, and on a little tree branch overhanging the torrent was a nest where a tiny bird sat peacefully singing in spite of the raging river. That's when your faith gets tested, in the midst of turmoil. Quietness is a sign of faith.



"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."⁶

1. Psalm 91:11
2. John 20:29
3. Hebrews 11:6
4. 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7-8
5. Hebrews 12:1
6. Philippians 4:6-7



HOW FAITH WORKS

FROM THE WRITINGS OF DAVID BRANDT BERG

God loves to precipitate a crisis. He sometimes lets things happen to make us pray and believe Him for the answer. He wants us to take a definite step of faith by making specific requests and expecting specific answers.



Faith in God, trust in God, gives a feeling of rest of body, peace of mind, contentment of heart, and spiritual well-being. When we know that God loves us, we know everything is going to be okay.



We're supposed to believe God's Word simply because He said so. It's like a child who has to trust his parents even though he doesn't always understand why he must do or not do this or that. He just has to "do it because Daddy says so." Because the child trusts his parents and feels secure in their love, he takes their word for it. That's the way we should be with God. We should say to Him, "Yes sir!" and believe it and do it simply because He says we should. That's one way of showing our love and confidence in Him.



Take the first
step in faith.
You don't have
to see the whole
staircase, just
take the first
step.—Martin
Luther King, Jr.

How do you get faith? It's a gift of God and available to anyone who wants it. The problem is, a lot of people don't want it until they need it, and then they suddenly find they don't have the faith they need because they have no background of faith in God's Word. As no good building is without a good foundation, there is no solid basis for faith without the Word; faith in God is built on His Word. So if you feel like you're weak in faith, there's a simple cure: God's Word will increase your faith.

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"¹—meaning it comes through reading God's Word or learning from someone who is teaching about God's Word. The more you fill your heart and mind with the words of God, the more faith and the less worry, fear, and stress you will have.



When you pray, expect an answer. God is bound by His Word, so remind Him of His promises. Never doubt for a moment that God is going to answer, and He will. He has to. He wants to. Trust Him and thank Him for the answer, even if you don't see it immediately. ✂

1. Romans 10:17

ADAPTED FROM THE WRITINGS
OF DAVID BRANDT BERG

STEPPING STONES

THE NEXT TIME YOU FIND YOURSELF FEELING DOWN AND OUT, YOU MAY BE ABOUT TO DISCOVER JUST HOW CLOSE AND CARING GOD IS, because it's through life's most trying times that we learn He is always at our side. He loves us, wants only the best for us, and is able to bring about positive results from everything that happens to us—even troubles. Each difficulty or disappointment can become a stepping stone to lead us to higher ground.

GOD'S LOVING PLAN

God has promised in His Word, "All things work together for good to those who love God."¹ He will never let anything happen to you, His child, that isn't for your good. Although a lot of things may have happened to you that didn't look very good at the time, you'll find out sooner or later, if you haven't already, that in some way they *were* good for you.

God's answers to our prayers are infinitely perfect, but sometimes He doesn't answer the way we want Him to because He sees ahead and knows that our desires would harm us or others if He were to grant them. Often we later find that what we were asking for was actually a stone that merely looked like bread, while He was trying to give us bread that in our shortsightedness looked like a stone.²

THE DARKEST TIMES

God's purposes aren't always immediately clear, but you can always rest assured that you're in His care and that things will work together for good in the end, someway. When you're going through trying times, in spite of the difficulty, in spite of the confusion, in spite of the disappointment or heartbreak, in spite of the loss, you must hold on to the knowledge that God loves you. His love is unchanging, unfailing, and unending. No matter what happens, no matter how bleak the outlook, no matter how difficult the battle, no matter how long and dark the tunnel, no matter how severe the suffering, He loves you. He doesn't give His love stingily. He doesn't mete out a little here and there as you earn it. He always pours forth His love freely and abundantly.

Even through the most trying times, He is "a friend who sticks closer than a brother."³ "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."⁴ He is there in the darkness. He is there in the trial. He is there in the confusion. He is there in the depths. He is there because He loves you. He is there to help you through.

NG



He doesn't like to see you suffer and be unhappy, but He knows those experiences will help you to become the better man or woman He knows you can be.

PATHWAY TO GLORY

When you come to the end of life's road and look back at all that happened to you, you'll see just how much God loved you and how faithfully He cared for you all along the way, especially when the going got rough. It will be clear then that the rocks in your path were not placed there to cause you to stumble, but they were meant to be stepping stones to better things.

So no matter what hard turns your road may take, remember that Jesus is with you. He cares, and He will eventually cause even the "worst" situations to work together for your good. He has promised that.

FOR MORE ON HOW TO PASS THROUGH LIFE'S TESTS AND TRIALS VICTORIOUSLY, ORDER THE *GET ACTIVATED* BOOKLET *OBSTACLES ARE FOR OVERCOMING* FROM ONE OF THE ADDRESSES ON PAGE 2. ■

1. Romans 8:28

3. Proverbs 18:24

2. See Matthew 7:7-11.

4. Psalm 23:4

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

By *Abi F. May*

The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk knew what it meant to trust in God no matter how badly things were going.

Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer's feet,
And He will make me walk on my high hills.
—*Habakkuk 3:17-19*

If Habakkuk had been born 2,500 years later, perhaps he would have put it this way:

Though factories close,
And farms go bust;
Though the economy fail,
And jobs be lost;
Though currencies fall
And savings fade;
Yet we can rejoice in the living, loving God
For He is to be trusted;
He will keep me going;
His love will carry me through
And on to better things.

COMPILED FROM THE WRITINGS OF DAVID BRANDT BERG

falling upward



LIFE IS ONE BIG LEARNING EXPERIENCE, and for those of us who know and love Jesus, He is our teacher. More than anything, He wants to teach us all we need to know about Him and His love, so things will go better and we'll be happier.

He knows that none of us can accomplish any real good if we depend on our own supposed strength and wisdom. In fact, He said, "Without Me you can do nothing."¹ But the Bible also says that we "can do all things through Christ."² That's the key right there. We need to learn to let Jesus do things through us.

1. John 15:5
2. Philippians 4:13
3. See Genesis chapters 37, 39–41.
4. See Exodus chapters 2–3.
5. See 2 Samuel chapters 11–12, 15.

6. See Acts chapter 9.
7. 1 Corinthians 1:25–29
8. 1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4
9. Isaiah 55:8–9
10. Matthew 25:21

Of course, learning to be more dependent on Jesus is not something that we can learn overnight. It takes time and experience, and often that involves some difficulties and seeming defeats. The list is almost endless of people in the Bible whom God had to humble before He could use them.

Look at Joseph. Of Jacob's 12 sons, he was his father's favorite. Joseph's older brothers finally became so jealous of him that they nearly killed him, threw him into a pit, and then sold him into slavery. Joseph had to be made a slave and later be condemned as a criminal before God could exalt him to the second most powerful position in Egypt and use him to save His people from famine.³

And look at Moses. For 40 years Moses was groomed as a prince in the courts of Pharaoh, but God couldn't use him until he had spent another 40 years in the wilderness doing nothing but tending sheep.⁴

And consider King David. When David fell in love with a married woman, Bathsheba, purposely had her husband killed in battle, and then tried to lie and cover up the entire crime, God had to expose him and severely punish him. And later David's own traitorous son, Absalom, drove him from the throne for a time.⁵ Was David's a fall downward? Or did he fall upward? Sometimes God's way up is down—just the opposite of what we think. David was humbled and reminded that it was God who made him great. From that squeezing and twisting of David's life came forth the sweet honey of the Psalms, praises to God for His love, goodness, power, and mercy.

Or consider the apostle Paul. He was an up-and-coming Jewish activist, then named Saul, who had taken it upon himself to put an end to a fast-growing new sect. As he journeyed by horseback to Damascus, where he intended to capture, imprison, and execute as many of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth as he could find, God had to knock him off of his horse and blind him with the brilliant light of His presence. Trembling, helpless, and blind, Saul had to be led by the hand into the city, and was so astonished by what had happened to him that he was unable to eat or drink for three days. A disciple of Jesus then came and prayed for Saul, and Saul regained his sight, was converted, and became the apostle Paul. God had to break him and make him a new man before He was able to use him to help many.⁶

Nearly everyone who has ever been of any real use to God had to first come to the end of themselves. Otherwise, they would have been too proud and self-confident, and would have taken the credit to themselves. God uses weak and foolish things.⁷

When we learn from our mistakes, we become better for them, like these men in the Bible did. We can also learn from their mistakes. "Now all these

things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our benefit, that we might find hope."⁸

God does not see things as we see them, for His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not ours.⁹ He doesn't judge or reward us according to our successes or failures, but according to our motives. In heaven one day, He won't say to those who are true to Him, "Well done, My successful servant," but "Well done, My good and faithful servant."¹⁰

So even if you don't always understand why you're going through tests, trials, hardships, and breakings, remember that God has a purpose and knows what He's doing. God gets some of His greatest victories out of seeming defeats—victories of yieldedness, brokenness, humility, and utter dependence on Him. So don't be discouraged when you make mistakes, but learn from them. Fall upward.

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994)
WAS THE FOUNDER OF TFI. ■

TO FIND YOUR WAY TO GOD'S
LOVING ARMS, START WITH THE
FOLLOWING PRAYER:

*JESUS, I WANT TO KNOW YOU AND
EXPERIENCE YOUR LOVE. I OPEN
MY HEART AND INVITE YOU IN.
AMEN.*

FAMILY

CHILDREN ARE FOREVER

Compiled from the writings of
David Brandt Berg

BEARING BABIES AND RAISING CHILDREN IS THE GREATEST EXPERIENCE in this natural life. Children are eternal gifts—not just for a time, but for eternity.

Babies are so close to God—straight from Heaven. Although it's very mysterious how the Lord plans and orders His creation, we know that He does not make any mistakes. God is the Creator of souls. He's the one who creates that spark of life, the union of spirit and body to form a human soul.

Of course children are not only a gift of God, but also the work of God. If God has given you children, then your first duty to God is to raise those children right. Your children are God's work for you. They're His children too, of course, but He wants you to take care of and train them.

That's a full-time job, but with that big job come big rewards and lots of benefits. You should be very proud to be a parent, because yours is the greatest work in the world—molding the future. The world of tomorrow is what the parents of today make it, according to the way they raise their children.

What an important job a parent has! It probably doesn't seem very important, just taking care of a baby and changing diapers, but who knows what that baby will grow up to do someday?

Never minimize the training of your children. Did you ever realize that the most important things



children are going to learn in their lifetimes, they learn before they're five years old? So just think how important it is that you teach and train them right during those first formative years. That's why the Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

You can't wait till your child is five years old before you begin teaching him or her. Every single day counts, and what that child learns each day is important. You as a parent are responsible to see to it that your child is not only fed, clothed, protected, and kept healthy, but also that your child is taught God's Word, trained in His truth, and inspired with His love.

Some parents have the wrong attitude that if their kids learn, they learn, and if they don't, they don't. While children shouldn't be forced to learn something they don't want to learn, the truth of the matter is that all children want to learn. They're happier and feel more fulfilled when they are learning,

and they can learn a lot more with a parent's guidance and encouragement than if they are just left to learn on their own. In fact, it is entirely unscriptural to leave children to make up their own minds without first trying to inform them and guide them in their decisions. "A child left to himself brings his mother to shame" (Proverbs 29:15).

My mother and father placed great importance on teaching me about the Bible, the Lord, spiritual values, and biblical truths. Bible stories and the Bible itself were a tremendous influence in my life. I loved them and believed them because I knew they were the voice of God and the Book of God. As a result, my knowledge of God's Word and its truths were what guided my decisions and kept me through many difficult situations as I grew older.

I traveled a lot when my own children were small, helping to put a Gospel program on over 1,100 radio and 300 television stations over a 13-year period. But when I was home, I followed my parents' example

and spent as much time as possible with my children. I also took them with me on my trips when I could, and constantly taught them myself when we were together. I'd tell them a Bible story at bedtime nearly every night, usually in simple language they could understand. I would even act out parts to help them get the point, and they really enjoyed that. Children's minds are just like sponges, or tape recorders, or computers; they absorb, record, and process everything that goes on around them.

It's simple to teach your young children about Jesus. Just do it from your heart! Point them to the Lord by your example and your love, and by talking to them about Jesus.

As soon as they're old enough to understand what a mother or a father is—someone who loves them and takes care of them, who helped create them and gave birth to them—they're old enough to receive Jesus as their Savior. Just explain that there is a great unseen Father who is everywhere and loves us all very much, but because we've all been bad and deserve to be punished, He sent Jesus to take our punishment for us. Then have them repeat a simple prayer like the following:

Dear Jesus, please forgive me for being bad. Please come into my heart and help me to be good.

That's all they have to do! Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). He's just waiting to become their Best Friend and Savior!

May God help us to be good stewards of the most precious gifts He's given us—our children! •



Marriage is...

Marriage is
coming to
the realization
that you are
not complete
without your
other half.

What is marriage? It's a union, first of all. It's a uniting, two hearts becoming one. Marriage is companionship and friendship. It's being together, acting together, doing things together, and not wanting it any other way.

Marriage is understanding. It's being blind to the faults of the other. It's being considerate in every way—considerate of the other's time, feelings, and desires.

Marriage is caring. It's being concerned. It's going out of your way to make sure the other person is well cared for.

Marriage is kindness. It's saying kind words and putting those words into action.

Marriage is support. It's supporting your mate in their endeavors, in their projects, in good times and bad. It's giving them moral support, physical support, prayer support, all-around support. It's cheering them on and encouraging them when they feel down. Marriage is stooping to lift the other. It's being strong when the other is weak.

Marriage is protecting your mate from harm, physical and emotional.

Marriage is provision. It's doing your part to make sure the other has

their needs met. It's pulling your share of the load. Marriage is hard work day after day. It's going out of your way to meet the needs of your mate in whatever way you can, even if you don't feel like it. Marriage is lending a helping hand.

Marriage is sacrifice. It's giving of yourself for the one you love. It's being ready to give up your own ideas or desires to make your mate happy. It's giving and giving and giving again. Marriage is yielding, bending, melting together. Marriage is going the extra mile. Marriage is compassion. It's preferring the happiness of another to your own.

Marriage is give and take. Marriage is taking turns; it's not one sided. Marriage is submission. It's giving the other person a chance. Marriage is living and loving and helping one another. Marriage is learning from one another. Marriage is humbling.

Marriage is being open minded. Marriage is walking a mile in another's shoes. Marriage is listening and understanding.

Marriage is being there for the other in bad times as well as the good. Married love stands through thick and thin, no matter how hot

By David Brandt Berg



the trials or how hard the test. Married love never loses hope. It's always there, always dependable, always ready with outstretched hands and open arms to take the other in—to love, to comfort, to hold, and to cherish. Marriage is learning to let the little things pass.

Marriage is communicating honestly and openly. It's being willing to humbly share your heart and deepest thoughts. Marriage is talking, praying, discussing, and agreeing together. Marriage does not let things build up between you by ignoring the other, but rather finds a way; it creates solutions. Marriage is joining hand in hand, heart to heart.

Marriage is discovery. It's discovering each other, learning about each other and all the funny things you say and do. Marriage is a good sense of humor. It's relaxing together, enjoying each other.

Marriage is respect. Marriage is having faith in each other. Marriage is accepting another for what they are. Marriage is coming to the realization that you are not complete without your other half.

Marriage can be the most satisfying and strengthening experience you will ever have.

THE JUDGMENT

A woman once enumerated her husband's faults to a divorce court judge. She simply couldn't live with "that man" one day more, she said. On and on she went.

Finally she paused to catch her breath, and the judge asked, "Well, why did you marry him in the first place? You must have liked something about him then. What was it?"

"Well," the wife said, "he was a good man, a hard worker, and a faithful provider. He was also kind to children, and he was loyal."

"Isn't he still all those things?" asked the judge.

"Well, yes," the wife replied in a huff, "but..." And she started to repeat her grievances. "He's terrible! He throws his clothes on the floor. He never puts anything away. He's always late for dinner. He's hard to get up in the morning. He picks his nose in public. He fusses if I burn the toast. ..." All were relatively insignificant offenses.

"Very well then," said the judge. "Here's my preliminary ruling: Go home and think about those good qualities for which you first loved him, and try not to think about the things he does that peeve you. If after 30 days you still want the divorce, come back."

The judge never saw the woman again.

—Adapted from D.B.B.

To do the job of a mother takes the strength of Samson, the wisdom of King Solomon, the patience of Job, the faith of Abraham, the insight of Daniel, and the administrative ability and courage of King David.

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

REAL *mothers*

THERE'S A LOT MORE TO BEING A MOTHER THAN JUST HAVING A BABY! Almost any woman can have children, but it takes a real mother to raise and care for them and do all the work that's involved—and it's a full-time job! Motherhood is probably one of the hardest jobs in the whole world, yet one that is seldom appreciated enough. People who have never done it can't possibly appreciate what a big job it is! It takes great faith and a whole lot of plain hard work.

Up until a couple of generations ago, most women believed that their calling in life was to be a wife, mother, and homemaker. They gave themselves to it, and began learning it at an early age by helping their mothers do all the things they would one day need to know.

In many modern countries today, however, girls grow up without learning that kind of responsibility. Young women may receive little or no preparation for motherhood and

homemaking before they are plunked down with a full-grown man and a baby and find they don't know what to do with either one of them, much less the housekeeping and cooking. To them, boys were romantic playthings and a husband some kind of a dream, apparently with no work attached. But real life is a drastically different picture. Even with all the conveniences of modern living to take much of the pain out of housekeeping, children are still a full-time job!

To do the job of a mother takes the strength of Samson, the wisdom of King Solomon, the patience of Job, the faith of Abraham, the insight of Daniel, and the administrative ability and courage of King David. David was a fighter, and it takes a lot of fight to be a mother. It also takes the love of God, that's for sure!


I think motherhood is just about the greatest calling in the world! Mothers of the next generation are the ones that are molding the future. The

Never out of style

—A Message from Jesus for Mothers

Old-fashioned motherhood never goes out of style because it's all about love. I made people to need love, and I intended for them to first experience that love through their mothers. Mothers are the embodiment of love and care and tenderness—love that even the tiniest baby can feel and respond to.

So if you think you're missing out or living in the past because you're stuck at home "just" caring for a baby or raising children when you could be pursuing a career, think again. Love is the best thing in life! It's the most important lesson anyone can ever learn and the greatest gift anyone can ever receive—and mothers teach it and give it like no one else. Life would go on fine without many things, but not without mothers. Old-fashioned motherhood is here to stay! ◇



world of tomorrow is what the mothers of today make it, according to the way they raise their children.

My mother undoubtedly had the greatest influence of anybody over my life. Even though she couldn't be with me all the time due to her ministry for the Lord as an evangelist and pastor, I was constantly conscious of her spiritual presence, her love, and how she felt about things. Others had a great influence over me too, of course, like my grandfather and my father, my teachers and caregivers. Children are influenced by a combination of a lot of people and a lot of things—parents, caretakers, teachers, scoutmasters, Sunday school teachers, uncles and aunts, and friends they admire, books, and so on. Nowadays kids can also be greatly influenced by what they are exposed to on television and in movies.

Throughout my childhood, there were wonderful, dedicated people who helped mold my character and



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make me what I would become. I remember well the caretakers and Sunday school teachers my brother and sister and I had when we were young, who read us the Bible and told us Bible stories.

Bible stories and the Bible itself were a tremendous influence on my life, because I knew God was speaking to me through His Book. Thus God was a tremendous influence on my life through my teachers and mother and father, who all taught me of Him. Even as a small child, I knew the Lord, and He was a powerful influence on my life. I also learned a great deal from reading books, especially historical classics with their idealism and heroism.

As a young teen, my father became a tremendous influence in my life too. That is a crucial age when young people learn a lot about the world around them, much of it from their friends and peers. Young teenagers are very idealistic and begin to form strong ideas of what they think is right. The ideals, morals, goals, standards, and hopes that will largely steer their later lives are crystallizing.

At the age of 19 I was filled with the Holy Spirit. After that I just lived in the Bible and devoured the Scriptures all the time. I would say that from then on Jesus really became the greatest influence in my life.

After completing school I helped my mother in her full-time evangelistic work, and she continued to influence me. At 25 I married, and soon came another tremendous influence in my life—my own children!

Children make us parents serious about life and inspire us to be good and do good, to be an example and train them in the way they should go. We realize the sober responsibil-

ity of having a little child's life in our hands, and that he's going to be what we make him. Probably the final greatest influence in your life will be your own children.

Psychologists say that a child learns more in the first five years of his life than he'll learn in all the rest of his life put together. Those first years are extremely important. Parents can't wait till their children are five years old; every passing day is important. Parents are responsible to see to it that their children are not only fed and clothed and protected, get proper sleep and are physically healthy, but that they are also trained, taught, stimulated mentally, and inspired spiritually.

Childrearing is a serious, sobering responsibility. God will hold parents responsible who don't do what's right for their children or don't take care of them properly. If both parents must work at other jobs or are otherwise unable to be the primary caregivers to their children, then it is their responsibility to their children and to God to find somebody who is qualified to give that care and dedicated enough to do it right—and the same goes for single parents.

It cannot be stressed sufficiently how important children are to the future, or how important a mother's job is. God will bless you mothers for all you give of yourselves for these precious, eternal gifts from Him, your children. In fact, He is no doubt blessing you daily in ways that others can't even imagine!

Train your children in the way they should go, and when they are old they will not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6). When they are grown, your children will be so thankful that they had a *real* mother! ◇

The secret to raising happy, well-behaved, and well-adjusted children is actually quite simple—love. It's knowing how to apply that love that isn't always so straightforward or easy. Here are ten tips that are sure to help.

Ten Keys to Successful Parenting

1

Lead your children to receive Jesus.

There will be times when the natural love God has given you for your children won't be enough to satisfy your child's needs. Your children need their own connection with the source of all love, God Himself, and they make that connection by receiving Jesus.

Connecting with Jesus is so simple that even two-year-olds can do it. All you need to do is explain to your children that if they will ask Jesus to come into their hearts, He will be their best Friend, forgive them for having been bad sometimes, and help them to be good. Then lead them in a prayer like this one: "Dear Jesus, forgive me for sometimes being bad. Please come into my heart and be my best Friend forever. Amen."

2

Give your children God's Word.

What could help your children more than teaching them to find faith, inspiration, guidance, and answers to their questions and problems in the Word? "Faith comes by hearing the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Daily time in the Word is the key to spiritual progress, and that's true at any age.

If your children are quite young, you can start by reading to them from a children's Bible or Bible storybooks, or by watching Bible-based videos with them, explaining things when needed. Be consistent and make it fun, and your children will soon be "built up in [Jesus] and established in the faith" (Colossians 2:7). Then they will be less likely to be led astray by ungodly influences or search elsewhere for answers, because their lives will be built on the rock-solid foundation of God's Word.

3

Teach your children to be

motivated by love.

God wants us all to do what's right, not out of fear of punishment but because we love Him and others and therefore want to do what's right. If you've led your children to receive Jesus and taught them to love and respect both Him and others, they will develop that right, loving motivation over time if given enough positive reinforcement.

You can teach your children from a very early age to put love into action by being unselfish and considerate of others' feelings and needs. Jesus summed it up in Matthew 7:12, in what is now known as the Golden Rule. The following paraphrase makes a great starting place in teaching little ones to be motivated by love: "Treat others the way you would like to be treated."

4

Promote honest, open communication.

If your children know that they can expect you to react calmly and lovingly no matter what, they will be much more likely to confide in you. And if you build a relationship of mutual trust and understanding while your children are small, they will be more likely to keep that line of communication open when they reach their preteen and teen years and their emotions and problems become much more complex.



Put yourself in your children's place.

5

Try to relate to your children on their level and not expect too much of them. Also remember that children tend to be more sensitive than adults, so it's important to be extra considerate of their feelings. We all know how demoralizing it is to be embarrassed, hurt, or slighted by others, so realizing that such unpleasant experiences can be even more traumatic to children should cause us to do our best to spare them from such incidents.

Set a good example.

6

Be the best role model that you can be—not by trying to appear perfect in your children's eyes, but by being loving, accepting, patient, and forgiving, and by striving to demonstrate the other virtues and live the values you want your children to have.

Set reasonable rules for behavior.

7

Children are happiest when they know their boundaries and those boundaries are lovingly and consistently enforced. A spoiled, demanding, and irresponsible child becomes a spoiled, demanding, and irresponsible adult, so it's important that children learn to take responsibility for their actions. The goal of discipline is self-discipline, without which your children will be at a great disadvantage later in school, business, and the social world.

One of the best methods of establishing the rules is to get your children to help make them,

or at least to agree to them. It takes more time and patience to teach them to make the right decisions than it does to punish them for their wrong ones, but it goes a lot further.

Give praise and encouragement.

8

Like the rest of us, children thrive on praise and appreciation. Build their self-esteem by consistently and sincerely commending them for their good qualities and achievements. Also remember that it's more important and bears far better results to praise children for good behavior than to scold them for bad behavior. Try to always accentuate the positive and your children will feel more loved and secure.

Love unconditionally.

9

God never gives up on us or stops loving us no matter how far we've strayed, and that's the way He wants us to be with our children.

Pray for your children.

10

No matter how hard you try or how well you do at everything else, some situations will be beyond your control or require more than you have to give—but nothing is beyond God's control or His power. Tap into His limitless resources through prayer. He has all the answers and can supply every need. "Ask and it shall be given" (Matthew 7:7). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17).

Happy parenting! ■

"Children are a heritage from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3).

One of the most precious gifts any of us could ever receive is to become a parent and receive God's love in the form of a little child, so sweet and beautiful. They're all *His* children, really, but He entrusts them to our care and wants us to love and train them. They're a gift of God but, like flowers in our garden, we've got to take care of them. It's a case of God's gift also being God's work.

God Himself has set the example of how He wants us to be with our children. He is just and merciful and loving and patient, but He also deals with us firmly when He sees that we're getting off the track. Like a shepherd with an errant sheep, He sometimes has to let us feel His shepherd's rod in order to turn us off the wrong path. He is a loving God, but He's also a very good Father who knows how to correct us when we need it.

If we teach, train, and lead our children right and set the right example, they will carry that all through life. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). "All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13).

—DAVID BRANDT BERG



BY DASHA
EREMEEVA

WHEN MY DAUGHTER KARINA WAS PRESCHOOL AGE, I wondered what I could do to help her learn to not misbehave. She would often make a big scene, whining and crying when being corrected, which left me frustrated.

Then I had an idea that helped Karina over this hurdle. When she acted unkindly to her little sister, or was disrespectful to her father or me, or fussed or cried without reason, I would take her by the hand and explain that what she was doing was not very nice. Then I would lead her to a quiet adjacent room, where I would explain that she needed to stay there for a while in order to think and pray about her actions, as well as how she could

FEEDING READING

Children

CHILDREN ARE A BLESSING FROM GOD.

Genesis 49:25

Psalms 113:9

Psalms 127:3–5

GOD LOVES AND KNOWS CHILDREN, EVEN BEFORE BIRTH.

Psalms 22:10

Isaiah 49:1

Jeremiah 1:5

EARLY TRAINING WILL GUIDE CHILDREN ALL THROUGH LIFE.

Proverbs 22:6

IF YOU NEGLECT YOUR CHILDREN FOR OTHER THINGS, YOU AND THEY WILL SUFFER.

Proverbs 29:15b

YOU SHOULD TEACH YOUR CHILDREN GOD'S WORD.

Deuteronomy 6:6–7

Isaiah 38:19b

Joel 1:3

John 21:15

2 Timothy 3:15

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN TO TRUST IN GOD.

Psalms 22:9

Psalms 34:11

Psalms 78:6–7

LEAD YOUR CHILDREN TO RECEIVE JESUS.

Mark 10:14

John 1:12

ONLY GOD CAN TEACH LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS.

Psalms 25:5

Proverbs 8:32–33

Isaiah 54:13

TIPS ON PARENTING

By David Brandt Berg

LITTLE CHILDREN DON'T UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING that's going on, but they trust you that *you* understand, that what you say goes, and what you say is true; they believe in you. That's why it's so important to handle their hearts prayerfully and with utmost care.

WHEN LITTLE CHILDREN ARE IN A CONTRARY MOOD is no time to ask them anything. They'll say no to *everything!*

RULES ARE NEEDED, but don't make more than you have to. The fewer hard-and-fast rules that merit punishment, the better.

EACH CHILD HAS A UNIQUE PERSONALITY, and each one has to be dealt with on his or her maturity level and according to his or her individual characteristics and personality.

PUT YOURSELF IN YOUR CHILDREN'S PLACE and you'll have a better understanding of their problems.

YOU HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT RULES MUST BE OBEYED without fail, without exception, and what rules can sometimes be relaxed. It takes the wisdom of God to know the difference, so as much as possible such decisions should be made prayerfully in consultation with Him and His Word, and not on the spur of the moment.

IT TAKES WISDOM TO KNOW WHEN to try to persuade teenagers to do what you know from experience will turn out best, and when to agree to do things their way. Sometimes the encouragement they receive from being trusted with the decision or seeing that you're willing to take their desires and opinions into consideration will more than make up for what they might gain by doing it your way—and of course experience is sometimes the best teacher.

GOD'S GIVEN US AN EXAMPLE, and we should do with our children as He does with us. He tries to persuade us to do the right thing, the best thing, but He's given us free will and lets us make our own decisions. Do that, when appropriate, with your children when they are small, and they will be in a better position to know how to make good choices when they get older and the stakes are higher.



TIGHTROPE TANDEM

Decision Making in the Teen Years

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG, ADAPTED
BY THE TIME CHILDREN REACH THEIR EARLY TEENS, they have grown to nearly the physical stature of adults, but often still think and behave like children. That's the age when a lot of young people do wild, crazy things and get into trouble, and of course if they start going that direction and no one is there to help turn them around, things are likely to go from bad to worse.

Teens are at the age of decision, and that's a troubling, perilous time. They're trying to find their place in life, where they fit, and it worries them. They can be pretty difficult to live with, and they even find it difficult to live with themselves, because they are in a quandary, in a state of flux. They can be very idealistic, and at the same time very critical of their parents and other adults who aren't perfect.

Making the transition from childhood to adulthood can be like walking a tightrope, a high wire, and teens need someone there, a parent or other strong role model, to help them find their footing and steady them as they cross over.

Teenagers may not act like it, but they actually *want* leadership, they want direction, and they know they need it. They want help,

but you've got to win their confidence. They've got to know that you love them and are trying to help them.

When children become young teenagers, they start wanting to make their own decisions and run their own lives. That's a natural part of coming into adulthood. Of course, by that time their parents should have taught them how to make *right* decisions, and if they haven't, things are likely to go haywire. When that happens it may seem like it's too late, but better to start late than not at all—and it's never too late, with God's help.

When my first four reached their teens, I tried to guide them through the decision-making process, but then I'd get them to make their own decisions. I'd say, "*You* know what's right and what's wrong. What do *you* think you ought to do?"

They'd often try to get me or their mother to make the decision for them, so they wouldn't have to take the blame if things went wrong. Or they'd try to persuade us to say yes to them doing something that they knew they shouldn't do, so we'd be guilty and not them.

But I would tell them, "Don't ask me. You know what's right and wrong. What do *you* think you should do?" Afterwards they were usually glad that we made them decide, because they knew that was the way it was supposed to be and it helped them feel trusted and respected, which is a very important thing at that age.

Most of the time they knew what was right, and they wound up making the right choices. Even after they had made a wrong choice or two, they usually turned around and made the right one after a little wisely presented advice. I believe that most teens will do the same, if shown enough love and patience and understanding.

Parenting or mentoring teens is a difficult, sacrificial, and sometimes scary job, but it also has thrills and rewards that are all its own. ■

SUCCESS IN MARRIAGE

Quotes from David Brandt Berg

Lasting, genuine love is based on a more enduring foundation than mere fleshly gratification. It must be an unselfish desire to protect and to help and to make someone else happy.

As my mother used to tell me, don't marry the girl you can live with—marry the girl you can't live without!

Marriage should be as equal as possible, as sharing as possible. You should talk together, pray together, love together, discuss together, and then decide and agree together.

One very important thing that is often overlooked in a marriage is for both partners to have faith in God and Jesus Christ. When you have faith, everything is possible, and you can do all things through Christ.¹

In marriage you die to self, but you find new life.

Don't forget to thank her; don't forget to thank him. Gratitude is a great thing in married life. Show appreciation!

Two of the greatest assets to a good marriage are honesty and a sense of humor.

“Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things!”² That applies to your spouse as well. Try to remind yourself constantly of his or her good qualities—the good things—and try not to think about the bad things.

Say “I love you” a hundred times a day!

Marriage is more than sex or friendship or a business partnership. It is the most intimate, humbling, loving, and self-sacrificial relationship between human beings in all of life. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”³ This is love, real love, true love—the willingness of a husband to sacrifice himself for his wife, the eagerness of a wife to lay down her life for her husband. This is supernatural love, divine love, God's love, more than human.



Marriage is so difficult in today's society. There are countless temptations—not just to cheat on your spouse, but to be selfish, to assert your independence, to insist on your so-called rights over another individual. All of these stem from people's desires to promote themselves, and they run counter to God's idea that self-sacrifice is the way to happiness.

Thinking of your spouse first is the secret to married happiness. You give up old habits, old preferences, and old ways in favor of the new, in favor of this wonderful person God has put in your life. In doing so out of love, you find great happiness because God blesses unselfishness; He blesses your sacrificially yielding to another person's needs and wishes and seeking their well-being, even above your own. ❀

¹Matthew 17:20; Philippians 4:13

²Philippians 4:8, KJV

³John 15:13

REAL FATHERS

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

EVERY CHILD NEEDS A FATHER or father figure. Especially as he grows older, he needs a father even more than a mother. A father comes into the picture in a big way during adolescence, when the child needs discipline and strength more than ever. Fathers are usually the disciplinarian of the family, whereas mothers are inclined to be a lot more easygoing and lenient, especially if they have to handle the job alone.

A man can start being a good father by taking good care of the

mother, even before the child is born. Then he needs to learn to help her with the baby. He needs to realize how taxing it is for her, and he should share the load as much as possible.

Childrearing is not always easy or fun, but if you have real love for each other and the child, you will do whatever is needed. It also becomes easier when you remind yourself what an amazing thing has happened: God has created a new immortal soul and placed him or her in your hands. With His help it is now your responsibility to see that child through this world.

I loved being a parent, and I spent hours at it every day. I fixed bottles during the night when my children were babies, and I fixed them breakfast when they got older. I taught them how to eat and how to dress

God has created a new immortal soul and placed it in your hands.

themselves—all kinds of things. I got a lot of satisfaction out of it and a lot of reward.

I tried to spend at least an hour or two with my kids every day. I started reading them Bible stories as soon as they could understand speech. Of course when they were very small they couldn't follow all of it, so the youngest usually dropped off to sleep first. I'd read from the King James Version and translate it into the Daddy Version, explaining almost every phrase. Then I'd act it out, and they were just fascinated.

Someday you're going to be thankful that you had a part in those children's care and training. You will have helped form another human being. That's thrilling!

Are you equal to the task? No, but God is, and He will help you if you try! ✠

A PARENT'S PRAYER

May we so live that all our children will be able to acquire our best virtues and to leave behind our worst failings. May we pass on the light of courage and compassion, and the questing spirit; and may that light burn more brightly in these our children than it has in us.—*Robert Marshall*



Age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress;
And as the evening twilight fades away,
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.
—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)

outlook and those positive outcomes are because they have strong faith. They say, “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”¹ or, “I don’t fear the years! Come what may, I’m in God’s hands,” or, “God is a loving Father, and I know that all things will work together for my good because I love Him.”² What a glorious standard to live by!

A lot of people get bogged down with the cares of this life; they worry about whether or not their physical and material needs will be met in the future. “O you of little faith,” Jesus chided some of those people in His day. “Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”³ We have this assurance: “God shall supply all [our] need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”⁴ When the years come upon us, God understands our needs just as well as He does when we are young, and He is just as capable of meeting them.

The Bible tells us that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”⁵ He and His promises don’t change with the years. They are just as true and just as much for us when we are old as when we were young. “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes”⁶ will work just as well when we are 80 as it did when we were 18. “So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear.’”⁷

“[God] Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”⁸—He will not fail us in our old age, in other words. That’s the God I know. That’s the God who has proven Himself to me year after year under all conditions, and He’s standing ready at this moment to meet your needs also, whatever they may be. No matter what your age and no matter what your need, you are a unique concern of His at this very moment and always.

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968), WAS A FOREMOST EVANGELIST OF HER TIME AND MOTHER OF DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994), FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. 🌻



THE BEST TIME OF LIFE

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

Old age should be the greatest time of life. If you’ve filled your days with love, lived a good life, and done your best to please God, it’s a time when you can see the good fruit of your labors. That should give you a feeling of genuine permanent accomplishment, and you can look forward to eternal rewards.⁹

It’s really sad that so many people view old age as a terrible time of life, when really things should be getting better and better. Old age only becomes a disappointment if we find ourselves growing older in years without growing closer to God. That’s like walking in a circle; it’s motion without progress. But God didn’t give us the gift of life intending the first half to be the best. What God begins, He completes and brings to perfection.¹⁰ So neither fear old age nor fight it, but take hold of this stage of life and make something beautiful out of it.

¹Psalm 27:1

²Romans 8:28

³Matthew 6:32,26

⁴Philippians 4:19

⁵Hebrews 13:8

⁶Mark 9:23

⁷Hebrews 13:6

⁸Hebrews 13:5

⁹Revelation 22:12

¹⁰Psalm 138:8; Philippians 1:6

GENEROSITY AND FINANCES



Gain by Giving

YOU MAY HAVE noticed the contented aura, even radiance, of people who make it a habit to give. Whether it's time, money, help, friendship, or encouragement, they always seem to not only be content themselves, but to have enough to share with others. Jesus explained how this can be so: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap."¹

If we give to others, yield to their wishes to make them happy, or put their needs above our own, we can sometimes feel like we're losing out. But we're not really. God sees such unselfishness, and He will reward it. You never lose by giving.

THE TRADE UP

A story is told of a well-to-do lady who had become a Christian late in life. One day she was walking along a city street accompanied by her granddaughter. When a beggar approached them, the lady listened to his tale. She then took a bill from her purse and placed it in his palm. At the next corner a Salvation Army volunteer was waiting, and the lady dropped a gift into her kettle. Her granddaughter looked at her with curiosity and then said: "Grandma, I guess you have lost a lot since you became a Christian, haven't you?"

"Yes," said the lady, "I have. I have lost a quick temper, a habit of criticizing others, and a tendency to spend all my spare time in frivolous social events and pleasures that mean nothing. I have also lost a spirit of greed and selfishness. Yes, indeed, I have lost a good deal.

"And what I have gained is invaluable!—Peace of mind; power in prayer; a Friend who is always with me, who knows, loves, and protects me; fulfillment and richness in life that I never knew existed; faith that allows no room for fears; a promise of a wonderful heavenly home when I'm through with this earthly one—and much more! Yes, I'm happy about what I've lost, and what I have gained is priceless!"

COMPILED FROM THE WRITINGS
OF DAVID BRANDT BERG

¹Luke 6:38 NIV

THE BANK OF HEAVEN

“Take this to the poor widow who lives on the edge of town,” the old German shoemaker told his young apprentice, handing him a basket of fresh garden vegetables. The shoemaker worked hard at his trade and cultivated his little garden patch to make ends meet, yet he always seemed to be giving away what little he had.

“How can you afford to give so much away?” he was asked.

“I give nothing away,” he said. “I lend it to the Lord, and He repays me many times. I am ashamed that people think I am generous when I am repaid so much. A long time ago, when I was very poor, I saw someone even poorer than I. I wanted to give something to him, but I could not see how I could afford to. However, I did give, and the Lord has helped me ever since. I have always had some work, and my garden grows well. Since then I have never stopped to think twice when I have heard of someone in need. No, even if I gave away all I have, the Lord would not let me starve. It is like money in the bank, only this time the bank—the Bank of Heaven—never fails, and the interest comes back every day.”

God may not always reward you in mere dollars and cents; His reward may be in the form of protection from accidents, misfortunes, or serious illnesses that would have cost you a hundred times more than anything you may have given. But in whatever way it comes, He will reward you.

GIVE, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN UNTO YOU!

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

When the old abbot died, he was replaced by a new one with exactly the opposite nature—he was mean and stingy. One day an elderly man arrived at the monastery, saying that he had stayed there years before and was seeking shelter again. The abbot turned the visitor away, saying that the abbey could no longer afford its former hospitality.

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

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

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

“Oh yes,” was the reply. “And he had a twin. The one you banished was called ‘Give’ and his twin was ‘It shall be given unto you.’ You banished ‘Give,’ so his brother decided to go as well.” ✠



FEEDING READING

God’s miraculous supply

Meat for a month

Numbers 11:18–23, 31

The Lord pays a widow’s debts

2 Kings 4:1–6

Manna in the wilderness

Exodus 16:12–15

Water from a rock

Exodus 17:1–6

Fed by ravens

1 Kings 17:4–6

The barrel of meal and cruse of oil

1 Kings 17:10–16

Jesus feeds five thousand

Mark 6:34–44

A few of God’s many promises of supply

Matthew 6:33

Philippians 4:19

Psalms 23:1

Psalms 34:10

Psalms 37:25

Matthew 7:7–11

Romans 8:32

YOU NEVER LOSE BY GIVING

IT WAS CHRISTMASTIME in the early 1970s and my wife Maria and I were in London, England, living on a shoestring budget from gifts from overseas, staying at the cheapest boarding house we could find and spending as little money as possible.

We had gone for a coffee at our favorite neighborhood restaurant, and were chatting with our friendly waitress, an older woman with whom we had become well acquainted.

Hers was a demanding job that required her to be on her feet all day and to work long hours during the Christmas rush. She had taken the job in order to support her family since her husband had become ill. It was hard for her to earn enough for them to live on, but she didn't complain.

"I'm lucky to have this job!" she said, promptly putting an end to that subject. Then adding cheerfully, "I better hurry and clear your table, or I might lose it!"

After thanking her, Maria and I sat for a moment, deep in thought.

"Honey...." I started.

"Look at her hurrying around, trying to keep up with those young waitresses," Maria said. "Poor dear!"

"Lord," I prayed aloud, "I wish I had enough money to give

ADAPTED FROM THE WRITINGS OF DAVID BRANDT BERG

these dear people what I know they need. This poor waitress works so hard and I know she's not making as much as she needs."

"And she's always so sweet to us and waits on us so well," Maria added.

"Well, what do you think? We don't have much money ourselves, but we could tip her a pound."

"Or maybe two," replied Maria.

"Oh, Lord," I prayed aloud, "You know I always wished I was a millionaire so I could really give like I'd like to, especially to poor people like this waitress when I see they have a need."

You don't have to be a millionaire to give what you've got, the Lord spoke to my heart. You've got five pounds, so why not give them all to her? Give what you've got and I will give you more!

"Yes, I will!" I nearly shouted.

"Will what, honey?" Maria asked.

"It's Christmastime, after all, and the Scripture says, 'Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over' (Luke 6:38). I know she needs it. I'd like to give her five pounds!"

You see, the Lord's finances work the opposite of the world's. We say, "When I've got my million, then I'll start giving." But the Lord says, "Start giving what you've got now, and I'll give you all you need and more." He wants to see if He can trust us to give sacrificially from what we already have. When we do, He gives us more.


So I called our special waitress over. "A little tip for you, my dear. You're a wonderful waitress. God bless you!"

"Why, thank you!" she responded sweetly. "I can't thank you enough!"

You know, she didn't have to say anything—I felt great the moment I tipped her extra!

It did me so much good to give her that money that I began giving double tips to the waitresses, the bus drivers, and to the newspaper vendors.

And from that moment we began to receive the benefits of giving. Soon we were receiving more money for our living expenses. When I started doubling my giving to others, the Lord doubled His giving to me—and the more He gives me double, the more I can keep on giving double! You never lose by giving!

How much have you given lately? Let God give through you and you'll soon find He'll give you more. "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Try it! 

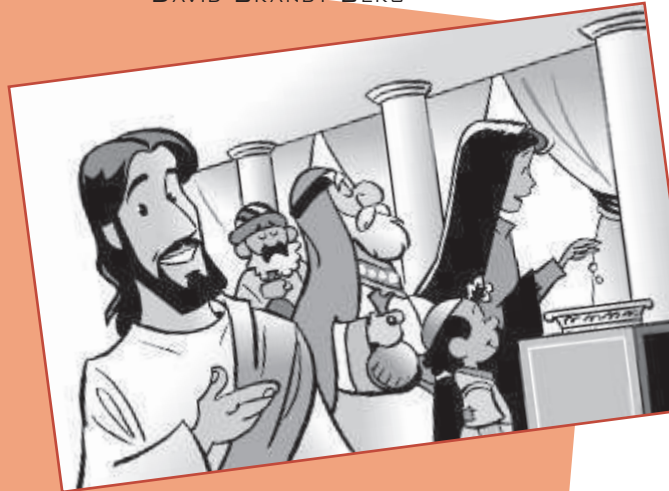
W GIVING TO GOD

—COMPILED FROM THE WRITINGS OF
DAVID BRANDT BERG

WHEN I WAS A POOR COLLEGE STUDENT trying to exist on only \$25 a month in a little 14-foot trailer [caravan] with a wife and two small children, my wife suggested that God would bless us if we would tithe¹ of even what little we had.

I protested at first that we couldn't afford it, but when we prayed to find the Lord's will about it, we opened the Bible to the very scripture about the widow who gave her last two mites—coins worth only a fraction of a penny by today's standards—to the Lord's treasury (Mark 12:41–44).

Well, I couldn't argue with that! I'd been saying we couldn't afford to cast in one tenth of our living, and here in the Bible was a poor widow casting in *all* her living! So the next Sunday we tithed our \$2.50 to the church we were attending then, which was the only place we knew to tithe, and Monday morning, after one of my college classes, the professor said: "Dave, here's something someone gave me to give you!" It was a 20-dollar bill—nearly 10 times as much as we had tithed.



And that's the way God is: He loves to outgive you, and He'll never let you outgive Him! He'll always give you much, much more than you ever give if your motives for giving are right. I'm not even sure the Temple needed that poor widow's two mites, but God honored her for her sacrifice just the same. As Jesus remarked, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood" (Mark 12:43–44).

So you can even cast in all your living and still not hurt, because God will bless you for it. If your intentions are good and pure, God will bless you for giving and honor and prosper you for it.



¹ Tithe: to voluntarily contribute a fixed percentage (usually a minimum of 10%) of your income or produce to God's work

It's His promise! He said, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this ... if I will not open for you the windows of Heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

God's going to repay you! "Whatever you spend," He says, "I will repay!" Do you remember who said that? It's in that wonderful story about the Good Samaritan who found the poor man along the side of the road who'd been beaten by thieves. The Good Samaritan picked him up and took him to an inn and told the innkeeper, "Whatever you spend, I will repay you." (See Luke 10:30-37.)

I think you're going to find that in giving to God and His work, you're not really sacrificing at all; you're just *investing*, and the returns are going to be far beyond anything you have invested!



So put your investment in Christ Jesus and God's work, and you'll reap eternal dividends! God will bless you for it and see that you get good returns on your investment—the best! You'll share forever in the eternal rewards of the souls won as a result of your giving. Put God first and lay aside the tithe for His work, then He's promised to put you first with abundant blessings. He will bless you with so much that you won't even be able to hold it all! ■

GOD WILL SUPPLY

God is very good to us when we love Him and try our best to please Him. In fact, He tries to be as good to us as possible. He will give us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). He will solve every problem, He will meet every need, He will even give us our heart's desires if we please Him. He's promised it. He'll give us what we ask for and have the faith for. Our God is a God of miracles, and He can supply from some of the most unexpected sources. When we please Him, He not only gives us everything we need, but even many of the things we want. If you will be faithful to God and stay in the center of His will, He will be faithful to take care of you.

GOD'S

FINANCIAL

HEALTH

PLAN



STAYING HEALTHY FINANCIALLY IS A BIT LIKE STAYING HEALTHY PHYSICALLY:

There aren't any shortcuts or "magic pills," but rather it's dependent on numerous factors that have to be done with regularity.

To get healthy or stay healthy physically, you must do a number of things in proper balance—eat well, sleep well, exercise regularly, drink plenty of water, dress appropriately for the weather, avoid stress, stay clean and avoid germs, etc. You can't only eat well and expect to be healthy; you also need to do those other things. Each is a part of God's health plan, and they all work together to bring about the desired result.

It's the same with getting healthy and staying healthy financially. You have to follow God's financial health plan as best you can. That means first and foremost making time for your spiritual life and relationship with Him—"Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4)—but there's more to it than that. You also need to work hard, be honest and fair in business, pray for His guidance before making financial decisions, be thankful for all He gives you, avoid waste, and give back to Him by supporting His work and workers, as well as giving to others in need, etc. You have to enact each part of God's financial health plan and keep the right balance, or you can't expect His full blessing.

At the same time, you need to remember that having a good income and financial stability isn't the be-all or end-all of the Lord's blessing, any more than it's the be-all or end-all of life—or as Jesus put it, "One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). Sometimes His blessings come in other forms that benefit us even more, such as good health, protection from accidents, a loving family, a happy and harmonious home life, true friends, peace of mind, and purpose and fulfillment in life.

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

BE THANKFUL

The Lord is a wise investor. He gives the most to those who are thankful for the blessings He's already given them. We can show Him our appreciation by thanking and praising Him regularly—by not taking His generosity for granted. No benefactor would continue giving to someone who isn't grateful for what he or she has already been given.

The more you learn to recognize God's goodness and the more you make it a habit to thank and praise Him at every turn, the more He will bless. So tell Him how much you love Him and how thankful you are for all He does for you. As you praise and love Him, He loves you in return and pours His blessings on you. Praise down the blessings of God.

—*Maria Fontaine*

PAYBACK +

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A MILLIONAIRE TO GIVE WHAT YOU'VE GOT. There is not one of God's children who cannot afford to give something to help others less fortunate. You may think you can't afford to give, or you may not be able to give a lot at first, but God blesses everybody that gives. If you're *not* rich, that's all the more reason to give, so God can bless you and help you have more.

God's finances work the opposite from the world's. The world says, "When I've got my million, *then* I'll start giving." But the Lord says, "Start giving what you've *got* now, and then I'll give you more." Man says, "Me first. Self-preservation is the first law of nature." But God says, "Put Me and Mine first, and I'll take care of you afterwards."¹ There's no such thing as a poor giver. Nobody who gives generously—even if it's only of the little he or she has—can be poor, because *God* will bless them with more.

God's way to plenty is to give sacrificially of what you now have. The more you share, the more God will heap on you, and the more you'll have to share. Love gives itself rich.

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994) WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

"Mother, I have found some sticks, too. The wind caused them to fall in the night. They will make a nice fire."

The man looked deep into the child's eyes. "Surely, the Lord has led me here," he said.

I looked over at my boy, his curly brown hair tousled by the stiff breeze. His eyes were fixed on me, the way small children look at their mothers with expectancy and trust.

"Do not fear," the man said. "Make me a small cake first, and then make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God, 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.'"

I went to the shelf and took down the oil jar. It was light in my hands, nearly empty. Why was I doing this for a stranger? It didn't make sense.

"Light the fire, my son, while I make the bread."

I took the sack of flour from its bin. It too was nearly gone. As I kneaded the dough, a strange thing happened. Energy returned to my hands. My feet felt light as I took it to the oven. There was something different about this bread.

I struggled to ignore my hunger pangs as the room began to smell of freshly baked bread, and I avoided my son's attentive gaze.

The man reached for the bread as I offered it to him. He held it up to God and said, "Lord, bless this food You have provided, and bless these hands that have prepared it." He turned to me and smiled. "Now make for yourself and your son."

"But I have just used the last..." I hesitated. His eyes told me that I should just do as he said.

"Son, hand me the flour and the oil."

The boy's eyes were filled with wonder as he handed me the flour. The sack was heavier than it had been in days. Then he passed me the oil jar, and as he did, oil splashed on our hands. Our hearts, like the jar of oil, were full to overflowing.

And God was true to His word. What had once been only a handful of flour and a few drops of oil kept the three of us alive for nearly three years, until the famine had passed.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A TEACHER, WRITER, AND MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, U.S.A. ■

1. Matthew 6:33

GOD'S LOVE

“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.

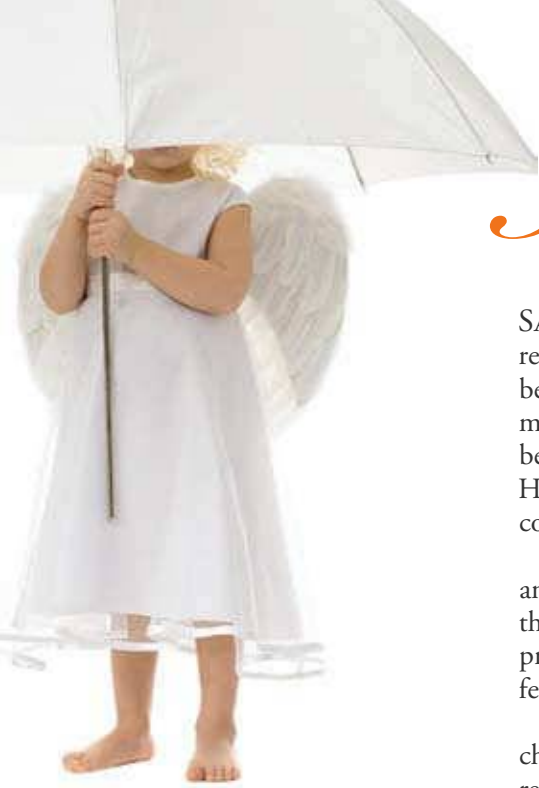
God, the great Creator, is a Spirit. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere and in everything—far beyond our limited human comprehension. So He sent Jesus, in the form of a man, to understand us and show us what He Himself is like and to bring us to Himself. And though many great teachers have spoken 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



It's free

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

SALVATION IS BY FAITH—pure and simple! Salvation is the result of believing: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”² If you get an emotional high or some other physical manifestation—a “feeling” of any kind—that is a bonus and beside the point. You are saved by faith in God’s Word, because He promised you salvation if you would meet His simple, single condition: believe. You’re not saved by your feelings.

It doesn’t matter how you feel, because God’s Word is unchanging and is not affected by that. It’s your faith that counts. If you believe the Word, regardless of how you feel, you’re saved! Eventually you probably will have some feeling, but it is not the “experience” or the feeling that saves you; that is a result of your being saved.

God’s plan from the beginning is based on free choice—your choice. God gave us free will to either choose to receive Jesus or to reject Him. Salvation is there for you. It’s yours, ready for the taking, but you must make the decision.

Salvation is a gift. All you have to do is reach out your hand of faith and receive it. Salvation is a miracle of God, but it’s yours for the asking. All you have to do is receive Jesus into your heart. He’s there, waiting to come in.

Believe and you’re saved. Period! Plus nothing! The Word plus faith plus nothing! That’s it! If you believe the Word and receive Him, it’s done! Of course, if you are thankful for Jesus’ love and the gift of salvation, your life will show it.³ But the instant you believe, it’s done, before you even have a chance to thank Him or show Him how much you love Him in return.

Salvation is not a reward. It’s not payment for anything good you may have done or anything bad you may have not done. It is a gift that you don’t earn and *can’t* earn by any kind of works of your own. “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”⁴

All *you* have to do is receive it. That’s what He means by “not of yourselves.” The one thing you have to do, *anybody* can do, even a little child: Receive it. You don’t have to work up some emotional experience. You don’t have to pray it down or work it up. You just have to receive Him, that’s all. Plus nothing! ✨

DONE DEAL

You don’t need to worry about whether or not you are going to lose your salvation or how you are going to manage to *stay* saved, because eternal salvation by grace means once saved, always saved. Once you’ve received Jesus Christ as your Savior, there are no ifs, ands, or buts about it—you are a saved child of God! “He who believes in the Son *has* everlasting life.”¹ That one verse should be enough to end all your worries. You *have* eternal life right now, and you can’t lose it.

Besides, you can’t keep yourself saved any more than you could save yourself in the first place. Even though you’re not perfect and you’re bound to make mistakes, God is going to save you anyway. Salvation is forever. He’s already given it to you, and He’s not going to take it back. It’s yours!

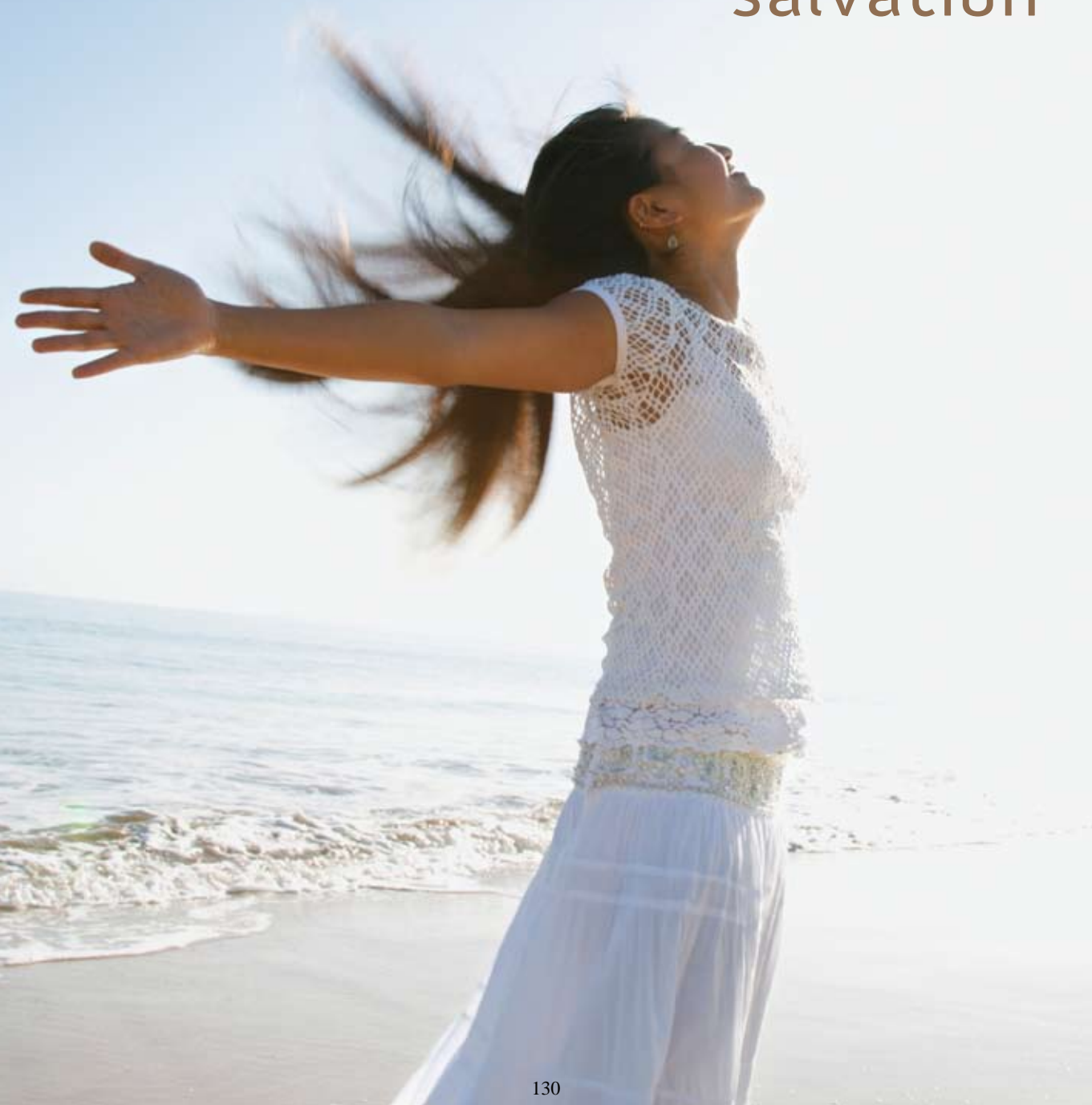
¹John 3:36

²Acts 16:31 NIV

³James 2:17–18

⁴Ephesians 2:8–9

answers to some
of the most frequently
asked questions about
salvation



WHO NEEDS IT?

Most people seem to think God grades on a curve. If you try to be a good person and don't make too many serious mistakes, you'll probably be given an average or above average grade when you die, pass the course of life, and go to Heaven; if you're below average, you fail, and, well ...

That might sound like a fair enough arrangement, especially if you consider yourself a better-than-average person, but according to the Bible, it doesn't work that way.

None of us deserve to go to Heaven. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."¹ "There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin."² "There is none righteous, no, not one."³ Anyone who thinks they're good enough to make it to Heaven on their own is only kidding themselves—and they will miss out on God's greatest gift. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."⁴

You can't be good enough. You can't earn salvation or work your way to Heaven. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."⁵ "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."⁶

So who needs it? Everyone!

WHAT'S IT GOING TO COST ME?

"Surely there's a catch," you're probably thinking. "Surely I have to give up something, work hard, or do *something* to deserve salvation." No, you don't—and that's the beautiful thing about salvation! "It is the gift of God."⁷ When have you ever had to earn or pay for a gift someone gave you? A gift is a gift. If you had to earn or pay for it, it wouldn't be a gift.

Salvation is not a reward for good works. Your good works can't get you into Heaven any more than your bad deeds can damn you to Hell once

you've asked for and received God's forgiveness through Jesus' sacrifice. You're saved purely by faith in Jesus. You just have to accept the fact that you couldn't possibly pay enough to buy your way into Heaven, and then humbly accept God's gift. It's as simple as that.

ARE THERE ANY SINS TOO BAD FOR GOD TO FORGIVE?

God wants to freely forgive everyone for every wrong they have ever committed. He says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon,"⁸ and, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."⁹

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."¹⁰ He wants to forgive everyone, and the way to experience His forgiveness is to believe in Jesus.¹¹ "He who believes in [Jesus] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."¹²

When people hear the truth—God's plan of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus' sacrifice, explained in terms that they can understand—the Holy Spirit speaks directly to their hearts and brings them to the point of decision. If they believe and accept Jesus as their Savior, their sins are forgiven; but if they willfully refuse His forgiveness, God's hands are tied. "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."¹³ This deliberate rejection is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which God cannot forgive.¹⁴ God has given every person the

¹Romans 3:23

²Ecclesiastes 7:20

³Romans 3:10

⁴1 John 1:8

⁵Ephesians 2:8–9

⁶Titus 3:5

⁷Ephesians 2:8

⁸Isaiah 55:7

⁹Isaiah 1:18

¹⁰John 3:17

¹¹Acts 16:31

¹²John 3:18

¹³John 3:19

¹⁴Mark 3:28–29

majesty of free choice, and He will not override their decision to reject His offer.

Of course, just because someone rejects the truth the first time they hear it doesn't mean they'll never be given another opportunity to make the right choice. Many people get more than one chance. Still, the Bible tells us, "Now is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."¹⁵ "For you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."¹⁶

HOW MUCH FAITH DOES IT TAKE?

You'd be surprised how little faith it takes to receive God's gift of salvation! God doesn't expect you to have great faith in something you know so little about and understand even less, and it's impossible to understand or appreciate salvation, really, until you've experienced it. All it takes is enough faith to concede that Jesus could possibly be the way to salvation, and a sincere desire to let Him prove Himself to you. If you only have enough faith to pray, "Jesus, if You really *are* real, and if You really are the way to salvation, *show* me," He will! If you're convinced enough by what you've heard about salvation to give it a try, He's given you all the faith you need to be saved.

WHY JESUS?

"Why must I ask Jesus into my heart?" you may ask. "Why do I have to use that name? Why can't I just pray to God and find salvation that way, through His name?"

Because Jesus is the only One who came to earth and gave His life for you. Jesus said, "I am the door"—into His Father's house, the kingdom of God. "If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved."¹⁷ So if you want to get to Heaven, you have to walk through Jesus, the open Door.

Jesus is also the only door. "There is no other name"—no name but Jesus—"under Heaven by

which we must be saved."¹⁸ "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."¹⁹ And Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."²⁰ That's just the way it is!

Then what about the adherents of all the other religions in the world? Can't they be saved? Yes, they can all get saved, regardless of their religion. Even if they don't have any religion, they can still be saved—but only through Jesus.

CAN I LOSE MY SALVATION?

No! One of the most marvelous things about the gift of salvation is that once you have received Jesus into your heart, He is there to stay. He has come into your life, and He will be with you forever. Jesus has said that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and that He will be with you always, even to the end of the world.²¹ There is nothing you could ever say or do that would nullify these wonderful promises.

Jesus knows you're not perfect and never will be—and He loves you just the same! When He forgave you for your sins, He not only forgave your past sins but your present sins and those you will yet commit as well.

True, you can keep yourself in line for more of God's blessings by trying your best to please Him and do what's right, but you can't keep yourself *saved!* Jesus did that once and forever. Eternal life is not a sometimes thing—saved and lost and saved again, every time you make a mistake and say you're sorry. There's no such thing! Once you're saved, you're saved forever!

Of course, if you willfully do wrong once you're saved and don't repent and make things right, you'll suffer for those sins in some way. The Lord will have to let you reap the bad results so you'll learn a lesson. "For whom the Lord loves He chastens."²² But even then, you won't lose your salvation! ❧

¹⁵2 Corinthians 6:2

¹⁶James 4:14

¹⁷John 10:9

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The question

Did God make a mistake by putting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, where they wound up making their own choice—the wrong one? (See Genesis 3:6.) Did God have to confess failure by the Flood, in that He had to wipe out all mankind for its wickedness? (See Genesis 6:5–7.) Was the Tower of Babel a total disaster, and was the confusion of tongues a catastrophe? Or was it necessary to accomplish God’s purpose to humble and scatter man over the face of the Earth? (See Genesis 11:1–9.)

Was it a mistake when Moses killed an Egyptian and had to flee for his life, and ended up living for forty years in the wilderness learning to be a humble shepherd tending sheep? (See Exodus 2.) Wasn’t that a terrible setback to the cause and the deliverance of his people? Or was it necessary for Moses to go into exile to learn the lessons God had to teach him to make him the man he needed to be to deliver his people?—Totally dependent on God, not himself.

Born in a barn and hated of men

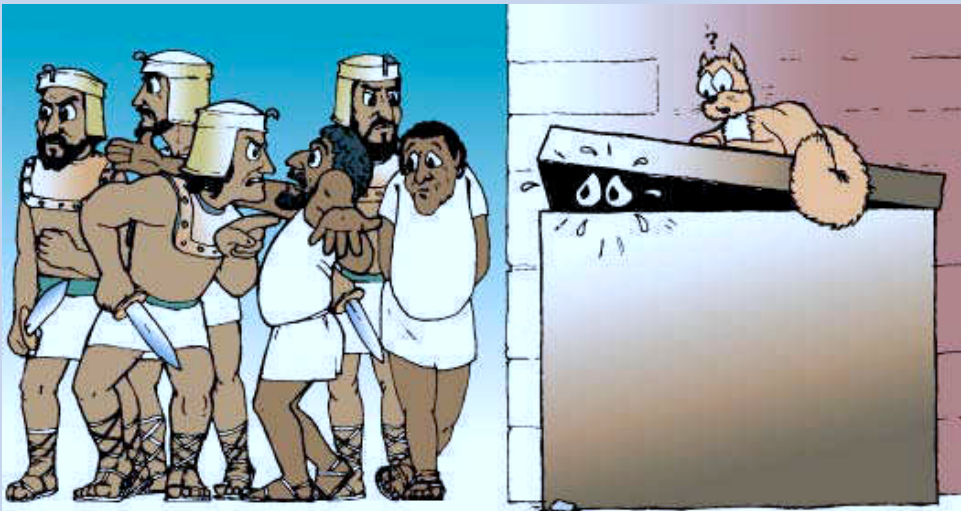
Wouldn’t it have been much more respectable and acceptable for the King of kings, Jesus, to have been born in a palace, with illustrious members of the court in attend-

Did God Make a Mistake?

By David Brandt Berg

ance, and with all the honor and praise of society? Instead, He was born on the dirty floor of a barn next to cows and asses, wrapped in rags and laid to sleep in a feed trough, with a motley crew of poor little shepherd boys kneeling on the floor beside Him.

Was it a mistake when Moses killed an Egyptian and had to flee for his life?





behind the evil reputation of having been a companion of sinners, a glutton and a winebibber? And why deliberately offend the established order? Why deliberately pick a bunch of lowly fishermen and a hated tax collector for His disciples? Couldn't the King of kings have gotten off to a better start, instead of being hated from the beginning? Lord, there must have been a better way!

**He was
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the dirty
floor of a
barn ...
wrapped
in rags
and laid to
sleep in a
feed
trough.**

Wouldn't it have been better for His earthly father to have been a prominent potentate instead of a humble hewer of wood? Wouldn't that have made it easier on Jesus and His followers, and advanced His work a little more rapidly, to have the approval of the established order? And wasn't that rather humiliating for His humble parents to become fugitives from injustice, and have to flee the country like common criminals for having given birth to the leader of a rival revolutionary government—the Kingdom of God? (See Matthew chapters 1 and 2.)

And wouldn't it have been better for Him to have lived a little more decently and acceptably, instead of scrounging His food in other men's fields, sleeping in other people's houses—including in the house of a couple of lovely young single sisters, Mary and Martha—and being buried in another man's grave? (See Luke 10:38–42; John 19:38–42.)

Did He have to always be challenging the religious establishment, defying convention, destroying traditions, and threatening the status quo, so that He had to be executed with common criminals and leave

Surely there was a better way?

Jesus, certainly You could have had better living conditions! The idea of You camping out on the grass under the trees! You knew that was bound to raise eyebrows and questions about Your character and morality and that of Your disciples, who were a rather questionable group of characters to begin with! Surely You must have been mistaken, Lord, about some of these things, and could have done some of them some better way!

Wouldn't You have made easier progress, Jesus, if You'd done it man's way, and chosen Your disciples from the learned Sanhedrin (the high council of the ancient Jewish nation) with the approval of the synagogues and the permission of the high priests and a license from Rome? Wouldn't You have gotten off to a better start, Jesus? Don't You think You could have improved Your tactics, Lord? Don't You think that was really making it a little too rough from the beginning, and suffering undue and unnecessary hardship and persecution due to Your own foolhardy

methods and lack of wisdom, Jesus? There must have been a better way!

One can understand Your making a *few* mistakes, but going so consistently and stubbornly contrary to all acceptable reason and logic and custom, wasn't that a little foolish, Lord? If You had beaten up the money changers in the Temple *once* they might have overlooked it, but to whip them out, bust

the furniture, and spill all the money *three times*, You know that was too much! Somebody was bound to get mad and get You in the end! (See John

2:13–16;

Matthew 21:12,13; Mark 11:15.)

Surely some of this was a mistake! Weren't You at all concerned about the opinions of men? Didn't You care what people thought about You and Your followers? Isn't there some better way?

The reply

Forget the “proper way”! The unexpected and the improper, the unconventional and untraditional, the unorthodox and unceremonious, contrary to man's natural expectation, this is the way God usually works! “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9). Who can know the mind of the Lord, and who can show Him anything? (See 1 Corinthians 2:16.)

God knows what He's doing, and it's none of *our* business how He does it! Just trust God that He knows what He's doing! “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not



on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

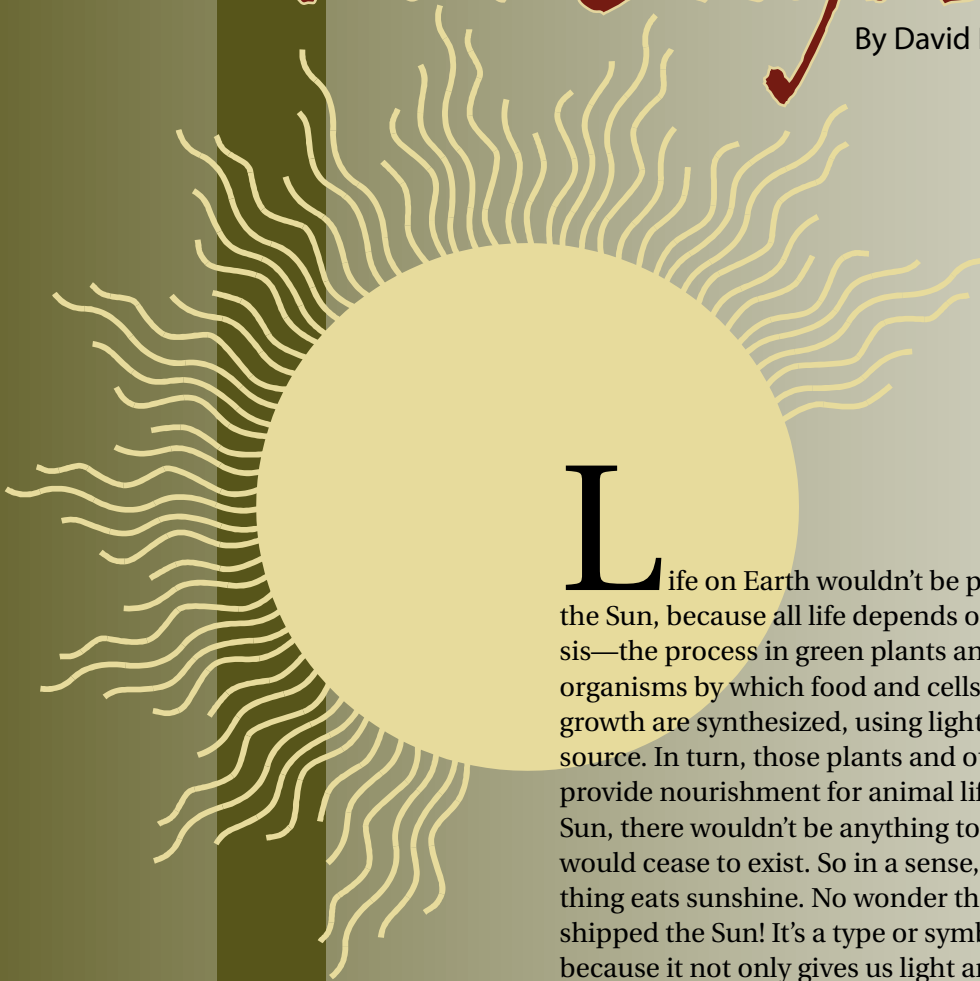
God loves to do things contrary to the way we think He ought to do them! God doesn't make mistakes, and even the “foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25). Are you willing to enter that straight gate that leads to life, even if you are considered a fool and of no reputation in the eyes of the world? •

(Excerpted from David Brandt Berg's original article by the same title, available in *Dare to Be Different*.)

God loves
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do them!

Lovelight

By David Brandt Berg



Life on Earth wouldn't be possible without the Sun, because all life depends on photosynthesis—the process in green plants and certain other organisms by which food and cells needed for growth are synthesized, using light as an energy source. In turn, those plants and other organisms provide nourishment for animal life. Without the Sun, there wouldn't be anything to eat and all life would cease to exist. So in a sense, every living thing eats sunshine. No wonder the ancients worshipped the Sun! It's a type or symbol of God because it not only gives us light and warmth, but it actually manufactures the food that we eat.

Without the warmth of the Sun, Earth would be too cold to support life—like on the dark side of the Moon and other places in space that are shielded from the Sun's rays, where temperatures are hundreds of degrees below zero.

The Sun's gravitational pull also keeps Earth in its orbit. It keeps the whole world on the right track.

The Sun performs these four major functions: It gives light, supplies warmth, produces food, and provides the gravitational pull needed to keep Earth in orbit. Now if the Sun has that much power, think how much spiritual power our spiritual sun, God, has!

What does it all mean?

God's physical creation often illustrates spiritual truths, and I'm sure He created the Sun, the Moon, the stars, Earth and the other planets the way He did in part to help us better understand our relationship with Him.

God is a Spirit, and the Bible also says that He is light (John 4:24; 1 John 1:5). If He is both of those things and if light can be powerful energy, as science has proven, then the Spirit of God can also be powerful energy—spiritual energy.

Without the light of the Sun, we'd be in total darkness, except for starlight. Even the Moon wouldn't shine without the Sun, because the Moon has no light of its own; it only reflects the light of the Sun. Just so, if it weren't for the Lord we would be in almost total spiritual darkness.

Without the warmth of the Sun's rays, we'd also freeze to death. In fact, we'd freeze solid! Without the Lord, we'd all be dead cold spiritually.

Without the Sun's rays, there would be no food, and without the Lord to feed us spiritually, our spirits would die of hunger.

Finally, without the Sun's gravitational pull, instead of staying in its well-planned orbit, Earth would go wandering off through space and probably crash into some other astral body eventually. Without God's guidance, His gravitational pull on us in the spiritual world, we too would certainly get out of the well-planned orbit of His will—our proper spiritual orbit—and we'd go wandering off into the darkness of spiritual space and probably crack up somewhere.

Wandering off in spiritual darkness is like being out of orbit, having no direction, no guidance—lost in space! That's what people who don't have the Lord are like: They're lost in spiritual space, spiritual darkness. Cold, hungry people are wandering around in darkness without God, just as Earth would be without the Sun.

God even calls the wayward angels, the rebellious angels and spiritual powers of the Devil "wandering stars" (Jude 6,13). They've tried to run away from His control. They've left their center and gotten out of orbit. In their rebellion, they're wandering off, lost in space!

That has the most horrible sound to it—"lost in space"—wandering off through the vast darkness of space, so alone! It's just like people without the

Lord—freezing, starving, blind, and lost.

Let it shine!

God is our sun; we are His moon. We merely reflect His light. And when should we reflect His light the most? When does the Moon shine brightest? At night, when the Sun is out of sight. As the world slips deeper and deeper into spiritual darkness, so we must keep on shining and lighting the world with His reflected light.

We are also like the Sun's rays. Each of us who has received Jesus as our Savior is like a sunbeam, a little ray of sunshine coming from the Lord. Each of us has become part of His light and part of His power, spiritually.

The Bible tells us that God is also love (1 John 4:8). Love is the power and light of God. So when you give God's love to people, you're showing them His light.

God's Spirit of love and power and light will lead you to those who especially need your loving help and who will respond in loving appreciation, just as it will also lead them to you.

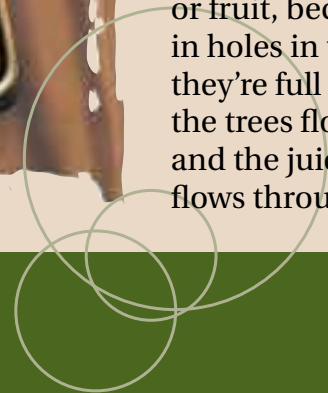
Have you got God's love-light? You do if you have Him! Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's love, and if you have Jesus, you have God's lovelight too!■



Where would we be without holes? Where would people be without seven holes in their heads? (Count 'em!) If it weren't for your seven holes, you couldn't eat or taste or smell or hear or see or even breathe. And actually, you've got lots more holes than that, because every little pore in your skin is a hole. Without those little pores, your skin couldn't breathe and you couldn't sweat. Without holes, you wouldn't have any hair either, because every hair grows in a little hole called a follicle.

Holes are an almost endless subject because there are so many of them! It seems like *everything* is composed of holes. Your whole body is full of holes. Your blood vessels are holes, your lungs are holes, your heart's got big holes in it for the blood to flow in and out, and your navel is a hole without which you couldn't have been born. Wow! There are so many important holes! We're really *full* of holes!

The whole world is full of holes! If it weren't for holes, there wouldn't be any pretty trees or flowers or vegetables or fruit, because they all grow in holes in the ground and they're full of holes: The sap in the trees flows through holes, and the juice in the leaves flows through holes.



What is a house but a hole in which you live? And if your house didn't have window holes, you couldn't look out or let the light and air in. Without holes, there wouldn't be any taps for water, and you'd get awfully thirsty. And worst of all, the house wouldn't even have a door, so you couldn't get into it in the first place—or if you were inside, you couldn't get out! How many other useful holes can you think of?

The earth itself is a hollow sphere full of fire, and every now and then the fire comes out through holes called volcanoes. All the seas are great big holes in the ground full of water, and all the lakes and springs and wells are holes, too. We get diamonds and other jewels and all kinds of minerals—gold and silver and copper and iron and tin and lots of others—out of holes in the ground called mines. We wouldn't have any of these useful and valuable things if it weren't for holes. The world is one great big ball of holes!

And if you could look *real* close, you would see that everything is made up of very little holes full of energy, called atoms. So everything is *mostly* holes with just a little bit of something around them.

Everything is more *nothing* than anything—like the universe is mostly space. The universe is a great big hole full of nothing, except for few things called stars and planets and moons and things like that, which are all very, very small compared to all that nothing called space that surrounds them. The universe is such a great big hole that we don't even know where it ends. So much nothing!

The Bible says that God even hung the world on nothing (Job 26:7), and that He made it out of nothing (Genesis chapter 1; Hebrews 11:3). So you see, there is a lot more nothing than anything else, and everything is made mostly out of nothing. God makes everything out of nothing—nothing surrounded by Him!

If you can believe in God, then *anything* is possible, because He makes everything out of nothing—even you and me! We're nothing and we're impossible except for God. He takes our nothing and makes it something. He's like the circle around our nothing that makes it something. With God all around you, even your nothing can be something. In fact, you can be almost anything!

So the next time you see a hole, remember it wouldn't even be a hole if there wasn't something around it—and you're just like that hole! If you feel like nothing or a big zero or only a hole, just surround yourself with God's something and you can become a very useful and important little hole—nothing surrounded by God, out of which He made everything. You could be almost anything if you're a good hole—a nothing that's got God around it—because God is in the business of making somethings out of nothings.

There's no end to nothing. There's always an end to something, but there's never an end to nothing. So if you'll just be nothing, you can even be bigger than something.

The poet Emily Dickinson once wrote:

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog,
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

All the big somebodies
wouldn't be anybody if it
weren't for us nobodies; all

Continued on page 10

David Brandt Berg

HOLY HOLES

the people that think they're something wouldn't be anything if it weren't for us nothings!

And do you know what love is? It's a hole that needs to be filled—plus something to fill it with, like you and me and Jesus.

There are square holes and round holes and all kinds of holes, and it takes all kinds of

pegs to fill them, so whatever kind of peg you are, somewhere there's a hole where you'll fit. And no matter what kind of hole you are, God's got you pegged!

All holes are nothing made for something, so if you feel like nothing, there's something for you somewhere. Are you a hole? Then God's got something for you!

Folks that aren't holes can't have anything, because they already think they're something, when they are really nothing. The Bible says: "If anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Galatians 6:3), and God "has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty" (Luke 1:53).

answers to your questions



I'm presently facing a decision that will have a major impact on my life. I've prayed for God to show me what He knows will work out best, but how will He do that? How can I make sure I get His answer?

If you've asked the Lord to help you make the right decision, you've already taken the first step in what is essentially a three-step process.

Second, you need to determine in your heart that you will believe and *accept* God's answer—even if it's contrary to your own reasoning or desires in the matter. In other words, you need to sincerely want *Him* to make the decision according to what He knows will work out best for you and everyone else involved. This is often the hardest part because it requires you to surrender your own will to God, in favor of His.

Once you have done that, you are in the position to, third, receive His answer. If you sincerely ask God to show you what is His will for you in any given situation, He will—and He will probably do it through one or more of the following seven means, which

are listed here in order of importance and reliability:

Number 1: God's Word. The first place we look to find the will of God is in His Words recorded in the Bible. He has put the *basic* answers to nearly every question or problem we will face in life right there. When God speaks to us out of His Word, we know it's right! Bible study guides such as *Bible Basics* and *Keys to Happier Living* can be helpful when we don't know what the Bible has to say about a certain topic relevant to decisions we face.

Number 2: The Voice of God's Word. Have you ever been thinking or praying about something when the Lord brought to mind a certain verse or passage from the Scriptures that shed His light on the issue? That's what is known as hearing the voice of God's Word. Or have you ever been reading the Bible when all of a sudden a verse or passage spoke directly to you, as though it had been written just for you in regard to some situation you face? That is also

If a hole is already full, God can't put anything into it. Everything falls out when He tries to put something into it, because it's already so full of something that it can't hold anything more. You've got to be a *hole to hold* something. Who ever heard of trying to fill anything but a hole?

God loves holes. Scientists say, "Nature abhors a

vacuum." But I say, "God *loves* holes, because He loves to fill them up." Are you a good hole full of nothing? Then God can fill you with something and make you a very happy hole full of anything God wants to fill you with!

You've got to be nothing to be something, so please be one of God's little holes, will you? Let's be holy too, okay?

Are you a hole? Then you're holy. Let's all be holy holes!

And do you know what? Jesus even called Himself a hole: the Door (John 10:9). He is the Hole you've got to get through to get into His Father's house, and He is the *only* Hole you can go through (John 14:6). Have you entered the Father's house through Jesus, the Hole, the only Door? □

the voice of the Word. The Lord applies His Word to you personally, and you get the answer you were seeking.

Number 3: Direct Revelation. God also speaks to us through messages received by the gift of prophecy, or through dreams or visions. If such revelations are truly from God, they won't contradict His written Word. You have to measure your revelation against the Word. It's wonderful to be able to get our answers straight from the Lord, and then confirm those answers with His Word, because then we know we're on the right track and can proceed in full faith. That settles it! We've heard from Heaven!

Number 4: Godly Counselors. The Bible tells us that "in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14; 24:6). When you're trying to find God's will in a given situation, it is often wise to ask for the counsel and opinions of others who are strong in the Lord, wise in His ways, and whose lives show the good fruit of following Him

closely (Matthew 7:15–20).

Number 5: Circumstances and Conditions (also known as "*open and closed doors*"). If something is God's will, He will usually open a door of opportunity that makes it possible. Or if something is *not* His will, He will often show us that by creating or allowing circumstances and conditions that stop us from doing it. Circumstances and conditions, when relied on solely, are generally a poor means of finding the will of God. They can, however, provide a confirmation of what the Lord has indicated through the other more reliable means.

Number 6: Strong Impressions or Feelings (also known as "*the witness of the Spirit*" or "*burdens*"). Feelings can be deceiving, but if God wants you to take a certain course of action, He will often give you an inner conviction that that is the right thing to do. Or if He *doesn't* want you to do something, His Spirit will give you a warning not to. Either way, He gives you a certain faith and peace that you're doing what

He knows is best. It's best to then confirm this with one or more of the other ways of finding God's will.

Number 7: Specific, Pre-determined Signs in Answer to Your Requests (also known as "*fleeces*"). You can sometimes check or double-check your decision by asking God to give you a specific sign, like Gideon did with his fleece, when he wanted a confirmation that he'd gotten God's instructions straight (Judges 6:36–40).

Above all, believe that God loves you and is always ready, willing, and able to help you make the right decision—the one He knows will make you and others happiest in the long run. Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened for you" (Matthew 7:7). That's a promise!

(For a more complete explanation of how to use these means to make wise, godly decisions, write for *God Online*—a collection of articles by David Brandt Berg that includes "Seven Ways to Find God's Will"—as well as the booklet *Making Great Decisions*. For more on the gift of prophecy, specifically, write for *Hearing from Heaven*.)

god never stops loving you!

What is God like? Some people picture Him as an angry God, some kind of monster with an all-seeing eye, carrying around a big stick, ready to clobber them—a cruel tyrant who is trying to frighten them into Hell. But actually, God is *love* (1 John 4:8). He is a loving God who is trying to love everyone into Heaven. He's so close, so intimate, so personal, so loving, so kind, so tender, so gentle, so concerned—and He's waiting with open arms. The only reason He follows us around is that He's hoping we'll turn around and meet Him with open arms.

God never rejects us or withdraws His love. He always has hope for us no matter how far we've strayed. So if you feel far from God, maybe it's because you haven't opened your heart to receive His love and forgiveness. You need not continue to feel condemned for your mistakes and sins; only be sorry, ask for God's forgiveness, and be forgiven (Isaiah 1:18; 1 John 1:9).

If you will even start going God's way—if you'll just turn toward Him and start trying to find your way Home—the Father will come running toward you and receive you with open arms of love (Luke 15:18–24).

—David Brandt Berg (DBB)

If you haven't yet experienced God's love and forgiveness, you can right now by sincerely praying a simple prayer like the following:

Thank You, Jesus, for paying the price for my mistakes and wrongs, so I can be forgiven and put my past behind me. Thank You that You cleanse me from all sin—past sin, sin now, and sin hereafter—by faith. I ask You now, dear Jesus, to come into my heart, forgive me, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen. ■

What a pity if we carry the burden of the past when the Lord paid such a price to lift that burden and set us free!

I wonder if there is anything more wonderful than the miracle of forgiveness—the assurance of having your sins forgiven. It's for all of us! He died for all of us! All you

have to do is reach out and take it—receive Him as your Savior and accept His forgiveness.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). He has promised this and He cannot break His Word. ■

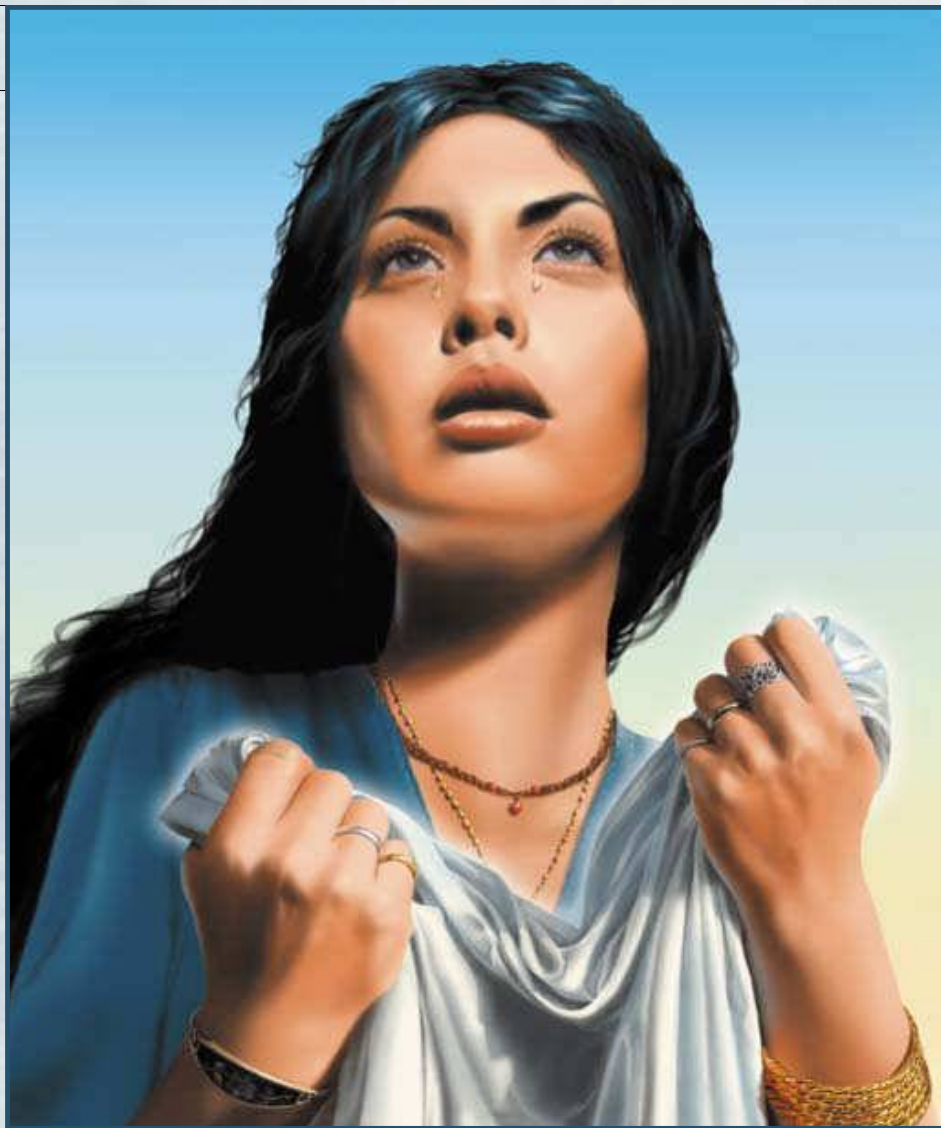


EASTER CELEBRATES JESUS' RESURRECTION. His cruel death by crucifixion took place at the same time as the Jewish holy celebration of Passover. What they had been symbolizing for over 1,000 years with the killing of sacrificial lambs and the Passover supper was now happening to the Lamb of God. On the very evening and at the very hour that people throughout the land were selecting and slaughtering Passover lambs, Jesus was crucified.

The way Jesus died also fulfilled many other Old Testament prophecies in amazing detail.

“He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). When Jesus stood trial for His life before the governor, Pontius Pilate, Jesus didn't speak in His own defense (Matthew 27:12–14).

About 1,000 years before crucifixion became a usual means of execution in the Roman Empire, King David wrote of the Messiah: “All my bones are out of joint. ... They



THE EASTER Story

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

pierced My hands and My feet” (Psalm 22:14,16). In death by crucifixion, the weight of the victim’s body pulls his arms out of their sockets. Most of the condemned were tied to their crosses, but Jesus was nailed to His—through the hands and feet.

It was also customary for the Romans to break the legs of those who had been hanging on their crosses for hours but hadn’t died yet. The lack of support for the body caused the windpipe and lungs to collapse, and hastened their deaths. But when the Roman executioners came to do this to Jesus, they found that He was already dead. Thus another Bible prophecy was fulfilled: “[God] guards all His bones; not one of them is broken” (Psalm 34:20).

Instead, just to make sure Jesus was dead, one of the Romans thrust a spear into Jesus’ side, piercing His heart. “And immediately blood and water came out” (John 19:34). This fulfilled the scripture, “I am poured out like water ... My heart has melted within Me” (Psalm 22:14). One would expect blood to flow from a spear wound, but not water. Where did that come from? Medical science has found that

God had to temporarily turn His back on His own Son so Jesus might die the death of the sinner.

people who die in great anguish of heart often have an accumulation of water around the heart. Jesus died of a broken heart—for you and me.

Jesus also died feeling like the lost sinner. He went through an experience that, thank God, we will never have to go through—not just crucifixion, not just agony of body, but agony of mind and spirit, feeling that God had deserted Him. As He died, “Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” (Matthew 27:46).

Had God forsaken Him? Yes, momentarily He had. He had to, that Jesus might die like a sinner dies, without God. Think of it: Jesus died the death of the unsaved, in agony! God had to temporarily turn His back on His own Son so Jesus might die the death of the sinner.

Did God answer Jesus on the cross? There’s no record of an answer. Jesus felt that God had deserted Him at that moment when He needed Him most.

Jesus suffered the spiritual agony of the dying sinner—lost, without salvation, without God, dying for his sins. Only in Jesus’ case He was dying

for *our* sins, the sins of the whole world. He was willing to go through all that so we could be forgiven and have eternal life. Such love!

“And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death” (Isaiah 53:9). Jesus was unjustly condemned and crucified between two common criminals (Matthew 27:38). Yet after His death, a rich man who was among Jesus’ followers, Joseph of Arimathea, laid Jesus’ body in his own new tomb (Matthew 27:57–60).

After Jesus’ body was laid in the tomb, to make sure His disciples didn’t steal His body and claim He’d risen from the dead, the tomb was sealed and some Roman soldiers stood guard (Matthew 27:62–66).

Three days later, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came at dawn to the tomb, and an angel appeared and rolled the stone away. When the Roman guards saw the angel, “they shook for fear of him, and became as dead men.” But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid. ... Jesus is not here; for He is risen, as He said.” And the angel showed the women where Jesus’ body had lain (Matthew 28:1–8). Jesus had risen from the dead! •

THE PARABLE
OF
THE
PHARISEE

{ PUBLICAN
AND
THE

Heaven
is full of

SINNERS

JESUS OFTEN TAUGHT IN PARABLES. One of the shortest yet most profound was the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Bible tells us that Jesus “spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luke 18:9).

The Pharisees were the most influential of all the Jewish religious sects of Jesus’ day. The word “Pharisee” means “the separated ones,” which sums up the basic nature of their beliefs. They were strict legalists who pledged to observe and obey every one of the countless restrictive rules, traditions, and ceremonial laws of Orthodox Judaism. They considered themselves to be the only true followers of God’s Law, and therefore felt that they were much better and holier than anyone else. Thus they separated themselves not only from the non-Jews—whom they absolutely despised and considered “dogs”—but even other Jews.

The publicans were tax collectors for the foreign occupier and ruler of Palestine, Imperial Rome. The Romans would instruct the publicans how much to collect from the people, and then the publicans could charge *extra* for their own income. So publicans were usually extortioners and were therefore considered traitors and absolutely despised by other Jews.

So when Jesus told this parable, comparing a Pharisee and a publican, He had chosen the two most opposite figures in the Jewish community. The one was considered the best, most righteous, most religious, most godly of men, whereas the other was considered the worst scoundrel imaginable.



The parable:

Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector [publican].

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.”

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 18:10–14).

Which of these two men did Jesus say was justified before God?—The Pharisee who appeared to be so righteous and holy, and who no doubt felt that he was a very righteous and good man?—Or the tax collector, the sinner, who was despised by others and who apparently even despised himself?—The tax collector who knew he had no goodness of his own and needed God’s mercy.

So often, God’s way of looking at things is very different from ours. He says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Although that publican’s sins were undoubtedly many, because of his honest and humble confession that he was a sinner who needed God’s help, Jesus said this publican was the one who left the Temple justified that day.

In God’s sight, self-righteous pride like this Pharisee manifested is the greatest sin of all—that hypocritical holier-than-thou attitude that causes people to look down on others who they think aren’t as good as they are. When people get this way, others usually find them to be the hardest people to be around—narrow-minded, intolerant, critical, and judgmental.

The Gospels also tell us that when the Pharisees saw Jesus sitting down and

eating with publicans and sinners, they were enraged and accused Jesus to His disciples. When Jesus heard that, He said to the Pharisees, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Matthew 9:10–13). In other words, “I would rather see you have love and mercy, and not just your dutiful keeping of the Law. I’d rather you’d give love to others than to be so self-righteous and condemning!”

None of us have any goodness of our own. Anything good about us is only the Lord, and *His* goodness. His Word says, “*All* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Even the apostle Paul said that there was nothing good in himself (Romans 7:18).

Jesus got so infuriated by the hypocritical, self-righteous hypocrisy of the Pharisees that He told them that they were worse than the drunks and prostitutes, publicans and sinners they despised, and that there was more chance for such sinners to make it to Heaven than there was for them (Matthew 21:31). He even told His own disciples, “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:20). And the only way to be better than the Pharisees is to have

***So often,
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The worst kind of people in the sight of God are those who pretend to be good and look down on everybody else.

Jesus' righteousness—salvation, through accepting His pardon for your sins—because the Pharisees were as “good” as anyone could possibly be in the natural.

Jesus so hated the hypocritical pretense of the Pharisees that He denounced them publicly. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matthew 23:25–28).

The thing that made the Pharisees so self-righteous and hypocritical was their pride. They were too proud to confess that they were sinners like everyone else. In fact, they not only couldn't confess their sins, they couldn't even see their sins. Therefore they became “blind leaders of the blind” (Matthew 15:14).

It's a big relief to honestly admit that we can't be good or righteous in ourselves. After all, God has said in His Word that nobody is good: “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

The worst kind of people in the sight of God are those who pretend to be good and look down on everybody else. We

just need to be honest and confess, “I'm no good. I'm a sinner. Of course I make mistakes! Anything good about me is only Jesus!”

God's idea of righteousness is not the supposedly sinless perfectionist, but the pitiful, hopeless, humble sinner who knows he needs God. Those are the ones He came to save.

God's idea of goodness is *godliness*—a sinner who knows he needs God and depends on Him for salvation—not the self-made, self-righteous, hypocritical Pharisees who think they can save themselves by their own goodness.

God's idea of saintliness is a sinner saved by grace, a sinner who has no perfection, no righteousness of his own at all, but is totally dependent on the grace and the love and the mercy of God. Believe it or not, that is the *only* kind of saints there are!

You cannot save yourself by your own works, your own goodness, your own attempts to keep God's laws and to love Him, or even your own endeavors to find and follow His truth. You cannot save yourself no matter how good you try to be. There's nothing you can do to get it except receive it by faith—that's all! You have to humble yourself and acknowledge that you *don't* deserve it, that you're just a lost sinner, and that there's no way you can be saved except by the grace of God.

The worst sinners in the world can go to Heaven through faith and God's forgiveness, and the seemingly best people can go to Hell because of unbelief and unwillingness to confess their need for God. Heaven is full of sinners, saved by grace through faith. •

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Jesus, self-righteousness is pride and pride is the opposite of love and humility, so please give me love and humility today. Help me not to criticize or condemn others, but to love and forgive and encourage. You said, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” Help me to have that kind of love for others, to be quick to forgive others' sins and shortcomings, as You have forgiven me. Help me to be as merciful to others as You are to me. Amen.

{ WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN }

Have you ever wondered why bad things happen to you and others for no apparent reason? In asking that question you are in good company. Many times King David of Bible fame asked God the same question, as recorded in the book of Psalms. “My God, why are You so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?” (Psalm 22:1 NIV).

In this Psalm, David was so discouraged he said he was no better than a worm

(verse 6). Maybe he even felt so low, as the saying goes, that he would have to reach up to scratch a worm’s ankle.

Despite David’s lament, you will read later in the same Psalm that David ends his heartcry on a positive note: “He has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; He has not hidden His face from him but has listened to his cry for help. The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the Lord will praise

Him—may your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord” (Psalm 22:24, 26–27 NIV).

David overcame his discouragement by praising God in spite of how he felt. It worked for David, and it will work for us! ■

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE MIDEAST.

{ LET THE LIGHT IN! }

The Devil is the accuser (Revelation 12:9–10). He accuses us for what we haven’t done or could have done but didn’t. He picks at all the lacks and shortcomings and weaknesses and little failures. If you start listening to him in your mind, you’re beaten, because there will always be something more you could have done or something you wish you hadn’t done. There will always be something—some neglect,

some oversight, some mistake or fault, some bad habit—that the Devil can pick on if he wants to, and he sure wants to!

But thank God for Jesus! He’s the antidote! Jesus always points out the good things. He never loses faith in us and He never stops loving us, even when we do make mistakes. So when the Devil descends on you with his dark thoughts about yourself or others, don’t listen to him. Listen to Jesus instead. Let

the light in! Think positive thoughts. Remind yourself constantly of the good. When you think positively about yourself and others, it chases away the doubts and the fears and nagging little accusations from the Devil. 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. Count your blessings and put the Devil on the run! ■

WHY JESUS CAME

JESUS CAME TO TRY TO MAKE IT AS EASY FOR US AS HE COULD.

He tried to make the Christian life so easy that anybody could live it. He walked those dusty roads and talked to the simple fishermen and the tax collectors and the drunks and harlots to show them that God loved them all and that they could all love God, they could all love each other and serve each other and serve the world with the Gospel.

God made a way of escape from the impossible burden of perfect adherence to His laws, a way of mercy, a way of forgiveness and grace: salvation. Now nobody has any excuse for blaming their problems on God, because He has made a way out, a way to get the victory, a way to overcome our sins and faults and shortcomings and problems and weaknesses, whatever they may be. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). He paid the price, made the way, and gave us the truth, and He alone can help us to live the kind of life we ought to live.

He never asks of any of us a standard that is beyond our individual reach. Whatever He asks, we can do with His help and by His grace, and through His power and His love we can attain it (Philippians 4:13).

—David Brandt Berg

If you haven't yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can right this minute by asking Him to come into your heart. Simply pray:

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for the wrong things I've done, come into my heart, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen.

FEEDING READING

Resurrection Power

JESUS' RESURRECTION WAS FORETOLD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.
Psalm 16:10b

JESUS' RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD IS A HISTORICAL FACT, ESTABLISHED BY EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS.

Matthew 28:1–9

Luke 24:13–53

John 20:1–17

Acts 1:2–3

Acts 10:40–41

Acts 13:30–31

1 Corinthians 15:3–6

2 Peter 1:16

JESUS HAS POWER TO GIVE ETERNAL LIFE TO ALL WHO BELIEVE IN HIM.

John 1:12

John 3:16

John 5:24

John 6:40

John 11:25

1 Peter 1:3–4

1 Corinthians 6:14

OUR PHYSICAL BODIES WILL ONE DAY BE RESURRECTED AND REJOIN OUR SPIRITS.

Job 19:25–27

John 5:28–29

1 Corinthians 15:51–54

OUR POWERFUL, IMMORTAL RESURRECTION BODIES WILL BE EVEN MORE WONDERFUL THAN OUR PRESENT ONES.

Luke 20:36

Philippians 3:21

1 John 3:2

THE REASON for it all

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

NONE OF US CAN REALLY GRASP HOW GREAT GOD OUR FATHER IS. He's so beyond our comprehension that He had to make Someone who could show us His love, Someone who was within our realm, Someone we could see, Someone we could feel, Someone we could experience, Someone who would bring God down to the level of our comprehension, one Man who was like Himself, whom He called His Son.

God shared His love with the whole world, but He also loves *you* so much that He gave His most priceless possession, the most cherished thing He had, "His only begotten Son," so that you could have everlasting life (John 3:16). He loves you dearly, more dearly than the spoken word can tell. You can never understand the love of God. It's too great; it passes all understanding (Ephesians 3:19). You just have to receive it and feel it with your heart.

This is why Jesus came that first Christmas Day, so you could know His Father's love. This is the reason for it all! 🌲

If you haven't yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can right this minute by asking Him to come into your heart with His love, life, liberty, truth, peace, plenty, and happiness here, now, and forever. Simply pray:

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for the wrong things I've done, come into my heart, give me Your free gift of eternal life, and teach me more about Your love. Amen.

shalem (health or full), contained this concept of the word. Peace included inner (spiritual, emotional) peace, health, abundance, harmony with life on every level, even "in the midst of storm," when life's problems seem to snuff out any kind of peace.

In the New Testament, the word *eirēnē* in the original Greek means "peace," both figurative and literal, and it is used over 100 times. For example, the expression "go in peace" means "stay warm and eat well" (James 2:16). On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus said to His disciples: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. ... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

As in the Old Testament, *peace* means much more than the mere "absence of conflict" in society. It means a very real inner sense of well-being that originates with God and is given as a precious commodity to each of us who receive the "Prince of Peace," Jesus, without whom there simply is no peace. This means peace for *you* personally, both in your own personal life and in your relations with

others. The peace of God which passes all understanding is very real and practical. You can receive it today; there's no need to wait for man's fragile peace, which never lasts anyway.

Even when the world is in turmoil, you can have peace in your own heart through the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. Even though war and chaos may be on the *outside*, you can get rid of it on the *inside*.

Jesus never sleeps! He watches all the time, along with all of His angels. He knows every hair of your head. Everything is in His hands. As the old hymn goes, "He hideth my soul in the cleft of the Rock [Jesus], that shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life in the depths of His love, and covers me there with His hand."

He is your peace. Your help comes from *Him*. In *Him* is your *confidence*. You must put your confidence in *Him*—the soundest base in the world—Jesus!

This Christmastime, Jesus offers to every soul on earth true peace, unflinching comfort, and eternal life and love. All of these are wrapped up in the priceless gift of salvation. 🌲

GOD'S FREE OFFER

COMPILED FROM
THE WRITINGS OF
DAVID BRANDT BERG



JESUS CAME TO make salvation as easy as He could. That's one reason why the religious leaders of His day wanted to see Him crucified, because their religious system as good as said that nobody could be saved without following their complicated laws, traditions, and religious rigmarole.¹ Jesus taught that all we need to do to be saved is believe that He is the Christ, the Savior, and that we are sinners in need of salvation, and then ask Him for salvation.²

We can't completely understand salvation, any more than we can understand the depth of God's love, which is why Jesus said that receiving salvation requires childlike faith. "Unless you become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven."³ It's impossible to fully comprehend either one. All we can do is receive them.

Does a baby understand the love of its mother or father? No, he just feels it, accepts it, and receives it. Even before he understands language, before he learns to talk, he understands love, he feels love, and he trusts his parents because he knows they love him. Likewise, you don't have to understand everything about God to experience His love and salvation; all you have to do is receive Jesus, God's Son, as your Savior by asking Him into your heart.

You can do that right now if you want God's answer to all of your problems and His love and happiness to fill your heart and life with joy and with a new plan and purpose in living. He'll meet all your needs and solve all your problems. He's just that wonderful, and it's all just that simple!

Jesus said, "I am the door" into the Father's house, the kingdom of God. "If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved."⁴ If you want to get into Heaven, all you have to do is believe that the door is there and walk through it.

SAVED AND FORGIVEN

Why is forgiveness an integral part of salvation? Because sin separates us from God,⁵ and no one is perfect; we are all sinners. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"⁶ and, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."⁷

So-called good people pride themselves on being better than others. "I don't do this, and I don't do that!" But it's impossible to get into Heaven by being good, because no one can be good enough.⁸ We all need to recognize and honestly admit, "I'm a sinner like everyone else. I make mistakes. I need a Savior."

¹Matthew 15:9

²John 11:25–26

³Matthew 18:3

⁴John 10:9

⁵Isaiah 59:2

⁶Romans 3:23

⁷Romans 6:23

⁸Galatians 2:16

Unless you become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven

That's why Jesus died for us, because we're all sinners and it's impossible for us to earn or be worthy of salvation. But Jesus was perfect, and that's why He could pay the price of our sins so God could forgive us. We all need God's love and mercy to be saved, and we find that love and mercy in Jesus Christ.

Salvation is like receiving a pardon. God has offered pardon to the guilty, and it doesn't

matter how bad you are or what you've done. If you believe that Jesus died for your salvation, you will be saved and forgiven. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,"⁹ no matter what you've done! "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."¹⁰

You can't be too bad, but you also can't be good enough. You

cannot save yourself, no matter how good you try to be, because you can never be good enough; you can never earn or deserve salvation. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."¹¹

Many people are too proud to accept a gift. They want to work for everything they receive. But no amount of good works



⁹1 John 1:7

¹⁰Isaiah 1:18

¹¹Ephesians 2:8-9



WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

Some people picture God as an all-seeing eye carrying around a big stick, ready to clobber them; or as a cruel tyrant, some kind of monster who is trying to frighten them into hell. But actually, He is love! He is our loving heavenly Father who is trying to love everyone into heaven. He's so close, so intimate, so personal, so loving, so kind, so tender, so gentle, so concerned—and He's waiting with open arms. The only reason He follows us around is that He's hoping we'll turn around and meet Him with open arms.

—David Brandt Berg

Understanding God

YOU DON'T HAVE TO understand God in order to love Him. In fact, no one can ever fully understand God. It's impossible because, as He says, His ways are far above our own. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."¹ Forget trying to figure out God! Just accept His love by faith.

Jesus tried to make it simple. He said, "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."² What baby or little child understands all about his mother or father, or how he was born, or all about life? Yet he is instinctively attuned to the most profound thing in the world—love. He feels his parents' love and receives it and responds with love.

The Bible tells us that "God is Spirit"³ and "God is love."⁴ He's the very Spirit of love in your heart. It's impossible to fully understand God and His love, but it is possible to receive His love and to love Him in return. Making a personal connection with the God of love is so simple that many people can't believe it. It's just a matter of asking in faith and receiving.

—DAVID BRANDT BERG ✠

What baby
or little child
understands all
about his mother
or father?

¹Isaiah 55:9

²Matthew 18:3

³John 4:24

⁴1 John 4:8

All things change, but JESUS never

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

AS SURE AS THE NIGHT FOLLOWS THE DAY, LIGHT FOLLOWS DARKNESS. AS SURE AS THE SUN RISES, IT MUST ALSO SET. As sure as the rain falls, it must also rise again. As sure as “dust you are, and to dust you shall return,”¹ there must be a continual birth, life, death, resurrection. The cycle must be completed—the perfect circle of eternity—of which God is the designer, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega.²

God moves. He is a moving God. He is never still. He is always doing, going, saying, and effecting change in every sphere of creation. He is never static, except for Himself—“I am the Lord, I do not change”³—except for His Word—“Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven”⁴—and except for the future, His promises to His children—“Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed.”⁵

Yesterday, today, and forever, Jesus is the same. All things change, but Jesus never.⁶

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.
—Henry Francis Lyte (1793–1847)

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994) WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

1. Genesis 3:19
2. Revelation 1:8
3. Malachi 3:6
4. Psalm 119:89

5. Joshua 23:14
6. Hebrews 13:8
7. Exodus 3:14
8. Psalm 46:4



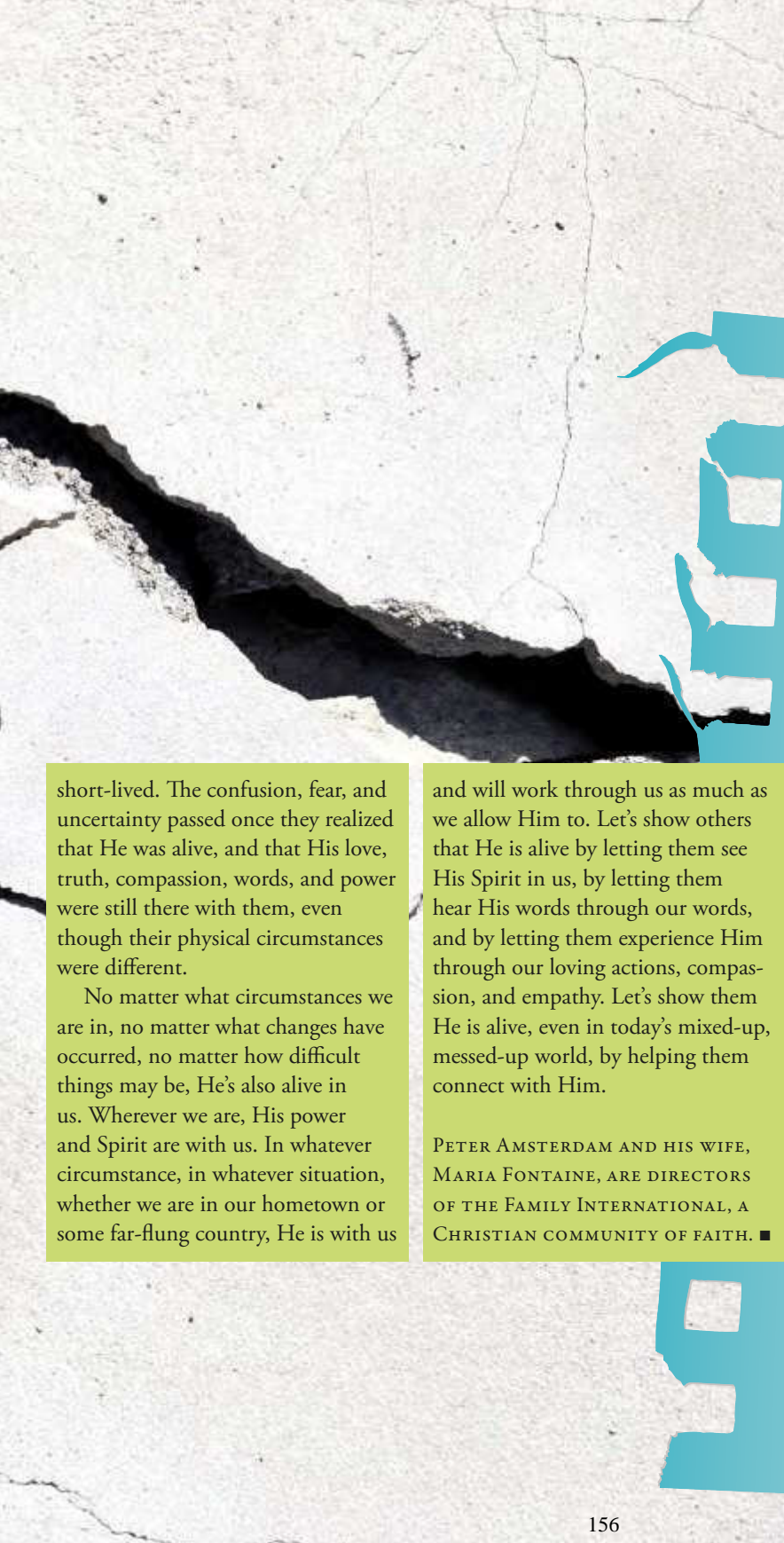
UNCHANGING

By Virginia Brandt Berg

WHEN GOD SENT MOSES TO LEAD THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT, HE TOLD HIM, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”⁷ God’s name is “I AM”—not “I WAS,” but “I AM.” What a wonderful realization! What assurance! What security!

“There is a stream that makes glad the heart of man.”⁸ So many things in life change. So many springs run dry. So many sources of pleasure evaporate as the years go by. But the Christian’s joy and peace don’t dry up, because they have as their source an upper, everlasting fountain—the unchanging God.

EVANGELIST AND PASTOR VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS THE MOTHER OF DAVID BRANDT BERG. ■



PARDON GRANTED

—Thoughts on Easter

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

We don't have a Jesus on the cross; He's left the cross! We have an empty cross. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"²⁰ We don't have a Christ in the grave; we have a live Jesus living in our hearts.

He rose in victory, joy, liberty, and freedom, never to die again, so that He could redeem us as well and prevent our having to go through the agony of death of spirit. What a day of rejoicing that must have been when He rose and realized it was all over. He had won the victory; the world was saved!



The miracle of Easter is that because Jesus didn't remain in the grave, we don't have to, either. We don't have to suffer in hell to pay for our sins, or experience eternal separation from God. He took that payment for us, and then rose to a new life. And His new life can be inside us, giving us hope and peace, as we are filled with His love. ■

short-lived. The confusion, fear, and uncertainty passed once they realized that He was alive, and that His love, truth, compassion, words, and power were still there with them, even though their physical circumstances were different.

No matter what circumstances we are in, no matter what changes have occurred, no matter how difficult things may be, He's also alive in us. Wherever we are, His power and Spirit are with us. In whatever circumstance, in whatever situation, whether we are in our hometown or some far-flung country, He is with us

and will work through us as much as we allow Him to. Let's show others that He is alive by letting them see His Spirit in us, by letting them hear His words through our words, and by letting them experience Him through our loving actions, compassion, and empathy. Let's show them He is alive, even in today's mixed-up, messed-up world, by helping them connect with Him.

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

HABITS AND SUCCESS

To be faithful until death ...

... Just be faithful today!

One of the best verses that you could claim for the coming year—and for the rest of your life, for that matter—is: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

Some people teach that this is referring to salvation. They say, “Well, if you always do the right thing and don’t make any mistakes, if you’re perfect, if you ‘keep the faith,’ *maybe* you’ll make it to Heaven.” That’s *not* what that verse

is talking about at all!

The Lord isn’t talking about salvation; He’s talking about your faithfulness in *service*—if you faithfully do your best to please God and obey His Word from now until the day you die.

The secret of being “faithful until death” is to be faithful one day at a time. You can only live one day at a time; you can only be faithful one day at a

time. So don’t worry about whether you were faithful yesterday or not, or whether you’re going to be faithful tomorrow. Just do your best to be faithful today. The Bible tells us to forget the past (Philippians 3:13), and tomorrow will take care of itself (Matthew 6:34)—or the Lord will take care of it. Just be faithful today. Don’t worry about your whole life! Don’t keep asking yourself, “Am I going to be faithful until the day I die, so I can be sure to get a crown of life?”

Just be faithful every day, one day at a time, and you’ll be faithful until death and receive an eternal crown of life. I believe that it is going to be some sort of an actual halo or shining crown that will enable us to shine like the stars (Daniel 12:3). So that’s my prayer for you, that you will be faithful every day, just one day at a time until the day you die or the Lord returns, and that you won’t worry about the future.

If you think about trying to be faithful for the rest of your life, that scares you, that worries you. That’s just too overwhelming, and you feel that you’ll never make it. But what about today? Weren’t you pretty faithful today? Surely you did a lot of things faithfully today.

I dare say that you were probably faithful today. Give the *Lord* a little credit! I’m trying to get you to



appreciate yourself a little bit, and to thank the Lord for how long He has kept you faithful *already!* You have probably worried about lots of days and events that are now passed. You have probably had *many* worries, nearly all of which never happened. And here you are—still faithful!

Look at all the time that you wasted wondering about whether you were going to be faithful or not, or whether you were going to succeed or not, and whether you were going to still be doing your best for the Lord. All that time you worried about it was time wasted, because here you are, still loving and following the Lord, still faithful. Be thankful for that! You have been faithful—not yet “until death”—but this far!

So quit worrying about the future! Quit worrying about whether you’re going to make it tomorrow or not. Jesus said, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:34). Don’t try to live the coming year in advance, and the year after that. “I wonder if I’m going to make it through tribulation, and I wonder if I’m going to be ready when the Lord comes, and I wonder if I’m going to get any reward or crown?” Quit worrying about that! Just keep busy today. Do what you’re supposed to do today. Be faithful *today!*

The *Lord* has kept you faithful today, and you ought to thank Him for that! Too many people think that being faithful is some kind of a “good works” thing that they have to work up on their own. But that’s not where faith comes from. Faith comes from the *Lord*. He’s “the author and finisher of our faith”



(Hebrews 12:2). He gives us faith as we take in His Word (Romans 10:17).

If you’re faithful, you’re full of faith. Do you still have your faith today? Then you are full of faith. Do you still believe in Jesus today? Then you’re full of faith. Do you believe you’re saved? Then you’re full of faith. My goodness, you’re so full of faith, I don’t see how you can hold it all!

You’ve been faithful today; you’ve been full of faith today. So why worry about whether or not you’re going to be full of faith tomorrow? You may have trials and tests, you may get discouraged, you may get tired, you may make mistakes, but so what? You’ll still have your faith, so you’ll still be



So don't
worry about
the future.
Don't worry
about
tomorrow.
Don't worry
about even
the next
hour.

more full of that than anything else, right?

Stop trying so hard! Stop worrying about it. We just have to depend on the Lord to keep us faithful, and trust Him that our faith won't fail, because our faith comes from *Him*. Faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).

Only the Lord can keep you faithful. Of course, you have to give Him a little cooperation. You have to pray and listen to Him, you have to read His Word, and you have to try to do what you know He wants you to do, but that's the easy part. It's *His* job to keep you faithful—full of faith, filled with faith that comes from Him. And if you don't have enough faith, all you have to do is read and listen to the Word. That's the source of faith. If you do that, He'll give you all the faith you need. Just keep reading the Word and trusting the Lord and don't worry.

You don't have to have faith for tomorrow. You don't have to have faith for next week or next month, and certainly not for next year or many years from now. You don't have to have that faith *now*. You'll get it when the time comes. The only faith you need now is for today.

You made it through another year, so what were you worrying about? Before long, you will have made it through this day—another day of faithfulness—and then you can go to sleep and not worry about tomorrow. Rest in the Lord. “Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on *His* faithfulness” (Psalm 37:3).

You don't even have to have faith for a whole day. Just have faith for this

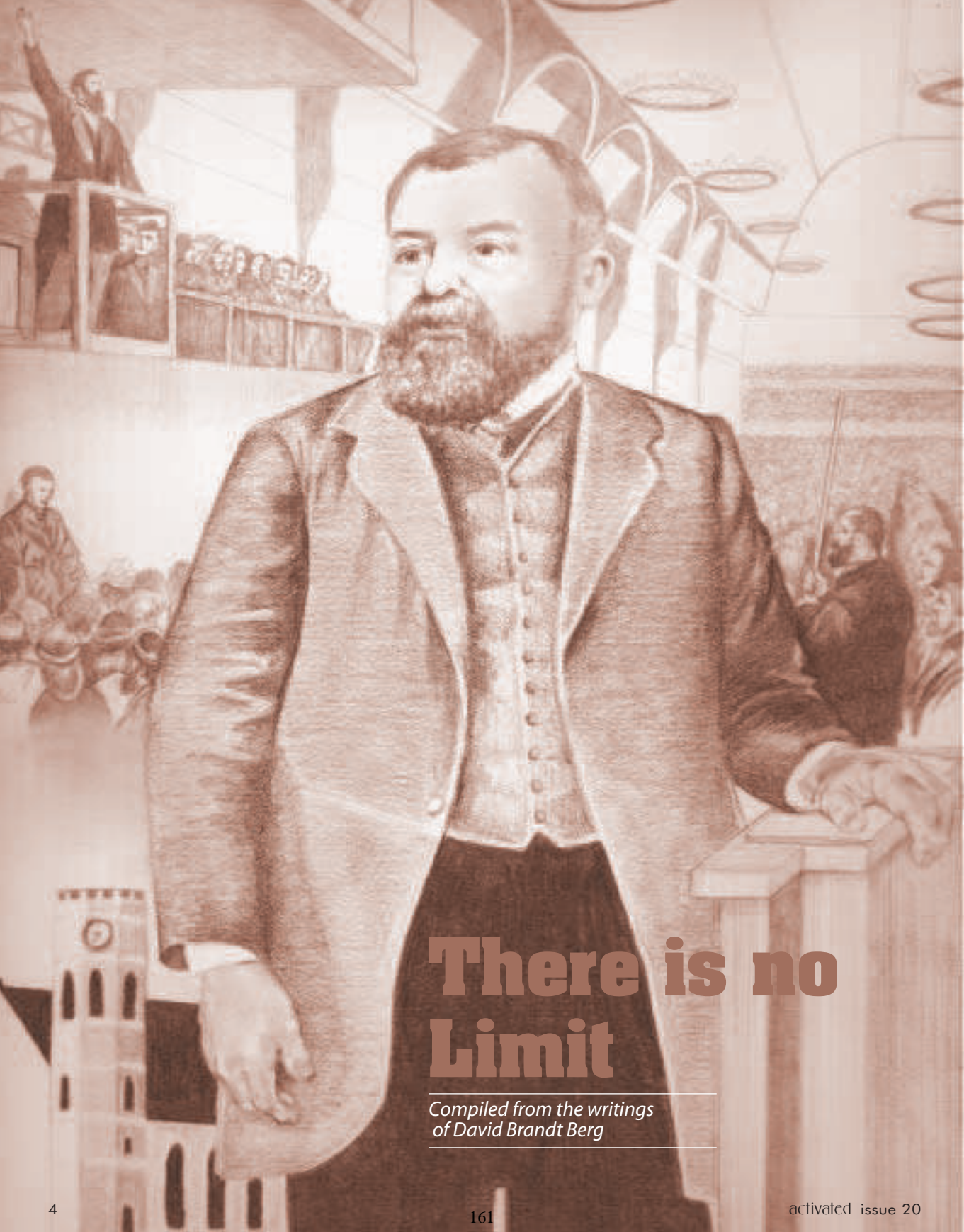
moment—right now. Just have faith for one moment at a time! When you wake up in the morning, you don't need to worry, “Have I got faith for today?” Just get up and have faith for each little thing that you do throughout the day. That's all you have to have faith for. If faith no larger than a grain of mustard seed can move an entire mountain (Matthew 17:20), then it shouldn't even take a microscopic speck of faith to keep you doing all the things that you need to do in a day!

So don't worry about the future. Don't worry about tomorrow. Don't worry about even the next hour. God will give you grace when the hour comes. He not only gives power for the hour, He gives power for the second or the split second—the instant! That's all you need. The only faith you need is what you have right now, for right now.

“Be faithful until death,” Jesus says, “and I will give you the crown of life.” You're going to get a special crown, a shining crown, a crown that you can be proud of. Of course, you're going to fall down before the Lord and cast your crowns before Him, like the 24 elders do in Revelation 4:10. Every time you start praising the Lord, you're going to forget all about that crown and it's going to tumble off at His feet. When you bow down and give Him the glory, you'll cast your crown at His feet! But since the Lord gave it to you, you'd better pick it up again and wear it. Your crown will show what you have done for the Lord, and the Lord wants the world to see it! He wants everyone to see the badge of your faithfulness—a crown of life!


God bless and keep you faithful throughout the New Year and all the years to come, until you join Him in Heaven and receive your crown! ○





There is no Limit

*Compiled from the writings
of David Brandt Berg*



The more we yield to the Lord and what He knows is best for us and those whose lives we affect by our decisions, the happier we and those others will be. That's why yieldedness to God's will is one of the most important things any of us can ever learn.

It reminds me of what an evangelist once told a former shoe salesman turned preacher: "Dwight L. Moody, there is no limit to what God can do with a man who is yielded and willing to do His will!"

Moody looked him in the eye and replied, "By the grace of God, I am determined to be that man!"— And he was!

A short while later, Moody moved to Chicago where he began telling others about Jesus and what He had done for him. Moody was soon so thrilled to find that he could lead other folks to the Lord, that he quit the shoe business and began serving Him full time. He went on to become one of the world's greatest evangelists. By the time he died in 1899, Moody had led tens of thousands of people to Jesus, and started a number of the ministries that are still going strong today.

But what if Moody had not determined to yield to the Lord? What a sad loss it would have been, not only for him, but also for millions who have since heard the Gospel as a result of that single, resolute decision!

The same holds true for each of us: If we are not yielded and open to God's will in our lives, if we are not willing to do whatever He may

ask of us, we'll never be all that God wants us to be or accomplish all that He wants us to do. That would be very sad, not only for us personally, but also for all those that the Lord wants us to reach and help with His love.

"But," you may argue, "I could never do anything great for the Lord, like Moody did! I'm no flaming evangelist or outstanding soul winner." Well, neither was Moody to begin with. He was just a poor farm boy and a below-average student that never made it past the fifth or sixth grade, who became bored with life on the farm and moved to the big city of Boston. After several weeks in the city, he set a new goal for himself: to become a big businessman and to make \$100,000 [the equivalent of today's millionaire]. Giving his life to God's service was the *last* thing on his mind!

In fact, when Moody was first saved, he was so completely ignorant of God's Word and truth that one church committee refused him membership. Some of his friends later said that of all the people they had known, they could hardly think of anyone who seemed less likely to ever become a strong Christian, much less to go on to do what he did for the Lord.

But when Dwight Moody found Jesus and realized how much the Lord had given for *him*, then he determined to give his life to the Lord and to do whatever God would ask of him. The Bible tells us, "Draw near to God, and *He* will draw near to *you*" (James 4:8). This is the secret of success of not just Moody,

but of *every* man or woman whom God has ever used to the full: They drew close to the Lord and relied solely upon Him and His power and His Word for guidance, strength, and inspiration.

Despite all of our faults, weaknesses, and inabilities, there really is no limit to what God can do with us if we will simply turn our lives over to Him and be willing to let Him make us what He wants us to be. Of course, that is a very big “if,” because we each have our own free will, and we can choose to either yield to Him and “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33), or we can seek first our *own* desires and plans and ways. The choice is ours, and whether or not we have His full blessing and His help will depend on whether or not we are willing to give Him first place in our lives.

Many Christians today seem to be more concerned about having God accept what they want to do than they are about accepting what God wants them to do. They’re trying to put their programs across to God, to get Him to sign His name and give His approval to *their* plans. The question they should be asking themselves is not, “Can I present my program to God for His signature?” or even, “Am I willing to be presented with God’s program for my signature?” but rather, “Am I willing to sign a blank sheet of paper and let God fill it in without my even knowing what His program is going to be?” That’s the real test of yieldedness!

If you’re willing to be what *God* wants you to be—not what you are, but what God wants you to be—*then* He can mightily use you.

God knows you can’t do it yourself. You have to turn your life, your mind, your heart, your everything over to the Lord and let *Him* make it for you! When you finally get to the point where you surrender to Him, where you let go of your own way and let God have His, then God has a chance to step in and do it—and He will! Just give Him a chance.

When you’re giving your all to the Lord, then you don’t need to worry about anything. Your entire life is in His hands, under His loving care, and the Devil has nothing that He can get a hold of or lay claim to. In fact, to really overcome the Devil, submission to God’s will is exactly what the Lord requires. “Submit to God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

But as long as there are any areas of your life that you’re *not* willing to yield to the Lord, if there’s even one little part that you refuse to surrender, the enemy of your soul can use that against you. This is why God’s Word tells us to give *no* place to the Devil (Ephesians 4:27).

It’s like the story of Huddersfield: A rich landowner decided to buy the entire village of Huddersfield, and over time he bought every piece of land in the area—every piece, that is, except one little plot. One stubborn old farmer refused to sell his tiny piece of land, and nothing would change his mind. The landowner even offered the farmer much more money than his property was actually worth, but the farmer was so fond of his land that he absolutely refused to sell. When the landowner finally gave up, he tried to encourage himself by saying, “What difference does just one little plot of land make? I’ve

Before we can pray, “Lord, Thy kingdom come,” we must be willing to pray, “My kingdom go.”

To win, we must surrender.

bought everything else, so Huddersfield is *mine*. It belongs to me!”

But the stubborn old farmer overheard him and said, “Oh, no it doesn’t! *We* own Huddersfield. It belongs to you and me!”

Don’t let the Devil be able to say that of you to God! “Aha! Look, God! He’s yielded everything except this one little thing! Even though he belongs mostly to You, a little bit still belongs to me!”

To have *real* peace of heart and mind, you must commit your *all* to the Lord. Then, when your will is in perfect harmony with God’s will, He will bless you with His perfect peace. A dear old hymn says:

You have longed for sweet peace,
And for faith to increase,
And have earnestly, fervently prayed;
But you *cannot* have rest or be perfectly blest
Until *all* on the altar is laid.

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?
Your heart does the Spirit control?
You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest,
As you yield Him your body and soul.

—Elisha A. Hoffman

So give your all to Jesus. Ask Him to take and use you for His glory, and He will—as much as you will let Him. “There is no limit!” You are His child, and He loves you and will always do His best to make you happy and useful to Him, so that you may bring others the same life and happiness that you have found in Jesus. Do your best for Jesus by yielding to Him today! ○

Feeding Reading

YIELDEDNESS

To please the Lord, we need to learn to yield to Him and what He knows is best.

Psalm 25:4–5

Psalm 143:10

Matthew 11:29–30

James 4:13–15

Yieldedness is putting the Lord’s will above our own.

Psalm 40:8

Matthew 6:10

John 4:34

John 6:38

Ephesians 6:6

Yieldedness means obeying God even when it’s hard or it hurts.

Jeremiah 42:6

Luke 22:42

Romans 12:1–2

1 Corinthians 15:31b

Galatians 2:20

Only when we yield to the Lord is He able to work through us as He would like.

John 15:4–5

The more yielded we are to the Lord and His will, the happier we will be.

Deuteronomy 4:40

Isaiah 1:19

John 13:17

John 15:10–11

The mind is the great battlefield where **relentless** spiritual **war** is waged—the war for the control of people’s **thoughts** and, through their thoughts, their **actions**.



MOST OF THE THINGS THAT BRING PEOPLE DOWN start in the mind: pride, jealousy, selfishness, hatred, covetousness, bitterness, worldliness, self-righteousness, unbelief, etc. They begin in the mind, take root in the mind, and fester in the mind—all through putting on the mind of man and the mind of the world instead of the mind of God.

The Bible has much to say about the need to guard our thoughts, about finding and putting God’s will above our own will, and about putting on the mind of Christ:

- “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).
- “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).
- “Do not be conformed to this

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

- “To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).
- “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

It is through the mind that Satan gains entrance, through the mind that he tries to influence people, through the mind that he works to recruit the lost of the world to his side, and it is through the mind that he controls and manipulates his own.



*It is through
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that Satan
gains
entrance.*

And the Devil doesn't stop with his own, of course. He also attacks God's children, trying to hinder their happiness and well-being and usefulness to God by interjecting his negative thoughts into their own. But when they choose the Lord's light over the Devil's darkness, when they allow Jesus to control them by asking Him to give them His thoughts, anything good is possible.

How close we stay to the Lord and how much He is able to bless us as a result is determined in our mind, because this is where our will is set. This is where we choose Him and His ways, where we choose to believe His word above the Devil's, where we are able to put on the mind of Christ.

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), the Bible tells us, and one of the best prayers we could continually pray is for the Lord to direct our thoughts and rid our minds of the Devil's input, because for the Lord to bless and use us as much as He would like, He needs full control.

His thoughts cannot coexist with our natural minds, which are at odds with His mind. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). Our natural minds are easy prey for the Devil's doubts and lies and propaganda, and can stifle the Lord's Spirit.

This is the crux of the matter: If we're going to be the kind of Christians the Lord wants us to be, we must be wholly His, and in order to be wholly His, we must put on His mind; we must more fully think His thoughts. How do we do this?—By

putting *off* the mind of man, the mind of the world, the thoughts of Satan, the propaganda of Satan, the vanity of the carnal mind.

We must "gird up the loins of our minds" (1 Peter 1:13). That means to put up barricades to shield us from the Devil's attacks through our thoughts. It means to allow Jesus full control. When we do, He is able to live in us and work through us like never before! □

HUDDERSFIELD

THERE WAS ONCE A RICH LAND-OWNER who decided to buy the entire village of Huddersfield, and over time he bought every piece of land in the area—every piece, that is, except one little plot. One stubborn old farmer refused to sell his tiny piece of land, and nothing would change his mind. The landowner even offered the farmer much more money than his property was actually worth, but the farmer was so fond of his land that he absolutely refused to sell. When the landowner finally gave up, he tried to encourage himself by saying, "What difference does just one little plot of land make? I've bought everything else, so Huddersfield is *mine*. It belongs to me!"

But the stubborn old farmer overheard him and said, "Oh, no it doesn't! *We* own Huddersfield. It belongs to you and *me*!"

Don't let the Devil be able to say that of you to God! "Aha! Look, God! Even though he belongs mostly to You, a little bit still belongs to me!"

>> DAVID BRANDT BERG (D.B.B.)

ATTACK YOUR FEARS!



what to do when fear strikes

>> BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

FEAR!—WE DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH OF IT IS SUBCONSCIOUS until we analyze it and try to put it into words, yet we're often afraid to talk about our fears or even confess to ourselves that we're afraid because that would expose our innermost selves.

The fear of failure is probably one of the greatest fears people have—the fear of failure in life, love, labor, and—for Christians—failing the Lord. For the Christian, the fear of failing God is perhaps second only to the fear of failing others, because we know that God will forgive us, but others sometimes find it hard to forgive. The fear of hurting others because of our failure, the fear of letting them down, disappointing them, disillusioning them, discouraging them—the fear that because of our failure, others will also fail—this is hardest to bear.

But whatever your fears are, it pays to face them and to draw a line of distinction between the truth and the lie, between reality and the imaginary, between fact and fear.

An incident from my childhood illustrates this principle: As a boy, I delivered papers and handbills door to door, and I frequently encountered big dogs that would chase me and nip at my heels. Occasionally they actually bit me, but most of the time their bark was worse than their bite. I soon discovered that if I turned my back on them and tried to run from them, they were more apt to bite me than if I faced them.

Once when I was about 12 years old, I had gone into a certain yard to deliver a handbill, when out from the back yard came a huge Great Dane, barking and growling furiously. He was coming at me full speed, leaping and bounding, and I thought, *This is it!* I knew I didn't dare turn my back on him or he would bite me for sure! Thank God I remembered to pray for the Lord's help. I suddenly jutted out my hand toward him and yelled, "I rebuke you in Jesus' name!"—And did he put on the brakes! He skidded to a stop and looked absolutely startled, turned tail, and ran!

He was coming at me full speed, leaping and bounding, and I thought, This is it!

***You have to
differentiate
between
reality
and the
imaginary,
the truth
and the lie.***

It not only pays to face your fears, acknowledge and confess them, but to take a positive stand against them, especially in the power and Spirit of the Lord, claiming the promises from His Word. It wouldn't have done me a bit of good to try to take the "positive thinking" approach and say, "Big old dog, you just don't exist, so I'm going to ignore you!" He would have promptly finished me off to prove that he *did* exist!

You have to differentiate between reality and the imaginary, the truth and the lie. It doesn't do any good to just shut your eyes and hope the problem will go away, or hope that when you open your eyes again you'll find out it didn't exist, that it was just your imagination.

That big dog *existed*, and he was coming right for me, and it wouldn't have done a bit of good to shut my eyes and hope he would go away, or to tell myself that he was just a figment of my imagination. He was *there*, as real as you or *me*, and he was headed for me! In that situation, the best thing I could have done was to face him and take action to eliminate the danger, and I did so by launching a counterattack by the power of the Spirit. At first he was on the offensive and I was on the defensive, but the Lord helped me turn the tables. Suddenly he was put on the defensive, and that's when he turned and ran.

As any military strategist knows, it's impossible to win a war as long as you stay on the defensive. Defensive warfare is doomed to defeat. To win a war you have to launch an attack; you have to take the initiative!

So it pays to face your fears, recognize they're there, decide between

the real and the unreal, the truth and the lie, and then to go to the *attack* to dispel the vaporous fiction of the fairytale and to drive away the genuine reality of real threat!

Fear is the exact *opposite* of faith. Just as "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10), fear of Satan is really the beginning of death. The Hebrew word translated as "fear" in this verse is *yirah*, which means "reverence." So to fear God is to give Him the respect He deserves. It's a form of worshipping God. Therefore, to fear Satan and his devices is to give him just the kind of worship that he wants. God's Word says about other kinds of fear that "fear involves torment" (1 John 4:18). Fear of the Devil will wear you down and wear you out. It is damaging and disastrous to your spirit if you harbor it.

So you must rebuke that kind of fear just as Jesus did when the Devil tried to get Him to worship him on the mount of temptation. Jesus put the Devil in his place: "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him *only* shall you serve'" (Luke 4:8).

The Lord promises "perfect peace" to those whose minds are fixed on Him, to those who trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3). So if you are troubled by a spirit of fear, put your trust in the Lord. Just tell Satan, "Be gone Devil! Get out of here! I'm putting my trust in God, in Jesus!" The Bible says that if you submit yourself to God and resist the Devil, he will *flee* from you (James 4:7). □

(The above was excerpted from David Brandt Berg's article by the same title. For the full version and six other articles by David Brandt Berg, order *Greater Victories* from one of the addresses on page 2 of this magazine.)

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG



The WISE and UNWISE leader

A GOOD EXECUTIVE IS NOT A BOSS—HE IS A SERVANT! Jesus wasn't just trying to teach His disciples humility when He said, "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:26). A good executive simply is not a dictator! He listens to his employees. When the top people don't communicate with those under them, then of course they don't understand them or their problems. When that happens, they're headed for trouble!

Leaders at any level should listen to those under them. Leaders *are* responsible to make the final decision, but being a leader does not mean that you have all the ideas and do all the thinking and all the con-

sulting just within yourself. A good executive will listen to others.

A good secretary knows more about her boss' business than he does—and she should! He shouldn't have to be involved with every little thing, but *someone* needs to be. A good boss understands that his secretary is more familiar with the extent of the work and the urgency of it, and he will respect that and usually take his secretary's suggestions.

When it comes to plans and goals and motivation and other overall aspects of the work, the leaders are supposed to be good or they shouldn't be the leaders. But when it comes to practical matters, leaders ought to listen to their helpers,



If you're going to be an effective team, every member must work together with all the other members.

because their helpers probably know more about it than they do. A good leader will listen to his workers' suggestions, discuss, agree with them on a course of action, and then leave them alone to carry out the work, just checking now and then to see that they are producing and don't make any serious mistakes. That's really the job of the executive—to keep things moving. He should let his people recommend the work, initiate the work, and by all means carry out the work.

Nearly every king is surrounded by counselors that tell him what to do. Did you know that even God works that way? He calls in His chief counselors and angels and asks them, "What do you think we should do about this?" He listens to their suggestions and then has the wisdom to know who is right. If you don't believe that, read 1 Kings 22:19–22 and Job 1:6–12. And God not only listens to His heavenly counselors, spirits, and angels, but don't forget, He even listens to us and does what we ask Him to do!

If God Himself won't do all the thinking for us, then who are we to try to make all the decisions, do all the thinking, give all the orders, and carry them all out besides? A leader just can't operate alone!

Only a novice, only a brand-new, not-yet-dry-behind-the-ears junior executive tries to run everything and tell everybody what to do. They've never been in that position before and don't know what to do or how to do it, but they pretend to as they sit on their thrones, giving out dictums. It's a very foolish king or executive or leader who works that way.

A wise king, when he wants to get a certain thing done, calls in his counselors and listens to them, and then decides whose advice is best. And

whom does the king appoint to carry out that job?—One of the others that had a different plan? Of course not! He gives the job to the one whose idea it was.

Any smart executive is going to pump people power! He is not going to try to be the pump, or the pump handle, or the water, or the bucket. He's merely going to be the guiding hand that takes hold of the handle and pumps. All he does is keep the pump in motion.

A good leader will try to keep everybody happy, because everybody has a right to be happy and to do the work he likes to do and wants to do if he's qualified.

If you're going to be an effective team, every member must work together with all the other members—not just one, not just a few, not even the majority, but all. You must learn to work together, listen to each other, counsel together, agree together, decide together, and then work it out together.

As in the human body, you can't say that you have no need of even one little member. You need every fingernail, every cell, as well as every organ and every limb (1 Corinthians 12:14–17). Every member is needed and everybody is important, from the lowliest to the mightiest, from the most insignificant to the seemingly most important. Everyone has his job, everyone is needed, and all must work together in unity and harmony and cooperation.

Talk together, discuss together, counsel together, agree together, decide together, do together, bear together, care together, grow together, work together, and enjoy the fruits of your labors together. Then and only then will you be a wise leader and a good executive. •

breaking

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

BAD HABITS

Everyone has weaknesses. That's part of being human and imperfect. When you entertain a habit long enough, it becomes part of your nature—and that's the scary thing about *bad* habits.

BUT THE GOOD NEWS is that the Lord can turn those weaknesses into strengths, so what was once a bad habit can be replaced by a good habit.

Besides bad physical habits, there are all kinds of wrong attitudes and behavior that can become habitual and do even more damage to you and others, such as thinking negatively about yourself or your circumstances, being critical of others, being rude or inconsiderate, being unwise or unloving in your speech, getting in a rushed or pressured spirit, or being angry or impatient. There are also bad habits that affect your spiritual life and relationship with the Lord, such as neglecting Him and His Word.

Habits can either take root for good or bad, and if it's for bad, they can become very difficult to change for the better—difficult but definitely not impossible, with the Lord's help.

Jesus is always willing and able to do the impossible. It takes an impossible situation for Him to do a miracle, but He loves to work that way because it causes you to recognize His miracle-working hand.

That's the wonderful thing about Jesus and His power: He can overcome anything—any sin, any problem, any bad habit, or any negative personality trait. There's nothing too hard for Him; He will deliver you from whatever bad habit you've formed if you put your will on His side and determine to work on it until together you win the victory.

It will take work on your part, but most of all you have to pray for His help. Ask Him not only to do what you *can't* do, but also to show you specifically what you *can* and need to do to get over whatever bad habit is hindering you. You have to believe what He

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tells you, and then you need to go to work and do what He shows you, because if you don't try, He can't do the miracle.

It's impossible to change through your own human strength, especially if you've allowed the bad habit to go on for years. Longstanding habits can become second nature. They become part of your personality, part of your nature, so you hardly even notice or recognize that they're there.

Or if you do recognize them, they can be a source of terrible discouragement. You begin to think that things can never change, because that's just the way you are. But really you *weren't* that way before you allowed that bad habit to form, so of course you can change it if you're willing to get serious with the Lord and work on it.

For example, people who have had a problem with thinking negatively most of their lives usually find it very difficult to break that habit. Nevertheless, many *have* overcome it through the Lord's power and Word and are now *positive* thinkers with a whole new outlook on life. They've been transformed and no longer have that old negative mindset (Romans 12:2).

So if you've formed some bad habit by repeatedly acting or reacting a certain way, the sooner you ask the Lord to help you, the better. You might think you're beyond hope and there's no use trying, but that's not so. Every time you catch yourself, ask the Lord for help, and make a conscious effort to not give in to your bad habit, you're forming a *good* habit that will eventually take root and grow until it crowds out the bad habit.

If a bad habit has gotten to the

point that you're not sure what to do about it, the first thing you need to do is ask the Lord for His thoughts on it. Ask others too—people you're close to and respect, or someone who has the good quality or habit you hope to replace your bad habit with.

It's also important to look to the Lord for encouragement along the way, because sooner or later you will most likely get discouraged and feel like giving up. Ask Him for some promises to claim—specific ones about how He will help you break that particular bad habit. Keep a record of the specific instructions the Lord gives you, as well as the encouraging promises He gives, so you'll have something to refer to if you don't seem to be making progress or are tempted to quit.

It's much easier to overcome bad habits if you go to work on them as soon as you notice them forming. That's why it's so important to take stock of your life regularly. Get in the good habit of asking the Lord every day or two how you are doing and what things you need to change before they become habits that will be much harder to break.

You have to make a commitment to continue to work on breaking that bad habit until it's gone. And remember, if you want it badly enough and do your part, the Lord will always do His because He loves you and wants you to be happy and free from the problem. Do your part, and He'll do His! •

It's much easier to overcome bad habits if you go to work on them as soon as you notice them forming.



The camel's nose

ACCORDING TO A BEDOUIN FABLE, an Arab and his camel were crossing the desert. Night came and the temperature dropped. The Arab put up his tent, tied his camel to it, and went to sleep.

The temperature dropped further, and the camel asked the Arab for refuge from the cold.

The Arab was adamant. "There is only room in the tent for one!"

The camel was quiet for a few minutes, but soon asked again. "Please, Master! Just my nose. If I could just put my nose in your tent, it would keep me from freezing out here."

The Arab reluctantly agreed.

The camel's nose became warm, but after a while the temperature went down even more. The camel woke the Arab and asked, "Please, can I just put my forelegs in the tent? They are very cold!"

Again the Arab reluctantly agreed.

"Only your forelegs, nothing more!" So the camel nudged his forelegs into the tent and they became warm.

After some time, the camel woke the Arab again. "Master, I must put my hind legs in the tent. Otherwise I fear that they will freeze and I won't be able to finish our journey tomorrow. What good is a camel with frozen hind legs?"

So the Arab agreed once more, and the camel moved his hind legs in. But since there was only room in the tent for one, the Arab was forced to move out into the cold, where he barely survived the night.

Depression is like that camel. It just needs a small opening to get started—usually a thought that seems to have some basis in truth or reason—but if you entertain that thought, pretty soon it and a whole lot more like it move in and take over. Don't let the camel get its nose inside your tent. •

WHO ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

THE LORD IS NOT THE ONLY ONE TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION or direct your thoughts, so you must learn to watch your thoughts and make sure you're on the Lord's channel. "Test the spirits" to make sure that what you're hearing in your mind or spirit is from the Lord (1 John 4:1). If your thoughts cause you to be discontent, bitter, dissatisfied, unhappy, or critical of others, they are not from the Lord but from the enemy of your soul, the Devil.

One of your best protections is to fill your mind and heart with positive, encouraging, strengthening, and faith-building thoughts from God's Word. Memorize Scriptures and quote them to yourself and even to the Devil when he tempts you with negative thoughts. Give no place to the Devil (Ephesians 4:27).

—DAVID BRANDT BERG (D.B.B.)

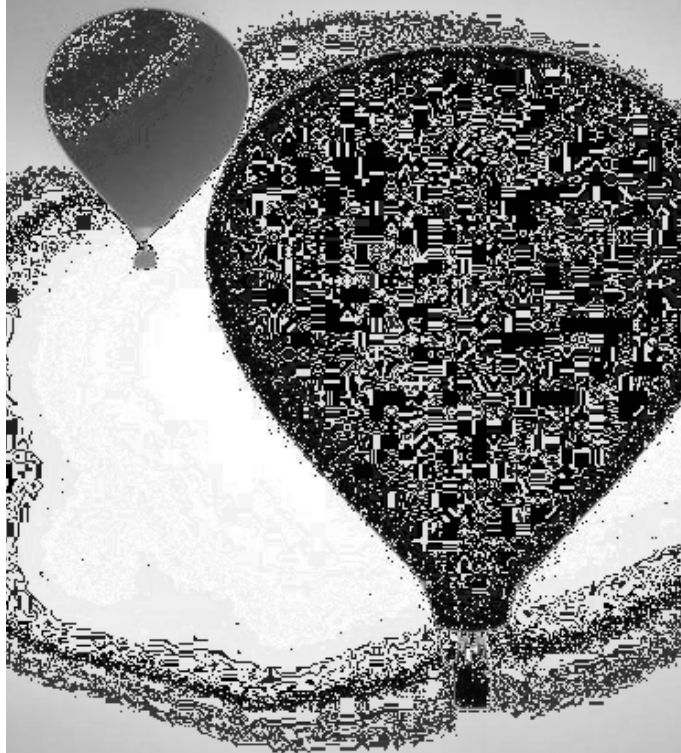
go slow

YOU'LL GET THERE QUICKER

“IN QUIETNESS AND CONFIDENCE shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15). There is nothing in the Bible promoting hurry. The only verse I know that seems to advocate rushing is, “The king’s business required haste” (1 Samuel 21:8). But for that one Scripture, I think there must be a hundred that tell us to go slow, or words to that effect—even to take it easy!

Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30). When you get under too much pressure and too much tension, too heavy a burden and too hard a yoke, it’s not God’s fault. It’s somebody else’s fault, or your own.

Maybe that’s why God created donkeys—as an object lesson. They are plodders. They are very slow, but they have more endurance and can carry heavier loads than horses. They are the workhorses of the backwoods. They can negotiate trails that horses would kill themselves on, carrying loads for miles that a horse couldn’t—especially not a racehorse.



FEEDING READING

RESTING IN THE LORD

The Lord promises His people spiritual rest.

Exodus 33:14
1 Kings 8:56a
Hebrews 4:9

Resting in the Lord brings complete rest—rest of body, peace of mind, contentment of heart, and spiritual well-being.

Psalm 23:2–3a
Psalm 55:18a
Psalm 116:7
Isaiah 28:12a

There is one condition for receiving the rest the Lord promises: “Come to Me!”

Matthew 11:28–30
Hebrews 4:11a

We cannot do the Master’s work without the Master’s power.

2 Chronicles 20:12b
Psalm 20:7
Psalm 84:5a
Psalm 127:1a
2 Corinthians 3:4–5
Isaiah 40:29,31

To get the Master’s power, we must spend time with the Master.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Psalm 105:4
Psalm 138:3
Isaiah 30:15a
Isaiah 41:1a

Resting in the Lord means giving our cares and concerns to Him and letting Him carry them.

Psalm 55:22
1 Peter 5:7
Hebrews 4:10

Resting in the Lord means taking time to meditate on the Lord and His wonders.


Genesis 24:63a
Job 37:14b
Psalm 104:34
Psalm 143:5

Resting in the Lord means humbling ourselves before Him.

Psalm 46:10
Isaiah 57:15
Micah 6:8

Take time to be holy—wholly His.

Luke 10:38–42
Psalm 27:4
Psalm 84:10a
Proverbs 8:17
John 14:21b
John 16:27a
James 4:8a



Racehorses can sprint for a few rounds around the track, and that’s it! They’re extremely high-strung, nervous, and are just not workhorses. They’re not plodders, and they’re not load carriers. But pack mules and donkeys are—and they’re as stubborn as they come! You cannot rush them. You have to do it slowly, in their time. They just plod along, but they do it and they get there. It’s like the old story of the tortoise and the hare: The tortoise was slow, but he got there.

You may choose intensity and speed; I’ll take the low road and the slow road. You can take the high road and get there first if you want to—if you get there at all—but I’m going to take the low road and the slow road, and I’m determined to get there in one piece, no matter how long it takes.

I can’t count the times I’ve told taxi drivers, “Go slow and you’ll live longer. Live fast and you’ll die quicker.” That certainly is true. Doctors and health experts have said that pressure and tension are killing people, and that many of today’s illnesses are from pressure and tension. Pressure and speed are killing people through heart trouble, nervous trouble, and high blood pressure.

Lord help us to go slow! We shouldn’t waste time, but we need to trust the Lord instead of being rushed and impatient. Patience indicates slowness, plodding along, doing our work persistently and not wasting time, but also not getting fretful and worried and all worked up about it. Impatience is marked by speed, hurry, rush, haste, push, pressure, tension! Patience shows faith. Impatience shows lack of faith. Impatience shows that we don’t think the job is going to get done unless we hurry and push it and rush it.

But if we’ve got faith that Jesus is going to help us take care of it somehow, we can afford to be patient and go slow and do it right. •



YOU ARE WHAT YOU “EAT”

{Based on the writings of David Brandt Berg}

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SOMEBODY ONCE SAID, “YOU ARE WHAT YOU READ.” It’s like the saying about health, “You are what you eat,” physically. Well, you are what you read, mentally and spiritually. And the same is true of movies, TV, music, and other forms of input, like the Internet and computer games. Tell me what kind of input someone enjoys most, and I can usually tell what that person’s spiritual condition is like.

God created people with a spiritual hunger for *truth*—insights and ideas that will feed their souls, bring them closer to Him by helping them better understand Him and His loving ways, and inspire them to live better lives. But sad to say, a lot of people today have developed perverted spiritual appetites through reading and viewing the wrong kinds of things, similar to what happens when people develop an appetite for junk food and sweets, and lose their appetite for good wholesome food.

It reminds me of the following verses from the Bible: “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance” (Isaiah 55:2), and, “Do not labor for the food

TELL ME WHAT KIND OF INPUT SOMEONE ENJOYS MOST, AND I CAN USUALLY TELL WHAT THAT PERSON’S SPIRITUAL CONDITION IS LIKE.

which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life” (John 6:27).

The portrayal of attitudes and actions that are contrary to the way God wants us to think and act really does have

THE LAND OF NOT TOO MUCH

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

I HAD THE STRANGEST LITTLE DREAM! I went over some mountains toward the sea, and it was like paradise, like going into another world, and I came back to tell you how wonderful it was.

The thing that made it so wonderful was that there wasn't too much of anything. It was just that simple. In that country it was *impossible* to do too much of anything. You couldn't eat too much, you couldn't drink too much, you couldn't work too much, you couldn't sleep too much, and you couldn't go too far.

You just couldn't do too much of anything, and that seemed to solve all the problems. Nobody wanted too much, so nobody had too much and so nobody fought to get too much. There weren't any fights or wars, because nobody wanted too much or more than the other fellow.

WOULDN'T IT BE WONDERFUL ... ?

A little love and understanding and tolerance and sharing could go such a long way in solving the world's problems. But when people don't treat others with much love, of course they're going to have problems—and they have. In fact, all of the evils in the world today can be traced back to people's lack of love for God and each other. The simple love of God and each other is still God's solution, even in such a highly complex and confused society as ours. If we love God, we can love each other, follow His rules of life, liberty, and the possession of happiness, and all will be well and happy in Him.

There was peace and plenty and safety and happiness, but not too much—just enough for everybody. Everybody had enough to eat and drink and enough to wear, but not too much.

Everybody had the truth, and the truth was that nobody had too much or was too much of anything. That seemed to solve everybody's problems. I came back all excited to tell everyone about how I'd found a land where everybody's problems were solved by not having too much of anything.

Everything was solved by not too much, so I guess you'd call it the "Land of Not Too Much," where everybody was content with not too much. Nobody was too good or too bad or too proud or too mean or too much of anything. You couldn't do or be too much of anything. It was just impossible. Isn't that funny? I guess I'd better stop before I tell you too much about the Land of Not Too Much. ■

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

THE CHAINED

EAGLE

MANY PEOPLE RESOLVE TO DO THIS OR THAT, CHANGE THIS OR THAT, break a bad habit, or start a new one. Sometimes it works; often it doesn't, because many of us are like the bird in the following story.

A man once owned an eagle, and for many years kept him chained to a stake. Every day the eagle walked around and around that stake, and over time wore a rut in the ground. When the eagle was getting old, his master felt sorry for him and decided to set him free. So he took the metal ring off the eagle's foot, lifted the eagle from the ground, and tossed him into the air. He was free—but he had forgotten how to fly! He flip-flopped to the ground, walked back over to his old rut, and started walking in circles like he had for years. No chain and shackle held him, just the habit!

There is a saying: "The chains of bad habits are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken"—and that would be true if it weren't for the Lord and His power. It's not possible for you to change yourself, but it's possible for God to change you by the miracle-working power of His Spirit. He'll do things you can't do!

You may have to put a great deal of your own will into the transformation process as well, but with God's strength and His intervention, you'll find you have more resolve, determination, and ability to

change than you ever thought possible. He said, "Whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:22).

This is what it means to "become a new creature in Christ Jesus" (2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV). Jesus coming into your life not only renews and purifies and regenerates your spirit, but it also renews your mind, literally breaking old connections and reflexes and gradually rebuilding it and rewiring it into a whole new computer system with a different outlook on life and a new way of looking at the world, with new reactions to nearly everything around you.

But it's impossible for you to make this change yourself. If you want this change, it's necessary for you to ask Jesus to help. Some changes are instantaneous, others take awhile.—But if you ask Him for help and do your part, you'll be changed, because Jesus changes people! ●





RUN THE RACE

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

A BIBLE STUDY ON HEBREWS 12:1

“**W**HEREFORE SEEING WE ALSO ARE COMPASSED ABOUT WITH SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which [does] so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1 KJV).

Like the rest of the Bible, the original text of this epistle was not divided into chapters. So you’ve got to keep in mind the preceding chapter in order to understand what “great cloud of witnesses” Paul is talking about. It is Hebrews chapter 11, of course, which some people refer to as the “Faith Hall of Fame,” and Paul is referring to great men and women of God who lived in Old Testament times. They’re not only watching us, they’re also praying for us. They are like our cheering section in the heavenly stadium, cheering for their team—you and me and everyone else who is serving the Lord. Whenever one of us scores a goal, they really cheer!

Whenever one of us wins a soul, all the angels in Heaven rejoice (Luke 15:10).

Think how wonderful it is that there are millions of witnesses up there in Heaven, all watching and praying for us. Sometimes the Lord even has them come down here to help us. *This* life is where the real action is, where the big tests and battles are taking place. Once you leave this life there are other things in store for you, but this life provides the primary tests. This is what the whole universe is watching, the big game, the World Cup! So since they are all watching us, what should we do? Paul explains:

“Let us lay aside every weight.” What are the weights?—The things that slow us down, that hinder us from getting the job done. God allows us to wear those weights for a while, to strengthen us. Sometimes runners wear weights while training, in order to build up their muscles. Then, when they take the weights off, they feel

like they can almost fly! So sometimes God allows us to wear a few weights to test us and strengthen our spiritual muscles. But when they have served their purpose, then it's time to lay them aside and run the race.

“And the sin which does so easily beset us.” What is sin?—Not doing the *most* important thing God wants us to do, the way He wants us to do it—not hitting the bull's eye, the center of His will. So, “let us lay aside the weights and the sins”—anything that holds us back from doing our best to be what God wants us to be.

Then, after laying aside all these weights and distractions and sins, what are we supposed to do? “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” You have to *do* God's will; you have to *do* God's work! As long as you are doing the job He has for you, as long as you're doing His will, you're running the race.

You can only “run with patience” if you have faith and are trusting the Lord. If you didn't have patience, you would lose heart and quit, wouldn't you? You'd say, “I'm tired of doing all this hard work, especially when people never thank me and don't appreciate me and don't realize what a hard job this is!” If you didn't have patience, you couldn't do it. In another epistle, Paul encourages us: “Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Galatians 6:9).

It's a race that some are going to do better in than others and therefore receive greater rewards for having run. Even if they never had the opportunity to do what others might consider great things for God, they did the best they could with what they had, and they tried to love and help others. I think that some of the people who do the seemingly smallest jobs in the Lord's service are perhaps going to get rewarded the most one of these days.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THEY WILL GET EVERYTHING THAT THEY DESERVE, AND THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS GOING TO HEAR ABOUT THEIR FAITHFULNESS TO JESUS!

They are the ones who will step forward to receive their medals, rewards, and crowns from Jesus. For the first time, they will get everything that they deserve, and the whole universe is going to hear about their faithfulness to Jesus!

Picture this: At the sound of a drum roll, a woman steps forward to receive her reward. “Who is that? I never heard of her!”

“Don't you know? That is one of the volunteers who helped make a wonderful outreach ministry possible.”


Dum-ta-dum-ta-dum! Out step some others. “Who are they?”

“Those are printers who donated their services. If they hadn't, a lot of Gospel literature would never have been printed.”

Dum-ta-dum-ta-dum! “And who are all those people?”

“They operated and maintained the computer systems that furthered the Gospel, repaired the Christian volunteers' cars for free, organized relief work, taught children about Jesus, sponsored volunteers, and did countless other jobs.”

So we're to “run with patience the race that is set before us,” which is serving the Lord however and wherever He has called us. And the only way we can have the patience we need to run and win this race is by doing what? “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). So keep your eyes on Jesus! ●



Squeeze!

—don't **JERK!**

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

ONE DAY MY WIFE AND I WERE IN A HURRY TO GET HOME, but instead we sat down on a lovely rock wall to enjoy the view for a moment—and we got this inspiration:

There is hardly anything that can be enjoyed in a hurry—not a glass of wine, a walk, a talk, a ride, a view, a meal, or an embrace. God is hardly ever in a hurry! It takes Him time to make a baby, a flower, a tree, a sunset, or even a blade of grass.

It's a funny thing, but thoughts like this used to come to me when I was a little boy. Sitting on a hill, I used to think about what everything in creation meant. I always felt that it was all an illustration of something; everything *said* something.

Speed kills. Haste makes waste. Patience takes faith. If you're in a hurry, you miss things, lose things, forget things, and wear out quickly. You may live it up, but you might not be able to live it *down*. You may marry in haste but repent at leisure! You may save a minute but lose a life! You may be penny-wise but pound-foolish.

If you go slow, you get there quicker—at least you *get* there. Better late than never; better safe than sorry! If you stop to look before you leap, you may not have to leap at all. A miss is as good as a mile! It takes time to aim straight.

When I was in the army, we often had target practice at the shooting range. Some of the targets were moving, while others appeared for a moment and then disappeared. Many of the other soldiers were in such a hurry to shoot for fear that the target would disappear, that they jerked the trigger so quick and hard that it jerked the whole rifle, which caused them to miss the target. But I took time to rest my elbow firmly, hold my rifle securely, aim accurately, and squeeze the trigger slowly. I learned to wait until I was sure I could hit the bull's-eye, and then fire. I got so good at this that I was rated as a sharpshooter, an expert rifleman with nine out of ten bull's-eyes in competition. I was neither



hasty, nor did I forget to fire altogether. I took reasonable time to aim straight and *squeeze*, not jerk! Squeeze, don't jerk, or you'll miss something!

Rome wasn't built in a day. Once when I was in a big hurry to do something, the Lord spoke to me with the following illustration:

It takes *time* to build a house. First, you must lay the foundation solidly, then build the walls, brick upon brick and stone upon stone, firmly joined with mortar, each piece fitting accurately—and you cannot do this in a *hurry*, or your wall will crumble. Then the roof must be laid securely, beam upon beam, rafter upon rafter, roofing tile upon roofing tile. Then come the plasterers; then the finishers to hang windows and doors, lay the flooring, and finally paint. Then at last, you have a building fitly joined together—a well-made structure built slowly and well to *last*.

But I've seen some buildings thrown up in a hurry that were, as some crooked contractors used to joke, “strong enough to get out of them before they fall!”—And it's this kind that collapse in storms and kill their occupants! I saw thousands of buildings demolished by a hurricane once. Hundreds of people were killed because of faulty, hasty construction that could not stand the wind of adversity.

You can have peace even in the midst of storm if you know you are secure and at rest in a safe building—strong, solid, well built, immovable by the wildest gale. A *good* building doesn't get up and run away. It's not blown away by the storm. It just sits tight until the storm blows over.

We are to wait on the Lord. “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31), instead of wearing out. “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3). Those who believe enter into rest (Hebrews 4:3).

Rest in the Lord! Patience takes faith. Tribulation teaches patience (Romans 5:3,



KJV), because it *compels* you to trust the Lord, to have faith in God for the outcome.

“He sins who hastens with his feet” (Proverbs 19:2). “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. ... ‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked’” (Isaiah 57:20–21). They are tossed to and fro, and they cannot rest. But “there remains a rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9).

Squeeze, don't jerk, or you'll miss something—and missing the mark of God is sin!

When Moses was in a hurry to deliver the children of Israel, he killed an Egyptian and had to flee for his own life, alone. But after 40 years of patiently, humbly tending sheep in the wilderness, with time to listen to the voice of God instead of his own impulses, he was finally ready for the slow, laborious, patient work of the Exodus—slow, but sure!

Then he spent 40 days and nights on the mountain and heard from God, but in one split second of anger, he broke all Ten Commandments and had to go back up and spend

another 40 days there. His haste cost him twice as much time (Exodus, chapters 32–34.)

In Aesop's fable, "The Tortoise and the Hare," the hare never made it, but the tortoise did!

My wife used to say to me on the way to some meeting or appointment, "Now, Honey, we don't have time for any of your shortcuts!" She knew what usually happened when I started cutting across country trying to find a quicker way: We'd get lost and wind up later than ever!

Sometimes my wife gets very impatient with me because I don't answer her immediately when she asks me a question; but it takes time to think and pray, to be sure I give the right answer. Anybody can reply immediately, but are they really saying anything? Be slow to speak and slow to anger (James 1:19). Go slow. Take your time. You'll enjoy things more, and you'll get more out of life.

My father used to sing a funny little ditty: "Never let yourself get worried, hurried, or flurried,

or else you'll find yourself getting harried, married, or buried!"

"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise" (Proverbs 6:6). But it takes time even to study the busy little antics of the ant, to learn anything from her. Don't be slothful, but be diligent in business (Romans 12:11). The sloth hangs there on the limb all day with his eyes shut, sleeping, scarcely moving, till he looks like part of the tree. He's not just slow; he acts like he's *dead!*

Be "temperate in all things" (1 Corinthians 9:25). "Let your moderation be known to all men" (Philippians 4:5 KJV). Don't run too fast, lest you stumble, and don't just sit there. Do something, but be circumspect, be prudent (Ephesians 5:15).

Squeeze, don't jerk, or you may miss the mark—and that's a sin!

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994) WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

the Upward look

RETOLD BY ABI F. MAY

THERE WAS ONCE A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR who sprinkled his lectures with personal reflections that invariably began with, "As I was walking in my garden, it occurred to me that..." Over and over he passed on to his students thoughts that his garden had inspired.

One day he invited two of his most promising students to visit him at home, and over a cup of coffee the students asked to see his garden. To their amazement it was only a narrow strip, barely wider than the walkway, with the house on one side and a high wall on the other.

"Is this really the garden where you have all those inspiring thoughts, Doctor?" one of the students asked.

"Yes," came the professor's reply.

"But it's so small!" protested the student.

"Ah, yes," said the professor, a twinkle in his eye as he gestured toward the sky, "but look how high it is!" ■





WORK SMART

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

ONE OF THE BEST THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN ORGANIZING YOUR WORK IS TO NOT GIVE YOURSELF MORE TO DO THAN YOU CAN MANAGE. Set priorities and work through your to-do list at a sustainable pace, starting with the most important or urgent items and doing what you can each day. Then you will have the satisfaction of knowing you used your time and energy wisely, and you will be that much closer to your goals when you start work the next day.

Getting the job done right is the most important thing. Accuracy is more important

than speed. Typing tutors emphasize that speed will come with practice, and the same is true of most work. Over time, positive results will come more easily and quickly, and eventually they will come almost automatically. Don't rush or push; just focus on getting it right, and as you gain experience, you will naturally gain speed.

Racehorses can spurt for a few rounds around the track, but that's it. They're extremely high-strung and not good workhorses. Pack mules and donkeys, on the other hand, are plodders and load carriers. You cannot rush them, but they can carry heavier loads and negotiate trails that horses would never survive. Some people struggle at their work because they approach it like a racehorse rather than a pack mule.

Other people's troubles stem from the fact that they have no regularity, no schedule, no scientific organization. If they would keep a chart or spreadsheet or even a simple prioritized list, they would know at a moment's glance where their work was at and what to concentrate on next. Getting and staying organized may seem like extra work, but it saves a lot of work in the long run.

That is also the best way to avoid last-minute cramming and the stress that comes with that. Having everything planned and scheduled and charted is a far more effective and pleasant course of action than constantly rushing to meet the next deadline.

Most large companies have what they call "efficiency experts" or "time management consultants" who hang over the shoulders of the workers to figure out how they could do their jobs better, cheaper, or faster, as well as what they're doing that they don't need to do. You can do that for yourself too. By planning your work, keeping records, and evaluating the results, you can significantly improve your work habits and productivity. Now *that* is working smart!

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994) WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ✎

THE HEALTH AND HAPPINESS CONNECTION

He who has health has hope and he who has hope has everything.
—*Arabian proverb*

It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.—*Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)*

Happiness is nothing more than good health and a bad memory.—*Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965)*

It is amazing how much crisper the general experience of life becomes when your body is given a chance to develop a little strength.—*Frank Duff (1889–1980)*

A healthy relationship with God contributes to better overall health by alleviating worry. “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”¹—*David Brandt Berg (1919–1994)*

It is against God’s rules of health and happiness to work seven days a week.—*David Brandt Berg*

God wants you to be a well-balanced, well-rounded individual, physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. That means not going to extremes. Use a little common sense. —*David Brandt Berg*

It tells us that mind and body are linked and that attitude has an impact on the final outcome, death.—*Toshihiko Maruta, lead researcher of a decades-long study by the Mayo Clinic in which optimistic people lived about 19% longer than pessimists*

1. Philippians 4:7

2. John 13:17

GOD'S HEALTH PLAN

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

It’s better to stay healthy than to have to be healed. Remember, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. A fence at the top of the cliff is better than a hospital at the bottom. The best way to prevent illness is to obey God’s natural health laws: live right, eat right, work right, play right, rest right, love right, and maintain a right relationship with Him.

You cannot violate God’s health rules or abuse your body and expect to be healthy, because God made you with built-in mechanisms to make you wish you hadn’t if you do. It’s not that God enjoys punishing you or seeing you suffer. To the contrary, He made His health rules because He loves you and wants to protect you from harm. The rules are to help you be happier and get more out of life by making sure you do what you can to keep yourself healthy and whole. “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”²

God created you, and He knows what is best for you. Take care of God’s creation by following His commonsense rules, and He will bless you with good health. ■

**HEAVEN
AND
SPIRITUAL
WORLD**



Mountain Men

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

WHEN Jesus climbed the mountain, He left the multitude behind. “And seeing the multitudes, He [Jesus] went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.”¹ Mountain peaks are never crowded. Why? Because it’s hard work getting there. Not very many people desire to climb mountains.

There is more light on the mountain. Long after the valley is in darkness, you can still see the sun. The valley is almost always dark—full of people and things, but usually in darkness. The mountain is windy and cold, but thrilling.

If you’re going to climb a mountain, you have to have the feeling that it’s worth dying for. Any mountain—the mountain of this life, the mountain of accomplishment, the mountain of obstacles, of difficulty—has to be worth braving wind and cold and storm, symbolic of adversities.

Only pioneers climb mountains—people who want to do something that few have ever done before, people who want to get above the multitude and go beyond what has already been

accomplished. Pioneers must have vision—vision to see what no one else can see; faith—faith to believe things no one else believes; initiative—initiative to be the first one to try it; courage—the guts to see it through!

On the mountain you feel like you’re living in eternity, whereas down below they’re living in time. You see the world in its proper perspective, with range after range to be conquered and a world beyond the vision and horizon of normal men. You see distant peaks yet to be climbed, distant valleys yet to be crossed. You see things that the men in the valleys can never see, or even comprehend.

In the valley, people get so caught up in the multitude and the little make-believe world of materialism that they can’t see anything but time and creatures of time and things of time, which are soon to pass away. But if you thrust your head above the multitude, you become like a mountain

¹Matthew 5:1

in their midst, and they will resent and resist and fight you because they can't understand you and don't want you.

They don't even want to know that there *are* mountains! They don't want others to hear there are mountains, nor to have a breath of fresh air from those crystal peaks. They want to keep everyone shut in down in the valley, in the mud and mire. They don't want it to be known that there is any other place to go than the valley, and they will do everything they can to discourage you from climbing the mountain.

Man dominates the valley, but only God dominates the mountain, and the men living on the mountains know this. But men living in the valleys think they are God, because they dominate themselves. They have become so secure that they think they don't need God. They have forgotten there *is* any God, for they can't see the sky any longer.

Beaten paths are for beaten men, but mountain peaks are for mighty pioneers.

What do you hear on the mountain? Things that are going to echo around the world. What do you hear in the stillness? Whispers that are going to change the course of history!

The greatest laws ever given to man, whereby most of the world is still ruled, were given to one man alone on a mountain. Moses came down from a mountain with the Ten Commandments, and the Hebrew nation was never the same, nor was the world!

The greatest sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount, was given to a handful of mountain men by the greatest mountaineer of all, Jesus, who finally climbed His last mountain, Mount Calvary, Golgotha, and died alone for the sins of the world. That was a mountain that only He could climb for you and me, but He made it!

After Jesus' disciples heard His Sermon on the Mount, they came down and changed the world.

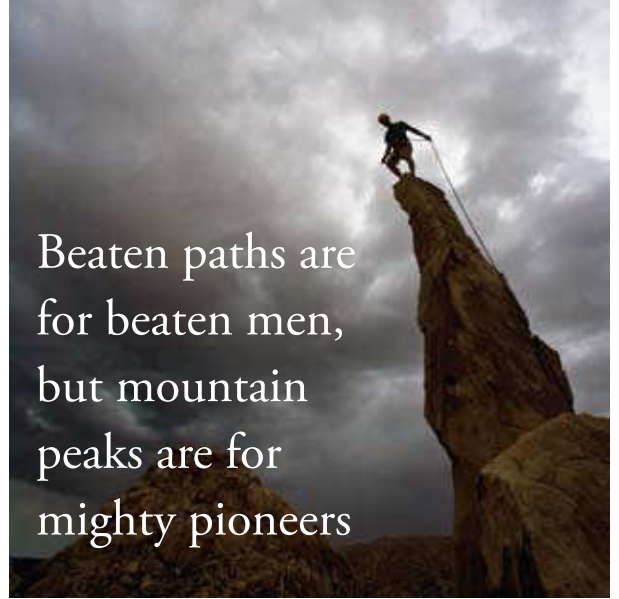
²Matthew 5:3

³Matthew 5:6

⁴See Luke 1:53

⁵Matthew 5:8

⁶Psalms 11:1



Beaten paths are
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but mountain
peaks are for
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They were never the same. What changed them that changed the world? They heard the voice of God teaching them things that were completely contrary to what was being said in the valley!

In the valley they were saying, "Blessed are the Romans—the proud and the powerful. Look what they've done! They've conquered the whole world!" But on the Mount, Jesus was saying just the opposite:

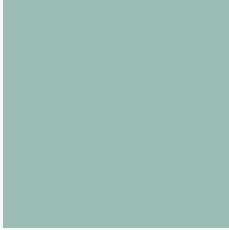
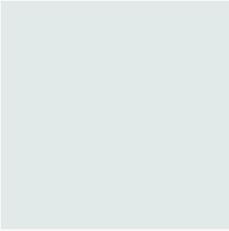
"Blessed are the poor in spirit [the humble], for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."² Simple little illiterate fishermen were listening to a carpenter tell them something that would make them greater rulers than the Caesars of Rome!

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."³ The people on the mountain hunger and thirst for the truth, and only God can satisfy them. The people down in the valley can't see any further than the end of their nose and are satisfied with themselves and are *full*—and He sends them away empty.⁴

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."⁵ There's no smog on the mountain. The air is pure. The water is pure. The people are pure in heart. They see God.

Life is on the mountain! Get out of the valley!
"Flee as a bird to your mountain."⁶ 🐦

(THE ABOVE WAS EXCERPTED FROM DAVID BRANDT BERG'S ARTICLE BY THE SAME TITLE.)



The Green Door

A Dream of a Polished Hell

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

I HAD A VERY UNUSUAL DREAM that reminded me a little bit of *Alice in Wonderland*. I still don't know how I got down there in that awful place! I think maybe I was out walking and found a passageway that I wanted to explore. It was almost as if I'd wandered into Hell by accident and wasn't supposed to be there.

It was completely underground with brightly lit hallways, almost like a hospital, as it had very nice polished floors. I wandered along, looking at things and trying to peek in the rooms to see what was in them.

In each room there were people doing a different thing, but it seemed like everything they were doing was totally futile and a waste of time. They were all very, very busy but accomplishing nothing, getting nowhere.

Scientists conducted endless experiments that never bore any useful results. They shot rockets into space that either never got off the ground or never went anywhere.

A soldier was on the battlefield, while bombers zoomed overhead. With shells screaming and landing all around him, he seemed to be going through the endless hell of war, just like he had been on earth.

A fugitive politician was running from a screaming crowd that wanted to lynch him, and he was running and running, trying but unable to hide.

Everything moved at a very slow pace, but there was no stopping. Workers never stopped working, soldiers never stopped fighting on the battlefield, scientists never stopped experimenting. Whatever people were doing, they did it all the time, continuously, and yet they never seemed to accomplish anything or get anywhere.

As I looked in all those rooms, I had this terrible apprehensive feel-

Everything was
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meaningless,
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ing. I thought, *Wow! This must be Hell! What could be worse than that?* Everything was an extension of the same meaningless, purposeless, fruitless, painful, sad existence that these people had on earth. As the Bible says, “There is no peace for the wicked” (Isaiah 57:21).

They keep doing the same things and going through all that agony and suffering and pain—the private hell of their former existence—but now absolutely useless and without relief or surcease or any hope of it ever ending. It was terrible!

It was similar to how many people live today. They get up in the morning, go to work, do the same things every day, come home, go to bed, and get up and do it again. What do they ever accomplish? What do they ever get out of life?

I never thought of Hell being like that. It was a very neat, well-organized place, but there was no end to the misery, no peace, no rest, and no one knew what was the truth. That’s about the worst thing I can imagine—not just burning up with literal flames, but constantly burning with that fruitless fire of endless, useless endeavor, ceaseless struggle, pointless pain, and seemingly endless sorrow and suffering!

It was just the opposite of the ecstasies of life in Heaven for those of us who know Jesus and are saved. Heaven will be an extension of the present happy life we now have. Though we’ll still have work to do there, we’ll be even happier then, with lots of mobility, accomplishment, progress, variety, travel, and freedom. The afterlife will be thrilling and fascinating for us. It will be an extension and amplification of the joy and exciting lives we now lead—our pres-

ent happiness multiplied many times over and with manifold blessings we can only imagine now!


In the dream I exited that polished Hell through a stairwell that led up to a dark green, weed-covered, grave-like hole in the ground. It reminded me of a song that was popular a number of years ago, “The Green Door.” The song was about a fellow who was wondering what was on the other side of a green door, and it turned out that the green door was the grave!

So watch out for that green door! It may lead to a realm where you don’t really belong and certainly would never want to be! Be sure you’ve got your name written in Heaven and your reservation confirmed for one of those mansions in God’s heavenly city instead (Luke 10:20; John 14:2; Revelation 21:27). That’s the place where you’ll be happy forever with Jesus. If you receive Him now, you can enjoy Him and Heaven forever. Then you won’t have to be afraid when it comes your time to die. You’ll know which direction you’re going—not down to a polished Hell, but up to a happy Heaven!



Jesus said, “He who hears My Word and believes on Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24 KJV). Receive Jesus’ forgiveness for your sins and get your free pass to Heaven—Jesus’ gift of eternal life—by simply praying the following:

Dear Jesus, I know I’ve done wrong and don’t deserve Heaven, but I accept Your sacrifice on the cross for my sins and receive Your love, forgiveness, and salvation now. Please come into my heart and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen. •



Compiled from the writings of David Brandt Berg

THE COMING HEAVENLY LIFE OF LOVE!

WHAT
HEAVEN
WILL
REALLY BE
LIKE

THE PLACE WHERE ALL OF GOD'S CHILDREN ARE GOING TO dwell with Him forever is not some fanciful dreamland way off in outer space somewhere, but an even more amazing dream city that's going to come down from God, out of space, to a new earth. And God is going to come down and live with us, and we with Him (Revelation 21:1–3). It's going to be such a literal down-to-earth Heaven that the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation chapters 21 and 22, describe the heavenly city in detail—its exact measurements, design, colors, and materials.

But before God brings down His heavenly city, He is going to purify the surface of the earth with fire, destroy the atmospheric heavens, and re-create a beautiful new earth and new atmospheric heavens. It will be the same ball, the same planet, but with a beautiful renewed surface, like a beautiful Garden of Eden—the Paradise of God (Psalm 102:25–26; Isaiah 51:6; 2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12).

We don't know exactly how it is going to work or what everything is going to be like there, but we do know that it's going to be a better world than the present one. It will be a world without death, sorrow, pain, or any of the other problems of today (Revelation 21:4).

The inhabitants of Heaven are not going to be entirely different. They're even going to look much like they did in this life, just as Jesus still looked like Himself after His resurrection. In His supernatural body, after He was resurrected from the grave, Jesus could appear and disappear, walk through walls and locked doors, and move from place to place at the speed of thought. Yet He ate and drank, and His disciples could still see Him and touch Him (Luke 24:36–43; John 21:12–13). In Heaven, people are going to have new supernatural bodies like His, incorruptible, immortal. Their old, decaying, natural bodies will go back to the dust, and they will be given new resurrected bodies that will live forever

(Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

But if all there is to Heaven is sitting around on clouds and playing harps, it could get awfully boring! I'm convinced Heaven is not going to be like that at all. I believe it's going to include all the joys and beauties and pleasures of this life, but without the drawbacks—all the assets, and none of the liabilities. After all, why would God have created all this to abandon it? Heaven is going to be like the best of this world, only more so!

Due to the fall of man through sin when he was first placed on earth, we haven't really had a chance to enjoy life as God originally intended, but in Heaven we

In Heaven, people are
going to have new
supernatural bodies like
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will—and I think the Scriptures corroborate this. Heaven is going to be an amplification and eternal continuation of what we who know and love Jesus already have in our hearts. It's going to be perfect and wonderful, thrilling and exciting, marvelous and beautiful—everything we have now, only in perfection.

Everyone there is going to be good and honest and loving and kind—the perfect society, in perfect fellowship with the Lord and each other. There'll be no hate or jealousy or selfishness or cruelty. We'll never grow old and decrepit, or be bound

by time. It will be absolutely wonderful!

Within the great heavenly city, all of God's saved children will live with Him forever (Revelation 21:24, 27). But outside there will still be others in various situations, some better off than others, according to the lives they lived, how much they received God's truth and were loving to others. And because there will be "no more sea" (Revelation 21:1), unlike our present planet which is four-fifths covered with water, there will be plenty of room for those living outside the heavenly city.

The whole creation will be the way God intended for it to be originally, without sin, war, pollution, or destruction. In a sense, it will be heaven on earth for everybody, even the unregenerated people who don't have the right to enter the city or walk its golden streets.

Inside the city, the River of Life will flow out of the throne of God and of Jesus. The river will be lined on both sides with Trees of Life that bear twelve different kinds of fruit, and the "leaves are for the healing of the nations" outside (Revelation 22:1–2). Perhaps these healing leaves are symbolic of the words of God, His truth. Surely the inhabitants of Heaven will go out and be teachers amongst the nations. They will still have a job to do when they get to Heaven.

We who receive Jesus now are going to be the inner circle and live in the city, the charmed city, living charmed lives as eternal super-beings in supernatural bodies. Are you ready? And are you going to take as many others with you as you can?

God bless you with His love, salvation, and Heaven, now and forever!•



BY DAVID
BRANDT BERG

IN RECENT YEARS A NUMBER OF PROMINENT DOCTORS have observed and documented hundreds of cases of what they call “clinical deaths.” Their patients actually died, and all vital functions ceased for from several minutes up to half an hour, but then the patients revived. Hundreds of these survivors of death told amazingly similar accounts of their life-after-death experiences.

“It was a marvelous feeling, like floating on air.”

Almost all of them said it was a marvelous feeling, like floating on air, no longer weighed down by their physical bodies. Their anxieties and worries suddenly vanished as they realized that although their bodies were dead,

their spirits were still very much alive and God was lovingly caring for them. In almost every account, those who returned from such experiences had a great change in their outlook on life. They were more loving, more full of faith, found greater purpose in living, and were convinced that they had been spared from death so that they could return and fulfill their mission in this life. *(For documented accounts of more than 200 life-after-death experiences, read Life After Life by Dr. Raymond A. Moody, Jr.)*

According to God’s Word, the next life is not so terribly different from this present existence that we can’t



LIFE

AFTER DEATH

—WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE?

comprehend it. We are going to be much the same as we are now, except that our eternal bodies are going to be supernatural, like the one Jesus had after He was resurrected (Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2). Jesus was able to materialize or dematerialize, appear or disappear. Think of that! He could pass from one dimension to the other, and walk through locked doors and solid walls (John 20:19,26).

But just because we'll have spiritual bodies doesn't mean we won't still be ourselves. We're going to have a lot of the same

characteristics that we have now, just as Jesus did after His resurrection. He could eat and drink and others could still touch Him as well as see Him, yet He was in a miraculous supernatural body, His new resurrected body (Luke 24:36–43).

You are still going to be you! You're even going to look a lot the same, only better—much better! You'll be much better off in every way, and you'll be in more direct communication with the Lord, experiencing the fullness of God's love and the realities of the world to come!

Those experiences of life after death that some have had are exceptional cases, of course, and it's obvious that most people do *not* come back after passing on. However, when your time comes, death is not something you should fear.

Contrary to the idea some people seem to have, God is not a cruel tyrant or some sort of monster who is trying to frighten everyone into Hell, but rather a loving and merciful Father who is trying to love everyone into Heaven. "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and He wants to help and save you and make you happy with His love. In fact, this is why He created you: to love and enjoy Him forever, now and in the life to come.

But sad to say, at some time or other we've all been selfish, mean, unloving, or unkind to others—even to God! "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). None of us deserve to go to Heaven. But the Bible says that although "the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Receiving God's free gift of eternal life is like receiving a pardon from the guilt of sin. God loves you so much, He gave Jesus to die in your place, to take your punishment for you (John 3:16). This is why Jesus could promise those who believe in Him that they "shall not taste of death" (Matthew 16:28). If we receive Jesus and His free gift of eternal life, our spirits—the real us—will never die or experience the agony of separation from God, even when our physical bodies die. "He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment [condemnation], but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

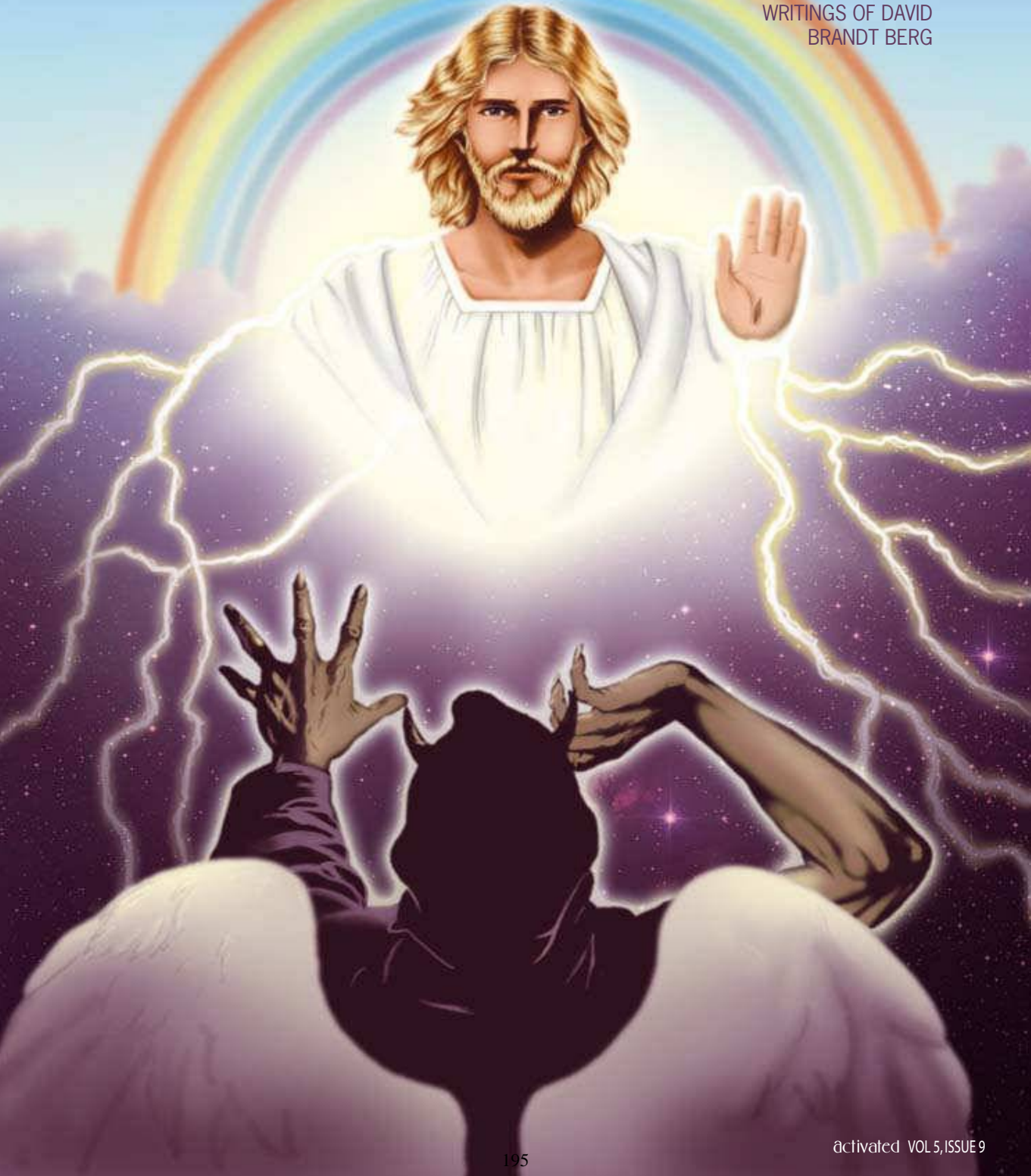
If you haven't yet received Jesus into your heart, you can right now by praying this prayer:

Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died for me. Please forgive me for all my sins. I ask You now to come into my heart and give me Your gift of eternal life. Help me to love You, and to love others by telling them about You and Your love and truth. Amen.

Once you have Jesus in your heart, you have made the most important preparation for your life, as well as death. And when your time comes to die, well, hallelujah! You will have finished your earthly task. It will be your graduation day—graduation to the heavenly world of the hereafter where you will receive a glorious crown of eternal life and be with God and Jesus and your loved ones forever! We who know Jesus will awaken in the heavenly kingdom of God with peace and plenty and love for all forever! Are you ready? ◊

OUT OF THIS WORLD

COMPILED FROM THE
WRITINGS OF DAVID
BRANDT BERG



A LOT OF PEOPLE TODAY ARE WAKING UP to the fact that the spirit world is real, that there is something beyond our four-dimensional world of height, breadth, depth, and time. Many sincere seekers are looking for the truth and true spirituality, but sadly many of the people they turn to for enlightenment are in the dark themselves. So in their quest for spiritual reality, many of these seekers begin to look elsewhere for a means to connect with the spirit world.

Little do most of these people realize what they're getting into. There are two sides to the spirit world, good and evil, and very powerful forces are at work there, so anyone who ventures into the spirit world without the Lord's guidance and protection is playing with fire! That's why so many people "flip out" when they dabble in the occult or take hallucinogenic drugs. They get a glimpse into the dark side of the spirit world but aren't prepared for or protected from what they see.

The same goes for some scientists and others who study the paranormal—ESP, telepathic communication, hypnosis, and so on. What most of these people who delve into the paranormal don't realize is that they are dealing with spiritual forces that operate in the spiritual realm.

A number of popular movies in recent years have also rekindled people's interest in the spirit world. Unfortunately, most of these movies have dwelt on the dark side—the horror of the Devil and his dirty work—and these are not all figments of some screenwriter's imagination, either. Demons are very

real and active today, as they have been in all ages.

The spiritual warfare

As the apostle Paul explained, our battle is "not against flesh and blood, but against ... the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12 KJV). Our daily lives, events, and ultimately the world's future are being influenced by battles in the spirit world between God and His angels on the one hand, and the Devil and his demons on the other. What's happening on the surface is only a physical manifestation of the real action. The real action is in the spirit world.

Many people today are plagued by demons and need deliverance, but they either don't understand that their problems are spiritual, or they don't know how to avail themselves of the Lord's help. For example, most doctors and psychiatrists diagnose such things as schizophrenia as purely psychological or physiological problems and try to counter them with drugs, when actually the cause is often spiritual.

We also play an important part in the spiritual warfare because we can help determine the outcome through our choices and prayers. We can exercise authority over all the demons of Hell and the Devil himself through the power Jesus promised His followers (Luke 10:19). In the case of a person being troubled mentally or emotionally by evil spirits, for example, we can command that spirit to leave and stop influencing the person they are afflicting.

The dark side

What about devil worship, demonism, black magic, and the like? Can people use spiritual powers to influence or cast spells on other people? Well, just as God has His means of communication in the spirit world, so does the imitator, the Devil. Just as God has His children, the Devil has his captives. God can possess His children, and the Devil can possess his.

God has seen fit to allow the Devil some power and control in the spiritual realm, within limits. Black magic, demonism, and so on are real, and those who practice them can wield real power. Just as God's people can pray to the Lord and ask Him to affect people and situations for good, so can the Devil's people communicate with him and curse others.

God has given the Devil certain powers, particularly over his own people—those who have rejected Christ and therefore aren't protected by the Spirit of God. The Lord gives everyone a degree of immunity or merciful protection from the Devil's influence up to the point of decision, when they must either accept or reject Jesus, but those who choose to reject leave themselves wide open for the Devil's lies (2 Thessalonians 2:10–11).

The right side—God's side

Of course there is also a *good* side to the spirit world—the side of light and right in which God Himself dwells with His Son Jesus

and the Holy Spirit, as well as many other good spirits. These include the seven spirits of God of Revelation 4:5, the seven stars or angels or spirits of the seven churches of Revelation 1:20, the four spirits of the heavens of Zechariah 6:5, and the multitudes of other celestial messengers, angels, or spirits of God mentioned in the Bible, as well as the spirits of all the millions of departed saints—all of whom are obviously *good* spirits.

The apostle Paul referred to these heavenly hosts as a “great cloud of witnesses” that surrounds us here and now (Hebrews 12:1). Like a cloud is composed of millions of tiny particles of moisture, this cloud is composed of millions of good spirits.

In another place Paul asks rhetorically, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14). So they are not only watching us, they are watching over us, protecting us, and trying to influence us for good. All throughout the Bible there are many promises of spiritual protection, such as, “The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Psalm 34:7), and, “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways” (Psalm 91:11).

Knowing who's who

How do we tell the difference between God's good spiritual forces and the Devil's evil spirits?—The Bible tells us to “test the spirits, whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1). The difference is usually quite clear: God's power is creative and loving; the

Devil's power is destructive and hateful. God's Spirit ministers love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—all good things (Galatians 5:22–23). The Devil and his evil spirits minister fear, hatred, bitterness, strife, misery, confusion, and torment—all bad things.

The same goes for the thoughts that form our attitudes and direct our actions. If a thought is not according to God's Word or causes us to be unloving, discontent, bitter, dissatisfied, or critical of others, that thought is not from the Lord but from the enemy of our souls, the Devil.

Our best protection

The Lord protects His own. Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27–28). Once we receive Jesus as our Savior, we are His property and the Devil can't get us back.

We can still get ourselves into a lot of trouble, however, if we stray from the Lord's protection by being careless and unprayerful, willfully disobeying His Word, or not heeding His warnings. So be obedient to God's laws of love, and don't give the Devil any place in your life (Ephesians 4:27). “Submit to God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

We who know and love the Lord don't have to fear the Devil, because we have a greater power that protects us. “He who is in you is greater than he who

is in the world” (1 John 4:4). In other words, God is saying, “My power in you is greater than the Devil's power in his people—much greater!” The Lord's protection is like a force field around us, which the Devil and his forces cannot penetrate, whereas God's power is like light that penetrates and destroys the Devil's darkness. Darkness can't exist in the presence of light.

The Devil can't touch us if we are the Lord's and in His will. So when the Devil *is* able to give us trouble, it's nearly always because we've strayed from the Lord's protection through disobedience, carelessness, or sin, and the Lord is trying to teach us a lesson and get us running back to Him. When we do, He is always there to deliver and protect us.

Wonders await you!

Even though the Bible has so much to say about the spirit world and the spiritual warfare, some Christians choose to ignore it or act like it doesn't exist. They are afraid of the subject because they feel it borders on spiritism and that talking about appearances of angels or departed saints sounds too much like having to do with “familiar spirits”—evil spirits and devils—which God's Word clearly condemns.

But this does not mean that we are supposed to ignore or shut ourselves off completely to the realities of the spiritual world in which God Himself dwells with His Son Jesus, the Holy Spirit, all His ministering spirits, the angels, as well as the spirits of all the millions of departed saints. We shouldn't condemn the entire spirit world

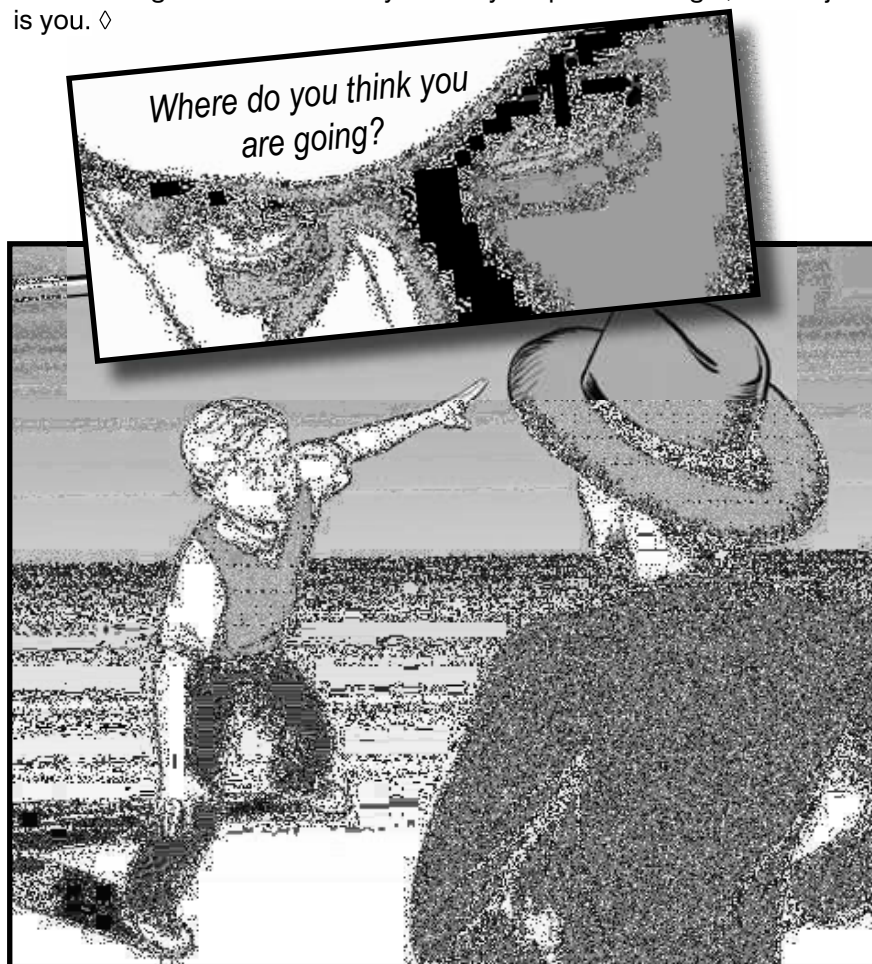
GUARDIAN ANGEL

just because the Devil also dwells and operates there. That would be like refusing to listen to any music just because the Devil uses music. If we stopped using everything the Devil uses, there wouldn't be much left for God and us to use for His good purposes!

We don't have to wait till we die to get a glimpse of the world to come. "As it is written, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). God wants to awaken us to the realities of the spirit world so we can enjoy the good, avail ourselves of the help He has put there for us, and more effectively combat the evil.

If you have received Jesus into your heart and have thereby been "born again of the Spirit" (John 3:5), you can safely explore the wonders of God's good spirit world. You don't need to fear or worry about demons or even Satan himself! God, His loving Holy Spirit, and His hosts of mighty angels are with you, surrounding, protecting, and delivering you from all evil (Psalm 34:7; 91:10-13). ◇

I WAS A TEENAGER THE FIRST TIME I SAW MY GUARDIAN ANGEL. I was heading across the street for some dive in San Francisco when suddenly he was right there on the curb in front of me, challenging me. He was tall, handsome, and blonde, with a real fine face, but dressed in an old bum's clothes and a slouch hat. He looked fiercely into my eyes, with eyes that glowed like fire, and I knew he wasn't going to budge an inch out of my way. He spoke to my mind, not with words but with his eyes or thoughts, and I heard him loud and clear, inside my head, as he looked at me with great disgust. "Where do you think you are going?" He knew where I was headed, and he was there to stop me—and stop me he did! I wasn't three feet from him, face to face, and he nearly scared me out of my wits! I nearly did a backward flip and ran the other way across that busy street, dodging cars. It's a wonder I didn't get killed. And I grabbed the first train home. I couldn't get out of there fast enough. I was terrified of him because somehow I knew exactly who he was—an angel of God in disguise, sent by the Lord to stop me from making a big mistake. It sure did the trick, and I never forgot it! So thank God for His angels, who are watching over us continually—even your personal angel, whose job is you. ◇



Your Own Angels

GOD WILL SEND ANGELS just when you need them. You may hear a flutter over your shoulder, or think you see something out of the corner of your eye. Or maybe there will be an old man you meet on your path, who directs you the right way and seems to have a lively light and love in his eyes. Or you may just feel a certain warmth and peace—an assurance that somehow everything is going to be all right.

As things get worse and worse in this old world, you'll need the help of these angelic beings more and more, and He'll send them more and more. The Lord wants you to know that He loves you, that He cares, and sending angels to help you is just one of the many ways He shows it. So don't forget that if you trust in God and His help, you'll have angels watching over you—your own personal angel or angels, sent by the Lord to take care of you!

DAVID BRANDT BERG

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, while I was doing volunteer work in Paraguay with several other members of the Family International, we had an ongoing ministry at a nearby prison. During one visit, an inmate I hadn't met before related the following story.

Two months earlier, he and two other prisoners drugged their guards, took their guns, and escaped. Other police officers quickly realized what was happening and followed the men. One of the escapees died in the ensuing gun battle, the man giving me this account was shot in the leg and surrendered, and the third escapee was captured the next day.

By this point in the story I realized that this had all taken place around the corner from our house. I remembered distinctly that when we had heard gunshots, we had gathered in our house and prayed desperately for our safety and against further bloodshed.

"After I was wounded," the inmate continued, "I turned and was about to shoot the policeman who had shot me, but then I heard a voice say, 'Don't shoot him! He is your brother. Give him your gun.' I obeyed the voice and surrendered. The policeman could have shot and killed me right there, but he didn't. I'm also very thankful now that I didn't shoot him!"

We explained that we had prayed during the gun battle, and that we also pray every day for our safety. "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Psalm 34:7). Perhaps it was one of the angels that watch over our house who helped him do the right thing. We are continuing to counsel this man, and hope to help him make a new start. •

[WISDOM FROM ABOVE]

“The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (James 3:17–18).

THANK GOD FOR HEAVEN!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

Wouldn't you just love to enjoy all the blessings you have right now without any pain, sickness, death, weariness, or any of the other difficulties of this present life? We will never get to truly enjoy life to the full as long as sin and its results are in the world, but in Heaven there will be none of these (Revelation 21:4). There all of our heart's desires will be fulfilled.

It's going to be a sinless new world where everything will be a joy and a pleasure and perfect, with peace and harmony and cooperation and love for all. Everything there will be true—the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth! Everybody there will be like Jesus—good and honest and loving and caring and kind. It will be the perfect society, where everyone will be in perfect fellowship with each other and the Lord. Isn't that beautiful?

God's plan is not going to be defeated. He's going to bring us through to final perfection the way He originally intended. We will have eternal, wonderful happiness, joy, and paradise, similar to what we who love the Lord have now, only it will be far better and it will be forever! Thank God for the hope of such wonderful things to come!

REMEMBER THIS...

When the concentration camp at Ravensbrück, Germany, was liberated by the Allies after World War II, a piece of torn wrapping paper was found, on which an unknown prisoner had scribbled these lines:

“Oh Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted on us; remember the fruits we have brought forth, thanks to this suffering—our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this. And when they come to judgment, let all the fruits which we have borne be their forgiveness.”

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

AN INSTRUMENT OF THY PEACE

Lord, make me an
instrument of Thy peace.

Where there is hatred,
let me sow love;

Where there is injury,
pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness,
light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that

I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood

as to understand,

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving

that we receive;

It is in pardoning


that we are pardoned;

It is in dying that we are

born to eternal life.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN,
OFTEN ATTRIBUTED TO
SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

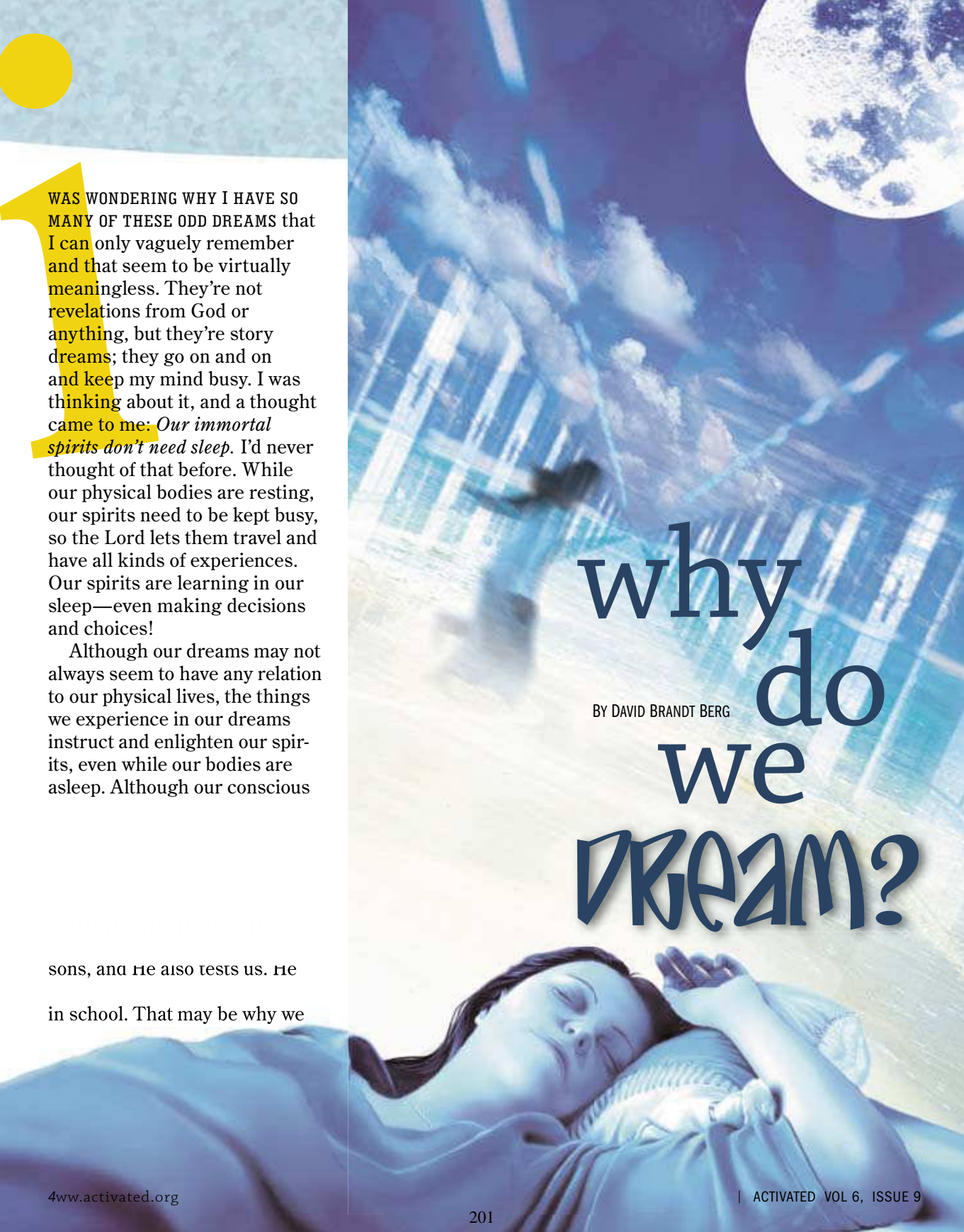




1 WAS WONDERING WHY I HAVE SO MANY OF THESE ODD DREAMS that I can only vaguely remember and that seem to be virtually meaningless. They're not revelations from God or anything, but they're story dreams; they go on and on and keep my mind busy. I was thinking about it, and a thought came to me: *Our immortal spirits don't need sleep.* I'd never thought of that before. While our physical bodies are resting, our spirits need to be kept busy, so the Lord lets them travel and have all kinds of experiences. Our spirits are learning in our sleep—even making decisions and choices!

Although our dreams may not always seem to have any relation to our physical lives, the things we experience in our dreams instruct and enlighten our spirits, even while our bodies are asleep. Although our conscious

sons, and He also tests us. He in school. That may be why we



why do we DREAM?

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

sometimes have nightmares: While our bodies sleep, our spirits are battling spiritual forces. I think the Lord allows that to see what we will do, and what effect it will have on us, whether or not we will make the right decisions, and whether or not we will call on Him for help.

That's what came to me when I was wondering why we have dreams that don't seem to have any particular significance or meaning, and yet we remember at least parts of them. Those dreams enlighten our spirits, even though we may not grasp the meaning with our conscious minds.

Our conscious minds are not always entirely aware of our dreams, but sometimes we catch fleeting glimpses of those spiritual experiences and remember them. They're retained in our memory just long enough that when we wake up, we still

ences of the past or taking trips into the future. So the Lord is good to us by helping us forget the past and not know too much about the future. We can thank the Lord for that!

Some people seem to have a stronger spiritual consciousness than others, and are able to translate their dreams from the spiritual realm to the physical, from their subconscious to their conscious mind, so that they can remember them. I remember lots of dreams very vividly, even though sometimes they seem to have no particular significance or meaning.

Actually, nothing is ever lost to the subconscious mind. Our subconscious minds are *always* thinking, and that's where everything is registered permanently. Our subconscious minds—our spirits, in other words—remember everything.

It's a gift, in a sense, to remember the good things we experience in our dreams, but it's also undoubtedly a blessing that we don't remember *everything* that happens in our sleep. It would be too much of a strain for our minds to be burdened with all that, when we have the present to worry about. Most of us have got enough to think about today!

With those dreams—I think I would call them “learning dreams”—we don't necessarily have to remember them all, because they're designed and intended to enlighten, to teach our spirits. On the other hand, when we're faced with having to make a decision when we're awake that we have already encountered in a dream, we are probably more likely to make the right one because we have learned that lesson while we were sleeping. I believe it!

Thank God for dreams! They're part of our spiritual education, as well as divine guidance in the physical if the Lord knows that we need to remember and apply them for some reason. But we've got enough to think about as we go about our daily activities without having to think about and relive these spirit trips in our waking hours. If we did, we'd wind up living in a dream world. We'd become so spiritually minded that we wouldn't be any earthly good!

“In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, then [God] opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction” (Job 33:15–16). •

"There lay one of the very scenes from my dream—the small town and marina, the likes of which I had never seen anywhere else!"

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

THE MOUNTAIN ISLAND VILLA DREAM



ISRAEL, DECEMBER 6, 1970: I keep having the same dream about an island with a mountain on it. On top of the mountain is a large villa, or mansion, and at the foot of the mountain is a cove with a beach.

It seems like I'm always having a problem getting to and from this island. Sometimes I'm struggling to catch a boat, and sometimes I'm in the water, swimming. Usually I have a hard time climbing from the beach to the villa. When I say mountain, I don't mean a snowcapped mountain, nor do I mean a little hill. It's only about one or two thousand feet high, but precipitous, and you really have to do some rugged climbing to get up the path that leads from the beach to the top.

From the top there is a gorgeous view of the blue water, and I can see the mainland off in the distance. Not far away is a small resort town.

Last night the dream was clearer than it's ever been. This time we drove in from the rear of the villa, and a fairly short, refined, middle-aged woman with curly neck-length blonde hair invited us in.

EN ROUTE FROM ISRAEL TO ENGLAND, APRIL 19, 1971: After deciding to stop off in Cyprus, I had a flash that we might find the mountain island villa there. In fact, my wife, Maria, had so much faith that my recurring dream was based on reality that

she asked people and looked for clues everywhere we went.

We eventually heard of Kyrenia, a small resort town on the north shore that seemed to fit the description. Everyone we talked to about it urged us to go there, saying it was the most beautiful part of Cyprus, but we were so busy packing and winding up our affairs in preparation for our departure in two or three days that I didn't see how we could possibly have time to run around chasing rainbows. Maria insisted, however, and now I'm glad she did!

Despite my reluctance, we took an early morning bus to Kyrenia. We rolled quietly through the beautiful countryside until we caught our first glimpse of the north shore, where the mountains meet the sea. As we wound along the mountainsides above the bright blue Mediterranean, our eyes eagerly darted in every direction, hoping to spot the villa in my dream—but no such villa.

Finally we crawled through the narrow streets of Kyrenia, an old fishing village that is now a tourist destination. As we walked toward the water looking for a scenic place to eat lunch, our eyes caught sight of the ancient castle of Kyrenia, towering out of the water, and we decided to investigate.

Castles and castle societies have always interested me, and we were soon fascinated with this old crusader fortress and its network of passageways, meeting rooms, dining halls, soldiers' barracks, chapels, security towers and turrets, gates and fortifications. At last we came out on the top of the wall, seeking a way back down to the waterfront.

There, before my widened eyes, lay one of the very scenes from my dream—the small town and marina, the likes of which I had never seen anywhere else!

I remembered well the shops and cafés along the boardwalk on my left, and all the small boats docked on the right. Even the chairs and tables and umbrellas of the little sidewalk cafés

were familiar to me, as well as the milling tourists and the men wearing little blue hats, who I had thought in my dream were sailors, but who turned out to be UN troops keeping the peace between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Despite the fact that I had now seen the town and harbor from my dream, it was still hard to believe that the villa actually existed. I think I feared disappointment as much as anything, so was almost afraid to look any further.

But I knew exactly which direction the villa was from the harbor, along with the approximate distance, as this was all very clear to me in the dream, and I finally decided that a quick search would settle the matter one way or the other.

We hailed a taxi, and told the driver that we would give him directions as we went. We explained that we were looking for a large mountaintop villa, somewhere to our left and overlooking the sea. He insisted that there was no such place, but we were determined and had him keep driving. When I felt that we had gone too far, we stopped at a café to ask for directions.

How do you tell people that you're looking for a place that you saw in a dream, and that belongs to someone you met in a dream? I didn't exactly know, but I began describing the place in detail to the manager of the café, his waiter, and the taxi driver. They discussed it at length between themselves, but couldn't think of anything.

Then I described the owner of the house in detail—a fairly short woman in her fifties with blonde hair, who spoke English with an accent and lived alone. The description must have rung a bell, because suddenly our driver exclaimed, "Oh, yes! That would have to be Mrs. Goldstein! I'd forgotten about her place. It's the only one on that side, and you can't even see it from the road." So we clambered back into the cab, and were on our way.

Only a mile or two from the town, he turned onto a small dirt road, and I immediately recognized it as the very road on which we had



approached the villa in my last dream. Sure enough, there was the villa!

There was a light in the window, so hardly knowing what to expect, we told our driver to wait as we knocked. The door opened, and Mrs. Goldstein greeted us—the very woman I had met in the dream!

Of course, how to introduce ourselves was somewhat of a problem. By this time it was not the best hour to make a social call to a stranger, but we gave our names and told her a little about ourselves, trying not to sound entirely crazy. We rambled on for a while, talking about everything else but why we had come. Finally I took the plunge!

There's that frightening moment when you stand teetering on the tip of the diving board, high above the water, wondering if you are going to hit it just right and if you will survive. Then

"On top
of the
mountain
is a large
villa, or
mansion,
and at the
foot of the
mountain
is a cove
with a
beach."

Nicole,
Maria,
Mrs.
Goldstein,
and David

you lean forward, and gravity takes over. There is that thrilling, suspenseful moment as you fall through the air, not knowing exactly what awaits you—and then you hit the water with a splash! Suddenly you’re gliding deep below the surface and curving beautifully upward, bursting out into the air with a sense of great achievement and satisfaction. It wasn’t as bad as you thought it was going to be! You made it! You came through safe and sound to live and try again!



Still not knowing what her reaction would be, I finally told Mrs. Goldstein that I had first seen her home and met her in a dream. And believe it or not, she accepted that explanation and received us into her home with the warmest of hospitality!

She introduced us to Nicole, a friend of hers who happened to be visiting that evening and had overheard the whole story.

The conversation moved on to exciting accounts of other supernatural experiences that each of us had had.

Here we were talking to the very lady in the very house I had seen in a dream, and we had earlier eaten supper at the very village I had also seen in the dream! We talked on into the night, and Mrs. Goldstein insisted on taking us to a nearby hotel so we could return in the morning and meet some of her other friends. I felt like I was still in the same dream, and later that night I asked Maria to pinch me to see if I would wake up—but I wasn’t sleeping. We had actually *been* there!

The next day, after visiting again with Nicole and a few other friends, we finally had some time alone with Mrs. Goldstein. I had waited for this chance, as I wanted to talk with her about the real purpose of our visit.

As the golden sunset reflected on the beautiful water below, I got up the courage to ask the big question. “Mrs. Goldstein, maybe you can tell us, why are we here? It must be very important to the Lord, because I’ve been having this dream since long before I even knew I would visit Cyprus.”

Mrs. Goldstein broke down and wept. “I lost my husband three years ago,” she replied, “and I’ve been very lonely ever since. I think God did it for *my* sake. He must have put you on my spiritual plane or channel, so that you could come and help me in some way.”

I knew that meant she hoped we would pray for her, and we did. We also told her how much the Lord must love her to have brought us so far to see her. She confessed that she’d considered suicide, but had been stopped by fear of death. We told her of the love of Jesus, and that it was His love that had brought us to her, His love that had done many miracles in our lives, and His love that we live to share with others. Mrs. Goldstein listened attentively, and finally opened her hurting heart to the healing balm of the Lord’s love.

What lengths God will go to in order to lead us to those He wants to reach with His love! His love and care know no bounds! •

FORBIDDEN PLANET

A MOVIE WITH A MEANING

BY DAVID
BRANDT BERG

FORBIDDEN PLANET (1956) WAS AN EARLY SCI-FI FILM AND ONE THAT I CONSIDER A SCI-FI MASTERPIECE, with more significant meaning than almost any other sci-fi.

It begins with a spaceship from Earth traveling to a strange planet where 20 years earlier another spaceship had crashed. Everyone on board had been presumed dead, but recently there had been some rather odd radio signals from this planet, so the crew of this second spaceship went to investigate.

Once they land on the planet, they discover a beautiful palatial villa where a scientist and his beautiful daughter live. Attached to the villa is a gorgeous garden where there are all kinds of tame animals, including ones that are normally savage.

The race of very intelligent beings that had originally inhabited the planet

had mysteriously died off, but all of their machinery was still running. The most amazing machine of all was the “thought machine,” through which they could create things by more-or-less wishing them.

The scientist had figured out how to use the thought machine, and it was all very nice in the beginning when he created things like lovely meals and pet tigers. But things got out of control when he became jealous of his daughter’s love for the space captain, and the machine began creating demons from the imaginings of his evil heart and jealous spirit—like an enraged tiger that tried to kill his daughter and the monster that eventually killed the scientist himself.

It seemed that the highly developed civilization that had once existed on the planet had done about the same thing in using monsters to protect it

from invaders, but the monsters turned on the people who'd created them and wiped them out too.

Probably without realizing it, the moviemakers were illustrating a spiritual truth. God's Word teaches that if we entertain a fear, it will come upon us (Job 3:25). So spiritually speaking, those things *can* happen.

Some people take drugs or flip out in some way, and they slip over the border into the spirit world where the present material world is no longer their reality. Some of them go crazy with schizophrenia or whatnot, and their demons and nightmares and hallucinations become real to them. It starts in their imagination, but once they slip over the border into that spirit world in their mind, it all becomes very real and horrifying, because they don't have Jesus and His protection.

The Lord says we shouldn't think about the dark side at all. "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Whenever thoughts of evil come to mind, we should call on Jesus for protection. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on Earth" (Matthew 28:18), so if you have Jesus, you've got all that power. All the devils of Hell, including Satan himself, are subject to your power because you have the power of Christ. So "resist the Devil and he"—as well as the evil thoughts he inspires—"will flee from you" (James 4:7).

This problem with evil thoughts entered the world in the Garden of Eden, when first Eve and then Adam ate the forbidden fruit of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil"

(Genesis 2:16–17; 3:1–6). This movie's title seems to be a play on words, with that in mind.

Science is sitting at the foot of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and plucking off its fruit, but the trouble is that some of it's good but some of it's bad. The evil imaginations of evil minds *can* be brought to life by science, and some of them have been. What is about the most evil thing that science has ever created?—The atomic bomb! But now they have created bombs that are many times more powerful than those that wiped out Hiroshima and Nagasaki—horror bombs that could wipe out whole countries!

God says, "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). You can't create such evil just to use against your enemies, because the inviolable law of the Bible is that the sower is the one who will reap the consequences. Those who have sowed the wind may very well reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7). Revelation chapter 18—which seems to be describing a coming nuclear war—says, "In one hour such great riches came to nothing. ... Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore" (Revelation 18:17,21).

The Bible admonishes us, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). In other words, we need to watch the imaginations of our hearts, lest they turn evil and become realities that can destroy us. This is why we all need Jesus and the Holy Spirit abiding in us, and why we need to fill our hearts and minds with the light of God's Word. Then we will dwell in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty, where no evil can befall us (Psalm 91:1,10). □

**PROBABLY
WITHOUT
REALIZING
IT, THE
MOVIEMAKERS
WERE
ILLUSTRATING
A SPIRITUAL
TRUTH**

FLATLANDERS

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELT! We are about to leave the drab and restrictive domain of the Flatlander and delve into the thrilling realm of the spirit world!

Come now and tune in to the mysterious dimension of eternal realities: the

living world of forever rather than the dying world of now, the everlasting realm of eternity rather than the temporary space of time, the fascinating dimension that is largely unseen by us in mortal flesh, rather than this mundane plane, which is so temporary.

The Bible tells us to set our affection on things above—Heaven—not on things on the earth, for the things which are seen are only for a time, but the things which are not seen are eternal (Colossians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 4:18).

All God's children of faith since the beginning of time have been looking for an unseen world, a "city which has foundations"—eternal foundations—"whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Not having received all that God had promised them but having seen those promises from afar, they remained strangers and pilgrims on the earth because they sought a better, heavenly, country.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, and He has prepared just such a place for them, the awesome Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, which will come down from God, out of the heavens, to rest on planet Earth (Hebrews 11:13–16; Revelation 21:2–3).

This is the hope of all ages: that now unseen eternal world where we shall dwell with Him forever, the heavenly city described in the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, and mentioned in many other places throughout the Scriptures. That's what we're all looking forward to—not pie in the sky, but literal Heaven on Earth.

But God's invisible heavenly kingdom is already in operation and existence, here and now! It not only surrounds us but is within us. As Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

Science tells us that in order to exist, all material objects must have four dimensions: length, breadth, and depth, which comprise space, and one more—time. Einstein brought out clearly in his theories of relativity that time and space are definitely related. Nothing can occupy material space without time; things must have time to exist.

I'm holding in my hand an amazing little postcard, a beautiful underwater scene of God's gorgeous and colorful creation. Now

the strange thing is that as I look at this postcard nearly edge-on, I can really only see about two dimensions, length and breadth. I am in the land of the Flatlander who can only understand his own little world of two dimensions, with no depth whatsoever. He can't see anything else. And as I look at this card edge-on, I can't see anything else either. If I were a Flatlander, I would insist that there was no other world beyond my two dimensions, just because I couldn't see it.

But as I move in a direction unknown to the Flatlander so that I'm looking down on the postcard from above, I find myself in an amazing world indeed, because this is a three-dimensional postcard. Suddenly it seems to have an altogether new dimen-

sion, depth. I seem to be able to see into the picture and observe some objects in front of others. A reed is growing in front of a lovely red coral, fish are swimming in between, and the pebbled bottom fades away into the distance, even beyond my new 3D vision.

So now we have entered a new world, beyond the scope of the poor Flatlander who can only see two directions, if he could exist at all, and we are looking in a new direction which opens a whole new beautiful world to explore. We have become like a god to the Flatlander, a being entirely beyond his comprehension.

We are now above his lowly plane of only two dimensions, and because he can

neither look up nor down, we have passed completely out of his sight. Unless we stoop to his lowly level, he cannot see us at all, much less understand our new dimension. For him to be able to see us, we have to get on the exact same plane as him; the moment we vary the slightest fraction out of his plane we are truly “out of sight”!

Our 3D world is one of almost unlimited space, so much larger and greater than his that he could not possibly begin to understand it or us. Ours is a whole new world, marvelous and magnificent, that the Flatlander does not even know exists, simply because he cannot see it.

Even if it were possible to show it to him, it would be so beyond his two-dimensional understanding that he would probably be like the old country farmer, who, the first time he saw a giraffe, said, “There just ain’t no such thing!”

The fact of the matter is that the dear little Flatlander, in his pride, hates to admit that there’s anything beyond his level. Poor fellow! How limited his vision, how narrow his realm, how restricted his scope of operation! Since he can’t go anywhere else, he just hates to admit that there is anywhere else. And he is particularly furious with anyone who claims to have been lifted up into that other world and caught a glimpse of what is beyond his own little domain. But just because he doesn’t believe in a realm that is invisible to him, that doesn’t make it not so!

And so it is with what the Bible calls the “natural man” who refuses to believe that anything such as a fifth dimension, a spirit

world, could possibly exist, simply because he’s never seen it or been there. “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him” (1 Corinthians 2:14). And so he says, “There just ain’t no such thing,” simply because he never saw it before.

To dismiss the entire spiritual realm like that would be just as absurd as if you were to say, “I don’t believe that New York City or London exist because I’ve never been there.” How ridiculous can you get!

The Bible is full of evidence, stories, and positive declarations of the existence of this fifth dimension, the spirit world. Some of its immortal characters, having passed on into it through death, even came back to tell us about it. Others were lifted up into the realm of the spirit to get a brief glimpse or vision of it, and many received messages from there. And some of us have even been there! I have, so I know it exists.

And you can know too! If you really want to know the truth and are willing to admit that others have something you haven’t got but would like, and if you will humbly confess your limitations and ask God and His children to help you find that whole new world, you too can know the indescribable joys, the beautiful scenes, the delightful sounds, and the ecstatic feelings of that marvelous heavenly realm! It’s such a wonderful, happy place; it’s “out of this world”! You’ll love it! Why not try it? What have you got to lose? ←


**DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994)
WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY
INTERNATIONAL.**



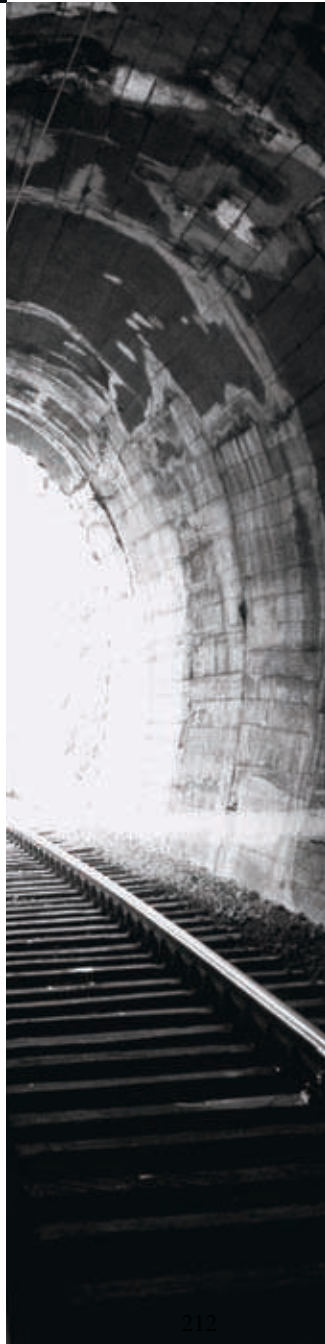
“Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.”—Thomas Moore (1779–1852)

My dear husband wasn't afraid to move on, and if you have received Jesus as your Savior you won't be afraid either, because you'll know that He will be with you. Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He says, “I will be with you.”⁷ He will be there to comfort you.

Never has God's love proved so great, never His mercy so sure and His grace so abundant as during the week after my loss. I praise Him with all my heart for fulfilling His Word and for His faithfulness.

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS AN EVANGELIST, RADIO MINISTRY PIONEER, AND THE MOTHER OF FAMILY INTERNATIONAL FOUNDER DAVID BRANDT BERG. 

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:13
2. John 11:25–26
3. 1 Corinthians 15:4
4. John Rippon, 1787
5. Isaiah 43:2
6. John 10:10
7. Psalm 23:4
8. Revelation 21:4
9. Romans 8:18
10. Psalm 30:5
11. 2 Corinthians 4:17



TEARS IN HEAVEN

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

The Bible doesn't say there aren't going to be any tears in heaven. When we get to heaven and face God, we will no doubt all have a few tears to shed for mistakes we made and opportunities we missed and loved ones that we'll wish we'd loved more and been kinder to. We will all have something to be sorry about and ashamed of then.

But isn't God wonderfully loving and merciful? He says He's going to wipe away all those tears. “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”⁸

The Bible says, “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.”⁹ When we think about that, it helps us bear some of the things we have to go through now.

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”¹⁰ We need to keep our eyes on Jesus and the end of life's road. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”¹¹

**HUMILITY
AND
SIMPLICITY**



Where would we be without holes? Where would people be without seven holes in their heads? (Count 'em!) If it weren't for your seven holes, you couldn't eat or taste or smell or hear or see or even breathe. And actually, you've got lots more holes than that, because every little pore in your skin is a hole. Without those little pores, your skin couldn't breathe and you couldn't sweat. Without holes, you wouldn't have any hair either, because every hair grows in a little hole called a follicle.

Holes are an almost endless subject because there are so many of them! It seems like *everything* is composed of holes. Your whole body is full of holes. Your blood vessels are holes, your lungs are holes, your heart's got big holes in it for the blood to flow in and out, and your navel is a hole without which you couldn't have been born. Wow! There are so many important holes! We're really *full* of holes!

The whole world is full of holes! If it weren't for holes, there wouldn't be any pretty trees or flowers or vegetables or fruit, because they all grow in holes in the ground and they're full of holes: The sap in the trees flows through holes, and the juice in the leaves flows through holes.

What is a house but a hole in which you live? And if your house didn't have window holes, you couldn't look out or let the light and air in. Without holes, there wouldn't be any taps for water, and you'd get awfully thirsty. And worst of all, the house wouldn't even have a door, so you couldn't get into it in the first place—or if you were inside, you couldn't get out! How many other useful holes can you think of?

The earth itself is a hollow sphere full of fire, and every now and then the fire comes out through holes called volcanoes. All the seas are great big holes in the ground full of water, and all the lakes and springs and wells are holes, too. We get diamonds and other jewels and all kinds of minerals—gold and silver and copper and iron and tin and lots of others—out of holes in the ground called mines. We wouldn't have any of these useful and valuable things if it weren't for holes. The world is one great big ball of holes!

And if you could look *real* close, you would see that everything is made up of very little holes full of energy, called atoms. So everything is *mostly* holes with just a little bit of something around them.

Everything is more *nothing* than anything—like the universe is mostly space. The universe is a great big hole full of nothing, except for few things called stars and planets and moons and things like that, which are all very, very small compared to all that nothing called space that surrounds them. The universe is such a great big hole that we don't even know where it ends. So much nothing!

The Bible says that God even hung the world on nothing (Job 26:7), and that He made it out of nothing (Genesis chapter 1; Hebrews 11:3). So you see, there is a lot more nothing than anything else, and everything is made mostly out of nothing. God makes everything out of nothing—nothing surrounded by Him!

If you can believe in God, then *anything* is possible, because He makes everything out of nothing—even you and me! We're nothing and we're impossible except for God. He takes our nothing and makes it something. He's like the circle around our nothing that makes it something. With God all around you, even your nothing can be something. In fact, you can be almost anything!

So the next time you see a hole, remember it wouldn't even be a hole if there wasn't something around it—and you're just like that hole! If you feel like nothing or a big zero or only a hole, just surround yourself with God's something and you can become a very useful and important little hole—nothing surrounded by God, out of which He made everything. You could be almost anything if you're a good hole—a nothing that's got God around it—because God is in the business of making somethings out of nothings.

There's no end to nothing. There's always an end to something, but there's never an end to nothing. So if you'll just be nothing, you can even be bigger than something.

The poet Emily Dickinson once wrote:

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog,
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

All the big somebodies
wouldn't be anybody if it
weren't for us nobodies; all

Continued on page 10

David Brandt Berg

HOLY HOLES

the people that think they're something wouldn't be anything if it weren't for us nothings!

And do you know what love is? It's a hole that needs to be filled—plus something to fill it with, like you and me and Jesus.

There are square holes and round holes and all kinds of holes, and it takes all kinds of

pegs to fill them, so whatever kind of peg you are, somewhere there's a hole where you'll fit. And no matter what kind of hole you are, God's got you pegged!

All holes are nothing made for something, so if you feel like nothing, there's something for you somewhere. Are you a hole? Then God's got something for you!

Folks that aren't holes can't have anything, because they already think they're something, when they are really nothing. The Bible says: "If anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Galatians 6:3), and God "has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty" (Luke 1:53).

answers to your questions



I'm presently facing a decision that will have a major impact on my life. I've prayed for God to show me what He knows will work out best, but how will He do that? How can I make sure I get His answer?

If you've asked the Lord to help you make the right decision, you've already taken the first step in what is essentially a three-step process.

Second, you need to determine in your heart that you will believe and *accept* God's answer—even if it's contrary to your own reasoning or desires in the matter. In other words, you need to sincerely want *Him* to make the decision according to what He knows will work out best for you and everyone else involved. This is often the hardest part because it requires you to surrender your own will to God, in favor of His.

Once you have done that, you are in the position to, third, receive His answer. If you sincerely ask God to show you what is His will for you in any given situation, He will—and He will probably do it through one or more of the following seven means, which

are listed here in order of importance and reliability:

Number 1: God's Word. The first place we look to find the will of God is in His Words recorded in the Bible. He has put the *basic* answers to nearly every question or problem we will face in life right there. When God speaks to us out of His Word, we know it's right! Bible study guides such as *Bible Basics* and *Keys to Happier Living* can be helpful when we don't know what the Bible has to say about a certain topic relevant to decisions we face.

Number 2: The Voice of God's Word. Have you ever been thinking or praying about something when the Lord brought to mind a certain verse or passage from the Scriptures that shed His light on the issue? That's what is known as hearing the voice of God's Word. Or have you ever been reading the Bible when all of a sudden a verse or passage spoke directly to you, as though it had been written just for you in regard to some situation you face? That is also

If a hole is already full, God can't put anything into it. Everything falls out when He tries to put something into it, because it's already so full of something that it can't hold anything more. You've got to be a *hole to hold* something. Who ever heard of trying to fill anything but a hole?

God loves holes. Scientists say, "Nature abhors a

vacuum." But I say, "God *loves* holes, because He loves to fill them up." Are you a good hole full of nothing? Then God can fill you with something and make you a very happy hole full of anything God wants to fill you with!

You've got to be nothing to be something, so please be one of God's little holes, will you? Let's be holy too, okay?

Are you a hole? Then you're holy. Let's all be holy holes!

And do you know what? Jesus even called Himself a hole: the Door (John 10:9). He is the Hole you've got to get through to get into His Father's house, and He is the *only* Hole you can go through (John 14:6). Have you entered the Father's house through Jesus, the Hole, the only Door? □

the voice of the Word. The Lord applies His Word to you personally, and you get the answer you were seeking.

Number 3: Direct Revelation. God also speaks to us through messages received by the gift of prophecy, or through dreams or visions. If such revelations are truly from God, they won't contradict His written Word. You have to measure your revelation against the Word. It's wonderful to be able to get our answers straight from the Lord, and then confirm those answers with His Word, because then we know we're on the right track and can proceed in full faith. That settles it! We've heard from Heaven!

Number 4: Godly Counselors. The Bible tells us that "in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14; 24:6). When you're trying to find God's will in a given situation, it is often wise to ask for the counsel and opinions of others who are strong in the Lord, wise in His ways, and whose lives show the good fruit of following Him

closely (Matthew 7:15–20).

Number 5: Circumstances and Conditions (also known as "open and closed doors"). If something is God's will, He will usually open a door of opportunity that makes it possible. Or if something is *not* His will, He will often show us that by creating or allowing circumstances and conditions that stop us from doing it. Circumstances and conditions, when relied on solely, are generally a poor means of finding the will of God. They can, however, provide a confirmation of what the Lord has indicated through the other more reliable means.

Number 6: Strong Impressions or Feelings (also known as "the witness of the Spirit" or "burdens"). Feelings can be deceiving, but if God wants you to take a certain course of action, He will often give you an inner conviction that that is the right thing to do. Or if He *doesn't* want you to do something, His Spirit will give you a warning not to. Either way, He gives you a certain faith and peace that you're doing what

He knows is best. It's best to then confirm this with one or more of the other ways of finding God's will.

Number 7: Specific, Pre-determined Signs in Answer to Your Requests (also known as "fleeces"). You can sometimes check or double-check your decision by asking God to give you a specific sign, like Gideon did with his fleece, when he wanted a confirmation that he'd gotten God's instructions straight (Judges 6:36–40).

Above all, believe that God loves you and is always ready, willing, and able to help you make the right decision—the one He knows will make you and others happiest in the long run. Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened for you" (Matthew 7:7). That's a promise!

(For a more complete explanation of how to use these means to make wise, godly decisions, write for *God Online*—a collection of articles by David Brandt Berg that includes "Seven Ways to Find God's Will"—as well as the booklet *Making Great Decisions*. For more on the gift of prophecy, specifically, write for *Hearing from Heaven*.)

LOVE and HUMILITY

By David Brandt Berg

You've got to admit, a big part of love is humility. It takes humility to be affectionate and to receive affection. If you want to fall in love and accept real love, you have to be humble enough to let go of your pride and receive that love.

This is true even of our relationship with the Lord. When we first hear that God loves us so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die in our place, we have to humble ourselves to receive God's love. Receiving salvation is a humbling experience. Those who humble themselves receive not only forgiveness, but also an infilling of love they could never have imagined. But those who are too proud miss out on both, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

Humility and love are inseparable. The truly loving are truly humble, and the truly humble are truly loving. You cannot have real love and not be humble, and you cannot have genuine humility without a lot of love. Pride's fear of failure or refusal also prevents us from reaching out to and loving others as much as we should. Not so with humility. Humility has love and faith without fear (1 John 4:18). Love doesn't care what other people think; it just loves in spite of what they think. So be humble—and love! ■

course not going to ask others to do anything that is hurtful or harmful. Whether we're doing the serving or others are serving us, it's all going to be loving and we're all going to benefit. What we ask of others may sometimes be a sacrifice for them, but by the same token, we will be serving them too and sometimes sacrificing for them, so it will be a two-way street.

Jesus said He "came not to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). So what does that make Jesus?—A servant. Jesus "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" (Philippians 2:7).

So Jesus was a servant, and He is still our servant. He is waiting to do our bidding. He says, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find;

knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). In other words, He says, "I'll do your bidding. What do you want? I'm your servant and I will do whatever you want." So if Jesus loves us so much that He is willing to be our servant, how much more should we follow His example and serve each other in His love?

The Bible says that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21), and Jesus also said, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). His Father sent Him as a servant. Jesus had the love and humility to do that for us, and He asks that we follow His example. That takes a lot of humility, but with such sacrifices come great rewards. ■

FEEDING READING

Humility with one another

FOLLOW JESUS' EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY.

Matthew 21:5
John 13:5,12–15
Luke 22:27
Philippians 2:5–8

OTHER EXAMPLES OF HUMILITY:

1 Samuel 25:40–41
Mark 7:25–30
Luke 7:2–7
John 1:27

LOVE AND HONOR OTHERS.

Romans 12:10
Romans 12:16
Philippians 2:3

SUBMIT HUMBLY TO ONE ANOTHER.

Luke 22:25–26
Ephesians 5:21
1 Peter 5:5

BE HUMBLE WHEN POINTING OUT OTHERS' ERRORS.

Luke 6:42
Galatians 6:1
2 Timothy 2:25





IT PAYS TO BE AS A LITTLE CHILD. In fact, Jesus said, “Unless you ... become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 18:3) and, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). We’re to be like little children—loving, sweet, simple believers, in childlike faith believing and receiving all that the Lord has for us.

Children are samples of the citizenry of Heaven, like little angels dropped from the sky. They’re so fresh from Heaven that they understand prayer and other spiritual matters better than most adults. They talk to God and He talks to them. It’s that simple. They have no

problem at all getting His ear with their pure, simple, childlike faith. It is given to children to be rich in faith. Faith just comes naturally to them. They have faith to believe anything God says, and with them nothing is impossible.

The problem with many grown-ups is that they know too much. They’ve been educated out of their childlike faith. But there are others of trusting childlike faith who are daily doing things that doubting intellectuals say can’t be done. So be like a little child, and anything wonderful can happen! •

CHILDLIKE FAITH

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

PARADOX

Jesus had no servants, yet they called Him Master.
He had no degree, yet they called Him Teacher.
He had no medicines, yet they called Him Healer.
He had no army, yet kings feared Him.
He won no military battles, yet He conquered the world.
He committed no crime, yet they crucified Him.
He was buried in a tomb, yet He lives today.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN



**LOVE
AND
COMPASSION**

By David Brandt Berg

Declaration of Love!

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

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 so 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" (Matthew 22:37–39).

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 Samaritan did. (See Luke 10:25–37.) 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

Jesus
had
nothing
material
to share
with His
disciples,

be proven without some 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” (Galatians 5:6). “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” (1 John 3:17–18).

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” (John 15:13). 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” (Galatians 6:7). 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” (Luke 6:38 *TLB*).

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*.)



CHANGE THE WORLD

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG



Change your life, your
home, your family, and
you've changed a whole
world—your world!

BACK IN 1913, a man about 20 years of age took a walking tour in the rural province of Provence, in southern France. Provence was a rather barren and desolate area at the time, as it had been almost totally denuded of trees due to overcutting and too-intensive agriculture. The soil had then been washed away by the rains, as there were no trees to hold it in place. The whole region had become barren and dry.

Little farming was being done now because of its poor condition. The villages were old and run down, and most of the villagers had deserted the countryside. Even the wildlife had fled, as without trees the protective undergrowth had thinned, food was scarce, and few streams remained.

The hiker stopped one night at the humble cottage of a shepherd, who, although gray-haired and in his mid-fifties, was still very stalwart. The young man spent the night there, enjoying the shepherd's hospitality, and ended up staying several days with him.

The visitor observed with some curiosity that the shepherd spent his evening hours sorting nuts by lamplight—acorns, hazelnuts, chestnuts, and others. He very carefully examined them and culled out the bad ones, and when he finished his evening's work, he put the good nuts in a knapsack.

Then, as he led his sheep to graze the next day, he would plant the nuts along the way. While his sheep were pasturing in one area, the shepherd would take his staff, walk several paces, and then thrust the end of the staff into the ground, making a small hole. He would then drop in one of his nuts and use his foot to cover it over with earth. Then he would walk several paces more, push his staff into the dry ground, and drop in another nut. He spent all his daylight hours walking over this region of Provence as he grazed his sheep, each day covering a different area where there were few trees, planting nuts.

Watching this, the young man wondered what in the world this shepherd was trying to do, and he finally asked him.

"I'm planting trees," the shepherd replied.

"But why? It will be years and years before these trees ever get to where they could do you any good! You might not even live long enough to see them grow!"

"Yes," the shepherd replied, "But some day they'll do *somebody* some good, and they'll help to restore this dry land. I may never see it, but perhaps my children will."

The young man marveled at the shepherd's foresight and unselfishness—that he was willing to prepare the land for future generations, even though he might never see the results or reap the benefits himself.

Twenty years later, when in his forties, the hiker once again visited this area and was astounded at what he saw. One great valley was completely covered with a beautiful natural forest of all kinds of trees. They were young trees, of course, but trees nevertheless. Life had sprung forth all over the valley! The grass had grown much greener, shrubbery and wildlife had returned, the soil was moist again, and farmers were again cultivating their crops.

He wondered what had happened to the old shepherd, and to his amazement found that he was still alive, hale and hearty, still living in his little cottage—and still sorting his nuts each evening.

The visitor then learned that a delegation from the French Parliament had come down from Paris recently to see this new forest of trees, which to them looked like a miraculous new natural forest. They learned that it had, over the years, been planted by this one shepherd, who day by day as he was watching his sheep, diligently planted nuts. The delegation was so impressed and grateful to this shepherd for having reforested this entire area single-handedly that they persuaded Parliament to give him a special pension.

The visitor said he was amazed at the change, not only in the beautiful trees, but also in the revived agriculture, the renewed wildlife, and the beauti-



You may not be able to change the whole world, but you can change your part of the world

ful lush grass and shrubbery. The little farms were thriving, and the villages seemed to have come to life again. What a contrast from when he had visited there 20 years before, when the villages had been run down and abandoned!

Now all was thriving, just because of one man's foresight, one man's diligence, one man's patience, one man's sacrifice, one man's faithfulness just to do what one man could do, day by day, day in and day out for a number of years.

So if you're sometimes discouraged with the world the way it is, don't give up! We read that great empires and governments, armies, and wars change the course of history and the face of the earth, so sometimes we're discouraged and think, *Who am I? What can I do? It all seems so hopeless and impossible! It looks like there's nothing that one person can do to change things for the better, so what's the use of trying?*

But as proven by this humble shepherd, over a period of years one man can change the world! You may not be able to change the whole world, but you can change your part of the world. You can start with your own heart, your own mind, your own spirit, your own life, through receiving Jesus into your life and reading His Word and putting its principles into practice in your life. Change your life, your home, your family, and you've changed a whole world—*your* world!

Then you and your little family can start trying to change your neighbors and friends and the people you come in contact with from day to day. You can make a special effort to reach lonely, hungry, needy hearts who are seeking love, seeking truth, seeking they know not what, but seeking happiness—desperately seeking to satisfy their yearning hearts that are empty and barren and desolate for lack of the water of the Word and the warm sunshine of God's love.

You can start individually, personally, just you or your little family, planting seeds, one by one, in heart after heart, day by day, by doing loving deeds for others and telling them about Jesus. You could also give or recommend Christian materials to those you meet, to help them understand God's Word. Patiently plant the seeds of the truth into that empty hole of an empty heart, and trust the great, warm, loving sunshine of His love and the water of His Word to bring forth the miracle of new life.

It may seem only a tiny little bud at first, just a little sprig, just one insignificant little green shoot. What is that to the forest that's needed? Well, it's a beginning. It's the beginning of the miracle of new life, and it will thrive and grow and flourish and become great and strong, a whole new "tree," a whole new life, and maybe a whole new world! So why not try it?

If you're faithful to plant seeds of God's truth, like the old shepherd that the government rewarded for his efforts, God is going to reward you one of these days when you finally come to your reward! He's going to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord!"¹

You can change the world! Start today! Change your own life, change your family, change your home, change your neighbors, change your town, change your country. Change the world! ✠

(EXCERPTED FROM DAVID BRANDT BERG'S ORIGINAL ARTICLE BY THE SAME TITLE. THE FULL ARTICLE AND OTHERS ON A VARIETY OF THEMES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE BOOK *DARE TO BE DIFFERENT*.)

¹Matthew 25:21

GOD'S

ONLY LAW IS

LOVE!

**“The Law
was given
by Moses,
but grace
and truth
came by
Jesus
Christ”
(John 1:17 KJV).**

In the beginning, God created us to freely choose to love and obey Him as His grateful children. He preferred that our obedience to Him be out of love, and thus there were very few rules. Everything was to be done voluntarily, because we loved and respected Him and appreciated His love and care. That was God's original plan.

But as people became more and more disobedient and evil, God had to give them more and more stringent laws and regulations, which are found in the Old Testament, primarily the first five books of Moses. These laws were not made for the righteous, because truly good people don't harm or do wrong to their neighbors; their actions are governed by love and consideration. God's laws were made for the wrongdoers.

Because people didn't act out of love, God had to crack down with the law—rules for

the transgressors. But the rules couldn't actually save anyone; they only showed them where they were wrong. “No one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what the law commands. For the more we know of God's laws, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying them; His laws serve only to make us see that we are sinners” (Romans 3:20 TLB). “There is none righteous, no, not one! For all have sinned and fall short” (Romans 3:10,23).

The Old Testament Law was only our teacher, our instructor or “tutor,” as the Bible says, to show us that we're sinners, to make us realize that we need to go to God for mercy and forgiveness, so that we might be reconciled and receive His goodness through faith (Galatians 3:24).

Like any parent, God far prefers that His children will-

ingly and cheerfully obey Him and do what He asks simply because they love Him and want to please Him and do what's right. If a child only obeys because he's forced to obey or because of fear of punishment, that's no proof of the child's love for his parent.

When the religious leaders asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment in the Law, He replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

He then shocked them by saying, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:40). ("Law" refers to the five books of Moses, and "Prophets" to the other books written by the prophets of the Old Testament.) There were many hundreds of complicated, ritualistic, restrictive religious laws, but Jesus told them that they now only needed two: Love God, and love others. That's it! He said that was all the law they needed—love! And that's just as true today as it was then. If we truly love God and others, we're not going to be selfish, act irresponsibly, or do anything else that will hurt anybody.

Therefore Jesus' Law of Love frees us from the old Mosaic Law. God's only law is love, and as long as something is done in real, unselfish, sac-

rificial love—God's love—then it's lawful in God's eyes. The Bible says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love. . . . Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). Against pure love, unselfish sacrificial love for God and our fellow man, there is no law of God.

"For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14). Think about it—all the Law is fulfilled by one new and glorious commandment: Love! "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is [sums up] the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). We are to "owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8). If you act in love, you are fulfilling all the laws of God!

In many ways the Law of Love is actually more binding than the Mosaic Law—the hundreds of laws of the Old Testament, which are often summarized by the Ten Commandments—because it says that not only can you not do bad things to others, but that you've also got to love everybody. Under Jesus' Law of Love, we are to go beyond mere justice and righteousness; we are to have love and mercy and forgiveness.

Love is greater than righteousness, and mercy is greater than justice. We are now to treat others with love, mercy,

and kindness. In the Mosaic Law there was virtually no forgiving. It was "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20). Moses said that if someone knocked out our tooth, we were allowed to knock out his. But Jesus said that we should treat even those who harm us the way we would want them to treat us. This is God's love.

So the Law of Love is actually much stricter and more difficult to keep—in fact, it's impossible to keep without Jesus! If the old Law was impossible, then Jesus' Law of Love is even more impossible! That's why He says, "Without Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). You can't possibly keep His Law of Love without His power. Unless you have Jesus in your heart and God's love within you, you will never be able to truly love others as much as you love yourself. But once you have received Jesus, then His Spirit in you can help you do the humanly impossible: Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Do you have the Spirit of God's love living in your heart? Do you love the Lord and others as much as you do yourself? Do you "do to others as you would have them do unto you"? If so, you are free from the old Mosaic Law. Now all you must do is keep Jesus' Law of Love. ■

HOW CAN ONE PERSON MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way,
That even when I kneel to pray,
My prayers will be for others.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true,
And know that all I do for You
Has to be done for others.

Let self be crucified and slain
And buried deep, and all in vain
May efforts be to rise again—
Unless to live for others.

And when my work on Earth is done,
And my new work in Heaven begun,
May I forget the crown I've won
While thinking still of others.

Others, Lord, yes, others!—
Let this my motto be.
Help me to live for others,
That I may live like Thee.

Elizabeth A.
Fenley

for **OTHERS**

What does love look like? It has hands to help others. It has feet to go to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and sadness. It has ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.



God cares for people through people.



Even the little things you do can mean a lot: A little bit of love goes such a long way! The light of your smile, the kindness of your face, the influence of your life, can shed light on many and have an amazing effect on some people you think might be the least likely to be impressed.

When people feel your love and you tell them it's God's love, they can't help but think, "Maybe somebody up There does love me!" It can change their whole outlook on life.

So many people are searching for love! People everywhere are looking around for some little ray of hope, some salvation, some bright spot somewhere—a little love, a little mercy, someplace where they can find some relief. If you can show them that love exists, then they can believe that God exists, because "God is love!" (1 John 4:8).

—D.B.B.



Stephen Grellet was a French-born Quaker who died in the U.S. in 1855. Grellet would be unknown to the world today except for a short prayer he wrote, which lives on:

"I shall pass through this world but once. Any good that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now and not delay it. For I shall not pass this way again."

“**F**AITH COMES BY HEARING, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17)—and faith can even come from hearing *your* word, your testimony, your witness, your letter containing the Words of God to a friend, relative, or other interested party.

I’m reminded of a true story I heard when I was young, about a crippled boy named Tommy who lived in poverty with his aunt in a small third-story apartment of a rundown tenement on a busy city street. He was so severely handicapped that all he could do was lie helplessly in bed.

One day Tommy asked a newsboy friend of his to bring him the book about “the Man who went about everywhere doing good.” The newsboy searched and searched for this unnamed book, until one book dealer finally realized that Tommy must have been talking about the Bible and the story of Jesus. The newsboy scraped together what little money he had, and the kindly bookseller gave him a copy of the New Testament, which he took back to Tommy.

The two boys began to read that book together, and after a time Tommy understood the message of salvation it contained. He received Jesus as his Savior and decided that he, too, wanted to do good like the wonderful Man in the book. But Tommy was crippled and could not even leave his little apartment, so he prayed and asked Jesus to show him what he could do, and the Lord gave him an idea.

Tommy began to copy helpful verses from the Bible onto little pieces of paper, which he would then drop from his window to flutter to the busy street below. Passers-by would see them drifting down and out of curiosity pick them up and read the words from the Man who went

Love finds a way

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG



around everywhere doing good—Jesus Christ. Many were helped, encouraged, and comforted, and some were even saved through the simple ministry of this boy and his New Testament.

One day a wealthy businessman found Jesus through reading the verse in one of Tommy’s little notes. He later returned to the spot where he had found the scrap of paper that had led him to the Lord, hoping to find some clue as to how it got there. Then he noticed another little bit of paper floating down to the sidewalk. He watched as a poor, tired old woman stooped painfully to pick it up, and noticed her countenance brighten as she read it. There seemed to be new strength in her step as she journeyed on.

The businessman, now fixed to the spot, kept his eyes glued upward, determined to find the source. He had to wait a long time, for it took poor Tommy many painful minutes to scrawl even one verse on one of those pieces of paper. Suddenly the businessman’s eyes were drawn to a certain window as he saw a scrawny arm reach out to drop another piece of paper, like the one that had brought a whole new life to him. He carefully noted the location of the window,

dashed up the stairs of the tenement, and finally found Tommy’s humble abode.

The businessman and Tommy soon became good friends, and the businessman brought Tommy all the help and medical attention that he could. Then one day he asked Tommy if he would like to come and live with him in his palatial mansion outside the city.

Much to his new friend’s surprise, Tommy answered, “I’ll have to ask my Friend about that”—meaning Jesus.

The next day the businessman returned, eagerly seeking Tommy’s reply. Instead, Tommy asked him some rather surprising questions.

“Where did you say your home is?”

“Oh,” said the businessman, “it’s in the country, on a large and beautiful estate. You’ll have a room of your own, servants to care for you, delicious meals, a good bed, every comfort and attention, anything your heart desires, and my wife and I will love you dearly and care for you as our own son.”

Hesitantly, Tommy queried again, “Are there any people that would pass under my window?”

Surprised and somewhat baffled, the businessman replied, “Why, no, only

Someone
passes under
the window
of your life
every day.



an occasional servant, or perhaps the gardener. You don’t understand, Tommy, this is a gorgeous country estate, far from the tumult of the city. You’ll have quiet there and be able to rest and read and do whatever else you want, away from all this filth and pollution and noise and the busy throngs.”

After a long and thoughtful silence, Tom’s face looked very sad, for he hated to hurt his friend. Finally he said quietly but firmly, with tears in his eyes, “I’m sorry, but you see, I could never live anywhere where people don’t pass under my window.”

Here is the story of someone so helpless and so isolated that you might have thought he could never have had any opportunity to help others, but love found a way!

Someone passes under the window of your life every day. Has your love found a way to help them? Has Jesus shown you how you can help them? He will if you want to, no matter what the conditions or your limitations.

God has windows too, and He has promised that if you obey Him and open the window of your life to others, He “will open for you the windows of Heaven, and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). ↵



REAL

By David Brandt Berg

LOVE

how to

find it

how to

give it

how to

keep it

Love and happiness are like perfume: You cannot pour them on others without getting a few drops on yourself.

TO BE GENUINE AND LASTING, love must be based on a more enduring foundation than mere physical attraction or fleshly gratification. It must include an unselfish desire to protect and help and make someone else happy. It must also involve admiration for the other person's finer qualities. A man or woman can be in love with their partner's mind, sentiments, spiritual reactions, and companionship—all of which have little or nothing to do with physical beauty. Real love is a spiritual thing; it's not merely physical. It's mostly manifested in spiritual and mental companionship and compatibility, the likes and dislikes and habits that the two have in common.

Even the things the man and woman don't have in common can sometimes be

interesting and amusing. Take my wife's interest in clothing, for example. I enjoy her little fashion shows because I know she enjoys doing that and does it to please me. As for myself, clothes have never been of any particular importance to me as long as I look clean and neat. I'm more interested in people. I often couldn't have told you five minutes later what someone I had just met was wearing, but I might have been able to tell you what they were thinking and what their character was like because I may have looked closely and deeply into their heart.

As a young man seeking a wife, my mother once told me not to put the physical features first in my quest, but to seek something more in a woman than that. Most of all seek that indefinable thing called personality. Seek the liveliness of the spirit, the fascination of the mind, the irresistibility of the heart, the magnanimity of the soul—that spiritual part that, in turn, can only be satisfied by the spiritual in you. The things of this earth can satisfy your body, but God has made you so that your spirit can only be satisfied by the things of the spirit.

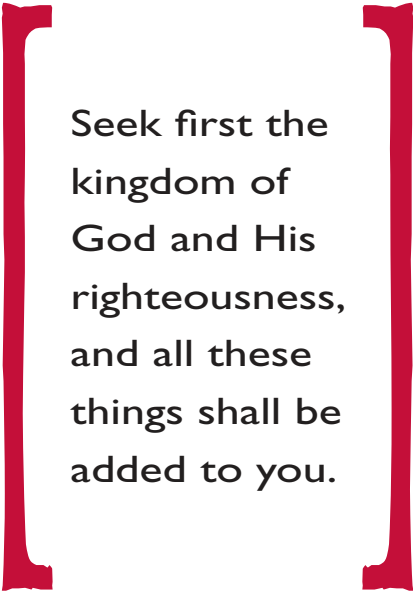
God's Word tells us, "Do not love the world or the things in the world ... the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15–17). "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2, KJV). "For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

God didn't say you wouldn't or shouldn't need or desire or enjoy the things of this life, but He admonishes you not to have an inordinate love for

them to the point that you put these things before the even greater needs of your spirit.

If you love the material world more than the spiritual, then it becomes a form of worship of the creation more than the Creator, and God and His spiritual world refuse to take second place in your affections or life. He says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37–39). "You shall have no other gods before Me. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:3,5). "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [your necessities] shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). But then if you do that, He's happy to give you "all these things," including the desires of your heart, as long as you delight yourself in Him (Psalm 37:4).

He's always given me not only everything that I've needed according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19), but also everything I've wanted as long as it was good for me, including good health, a safe and comfortable place to live, enough to eat, sufficient rest, enjoyable exercise, pleasant sights and sounds, and lots of affection and love. He supplies my wants as well as needs because my greatest desire and lifelong delight has been to please



Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Him and to try to make others happy. In return, He's given me the greatest blessings any man can ask for: friends and family, the love of many children, joy, satisfaction of heart and soul, a feeling of genuine accomplishment, and sublime fulfillment in life. I sometimes feel I could depart at any moment in peace and contentment and complete satisfaction because I have not only seen the glory of the Lord, but the fulfillment of virtually every desire of my heart.

But if you put the desires of the flesh above God or others or the needs of your spirit, then you'll find that nothing ever satisfies, not even the most total indulgence in the flesh. Those who seek only to gratify their flesh or that of their mate will never find complete satisfaction and happiness. The things of this earth can satisfy the body, but only God and His true love can ever fill that aching spiritual void in the heart, because He created that place for Himself alone.

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

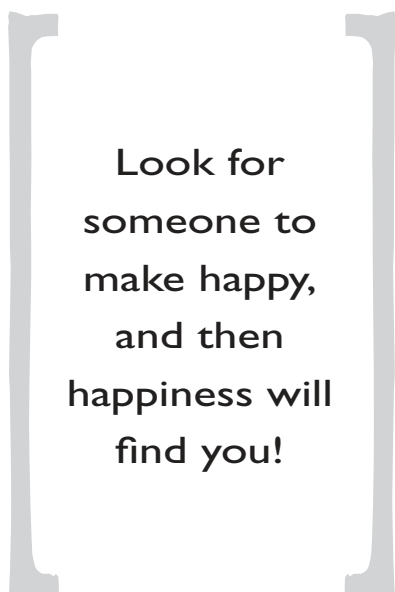
I once knew a woman who was always seeking a new lover but never finding one that satisfied or lasted because she was always seeking to get love, to receive love, to be loved. When I suggested to her that, after years of searching, perhaps she needed to learn to *give* love and to love unselfishly for the benefit of another, this struck her as an entirely new thought. It had never even occurred to her before! She went out and soon found what she had been looking for all the

time—by finding someone who she could make happy by giving him her love.

That's the secret: Look for someone to make happy, and then happiness will find you! "Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38). "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Those are God's laws of the spirit and are just as definite as the laws of physics, such as gravity. God's laws of the spirit never fail. They *always* work, either for you or against you according to whether or not you follow them. And the first law is the law of love—unselfish love for Him and others. If you will obey that law and give the love that is His and others' due, you will also receive love, "for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

This is why so many people love me, because they know that I truly love them and really would prefer their happiness and well-being to my own. Seeing others happy and making others happy is my happiness. And it could be yours, too!

Life, liberty, and the giving of happiness to others—these are things that only God can give and the only things that will ever satisfy your spirit. So if you want to be happy and make someone else truly happy, seek the satisfaction of the spirit that can be found only in God and His love!♥



**Look for
someone to
make happy,
and then
happiness will
find you!**



A LOST AND LONELY WORLD

So many people today are lost, lonely, downtrodden, weak, and weary. There are those who are trampled on—the poor, the persecuted, the hungry; those who are victims of war and crime and exploitation; those who nobody wants and for whom nobody cares; those who have so little in the way of material goods, who lack even the basic necessities.

Then there are others who do have material goods and who appear to “have it together” in the eyes of others, but who are lost and lonely prisoners of their own selfish desires. They are weary and heavy-laden with problems, stress, fears, and phobias. There are those who wear a smile, yet ache inside; those who are engulfed in a sea of emptiness; those who suffer from pain, guilt, bitterness, and condemnation; those who feel remorse over the past or fear the future—so many lost and desperate folks in the world today!

There is a great need for His love to shine through. You, dear Christian, must hold up the light for all to see. If you will shine His light on people, He’ll do all the rest. He’ll cause it to accomplish His purpose in their lives and hearts and minds. Let others see Jesus in you!

—David Brandt Berg

often our fault for not praying.

There are times, it’s true, that God’s will *is* set about certain things. At times like that, we have to trust that He knows best. But this is not always the case. Many times, when situations don’t change for the better it’s not because our prayers couldn’t change things, but rather because we lack the faith and conviction and determination to persevere in prayer, to really fight in the spirit for whatever it is we desire or need.

Jesus once taught this principle through the following parable: “Suppose you went to a friend’s house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You would shout up to him, ‘A

friend of mine has just arrived for a visit and I’ve nothing to give him to eat.’ He would call down from his bedroom, ‘Please don’t ask me to get up. The door is locked for the night and we are all in bed. I just can’t help you this time.’ But I’ll tell you this—though he won’t do it as a friend, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you everything you want—just because of your persistence. And so it is with prayer—keep on asking and you will keep on getting; keep on looking and you will keep on finding; knock and the door will be opened. Everyone who asks, receives; all who seek, find; and the door is opened to everyone who knocks” (Luke 11:5–10 TLB).

If you truly need something and you are doing your best to obey God and are convinced that whatever you need or desire is within His will, then *pray* for it! “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14–15). Be persistent! Keep praying for God to help you or give you what you need, and He will! “Seek and you *shall* find.”—And if the Lord doesn’t answer your prayers right away, don’t give up. Just keep knocking on Heaven’s door with your prayers and “the door will be opened”! ○

Ambassadors

OF LOVE

Through His children, God is trying to show the world what He is like. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). Jesus came to love the world and He calls us to do likewise in every facet of life, in every way—to give God's love to others. The only way that others will ever find His joy and peace and love and happiness and Heaven is through us. No matter where we are from, if we have Jesus, we are now His ambassadors and represent the King of kings, the One who runs the universe.

What was Jesus' last message to His disciples at the Last Supper, just before He was arrested, taken to jail, beaten, and killed? "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). He talked about love, that love was the most important thing.

Wouldn't it have been enough for His disciples to simply *tell* others about the love of Jesus? Couldn't the Lord just as well have said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you preach My message"? Evidently not. It's not good enough to just talk about love. Jesus said His disciples had to *have* love; they had to *live* love. He knew that there would be no denying that example.

And those first Christians turned the world upside down with the love of God. The way they lived convinced others that their faith was real. Even their Roman persecutors marveled. "Look at how

these Christians love one another!" "Who is this Christ?" they asked. "And how does He make you so happy? Even though you have nothing, you've got everything! How can I find this kind of happiness too?" And within two hundred years, one out of five people in the Western world were professing Christians.

Today, nearly two thousand years later, the heart of man is still the same. So many people are searching for love, but seldom, if ever, finding it. People everywhere are looking around for some little ray of hope, some salvation, some bright spot somewhere, a little love, a little mercy, someplace where they can find some relief. We who have found God and His love have what others have been searching for all their lives and need desperately, and if we can show them that love exists, then they can believe that God exists, because God is love.

Even the little things you do can mean a lot. The light of your smile, the kindness of your face, the influence of your life can shed light on many and have an amazing effect on some of the people you think might be the least likely to be impressed. When they feel your love and you tell them it's God's love, they think, *Maybe Somebody up there does love me!* It can change their whole outlook on life and give them a new start.

May we always be known by our love!

Even the
little things
you do can
mean a lot.



GOD'S ONLY LAW—

*and how
to keep it*

*If we love
someone
we're not
going to do
things that
would hurt
them*

An expert in the Mosaic Law, God's law for His people in Old Testament times, tested Jesus by asking, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"—to which Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:35–40).

Jesus summarized God's Law of Love in general terms in the above passage. He expressed it again in His now famous Golden Rule: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12

NIV), and, "A new command I give you: Love one another" (John 13:34 NIV).

Saint Paul echoed Jesus when he said, "All the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14).

These biblical passages are the essence of *all* of God's laws and should govern everything we think or say or do.

If a person's actions are motivated by unselfish, sacrificial love—the love of God for our fellow man—and are not intentionally hurtful to others, such actions are in accordance with Scripture and are thus lawful in the eyes of God. "The fruit of the Spirit is love ... against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22–23).

A prayerful study of the Scriptures illuminates the true intent of God's Law of Love: "You are not under the Law, but under grace."

Through the Lord's salvation and His Law of Love, Christians are released from the hundreds of rules under the Mosaic Law in the Old Testament. "The Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Of course, it's common sense and part of love to practice some aspects of the Mosaic Law. For example, we shouldn't kill, steal, covet our neighbor's things, etc. If we love someone we're not going to do things that would hurt them. We may also refrain from eating unclean foods or engaging in other unhealthy habits that the Mosaic Law warns against.

Not surprisingly, this radical doctrine of the Law of Love caused a raging controversy between Jesus and His followers and the religious leaders of the day, who lived under the Law. This controversy spilled over into the new Christian movement itself. From its very inception, a struggle took place between those who believed that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was the fulfillment of the Law and released believers from the Old Testament laws, and the legalists, who believed that all the Old Testament laws and customs must still be observed.

As recorded in the book of Acts, the apostle Paul reached out to the Gentiles with the message of salvation in Jesus. Paul was of the firm opinion that the old Mosaic Law had been fulfilled by Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. He wrote: "Christ is the end of the Law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4 NIV), "We have been released from the Law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code" (Romans 7:6 NIV), and, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law" (Galatians 3:13).

While some continue to this day to promote the Old Testament style of Christianity, a prayerful study of the Scriptures illuminates the true intent of God's Law of Love: "You are not under the Law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

In some ways, God's Law of Love is a stricter code of ethics than the old Mosaic Laws. The Ten Commandments told people how to act in order to avoid God's judgments. Under the Law of Love, much more is required—love and mercy.

You do not attain salvation by being good, but rather by asking Jesus Christ to forgive you for your sins. When you do, He comes into your life and loves others through you. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

This godly love is actually a much higher ideal to aspire to. In the Mosaic Law, there was little forgiveness or mercy. It was "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20). But Jesus went so far as to say that we should love our enemies, pray for them, and forgive them! (Matthew 5:38–44.)

In fact, the Law of Love is so much more difficult to keep that it's humanly impossible. This kind of love is only possible through the supernatural love of God, which we find in Jesus.

Love should be the main motivation for every Christian's every action, with God's love being manifested in loving deeds to help meet others' physical and spiritual needs. "For the love of Christ compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

COMFORT IN SORROW

No matter what loss we may suffer, we'll always have Jesus.

Deuteronomy 33:27a
Psalm 142:4–5
Isaiah 54:10
Matthew 28:20b
John 14:18
Hebrews 13:5b

God understands exactly what you're going through.

Exodus 3:7
Psalm 103:13–14
Isaiah 53:3a,4a
Isaiah 63:9
Hebrews 4:15

The Lord knows every tear you've shed.

2 Kings 20:5b
Psalm 6:6,9
Psalm 39:12a
Psalm 56:8b

God always has a good reason for allowing sorrow in our lives...

To make us wiser: Ecclesiastes 7:3–4
To bring about good: Romans 8:28
To drive us to His Word: Psalm 119:50,67
To teach us compassion: 2 Corinthians 1:4
To bring us to repentance: 2 Corinthians 7:9–11
To prepare us for greater service: 2 Timothy 2:12a
To teach us patience: James 1:2–4
To draw us closer to Jesus: 1 Peter 1:6–8
To strengthen us: 1 Peter 5:10

love ENOUGH

You may feel that what you've suffered is unpardonable, beyond forgiveness, but God can lift that burden and give you a change of heart. The miracle-working love of God is love enough to forgive—and to help *you* forgive.

—GABRIEL SARMIENTO

Trust God through your sorrow, like King David.

Psalm 13:2,5
Psalm 38:6,9,15,17–18,21–22
Psalm 42:9,11
Psalm 55:2,4,6–8,22
Psalm 69:29–31

Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.

Isaiah 25:8a
Isaiah 60:20
Luke 12:32
Luke 16:19–22a,25
John 16:21–22
Romans 8:18
2 Corinthians 1:7
2 Corinthians 4:17
2 Timothy 2:12a
Revelation 7:17
Revelation 21:4



NEVER TOO LATE FOR LOVE

The simple love of God and each other can solve all of our problems. His love is the answer to everything: It saves souls, forgives sins, satisfies hearts, purifies minds, redeems bodies, wins friends, and makes life worth living. It can survive almost any difficulty, difference, weakness, shortcoming, failure, fault, sin, or obstacle. It's the only truth, the only way, and the only peace. ☞ Love even has creative power, because God is love and He is the Creator (1 John 4:8). His love can change wrecks of lives into wonderful, productive, happy, warm, glowing sons and daughters of God. It can do *anything*. Nothing can resist the power of God's love. Whatever it touches, it changes. It's so beautiful! There's nothing like it. It can heal every disease and cleanse every stain. It's all-powerful. ☞ Love knows no hours or days. Love is *always*, for love is God and God is always. It's like a stream, a river, that just keeps flowing no matter what.

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

6. *Be a wise manager.* We need to remember that all that we have is given to us by God and that we're just the stewards, or managers, of it. He's entrusted us with it, and He expects us to manage it wisely. "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

7. *Live economically and within your means:* Part of being a good manager is to be saving—to be moderate and to avoid waste. And don't spend money that you don't have for things that would be nice but are not absolutely necessary. Going into debt or living for today, hoping that you'll be able to pay off your debt tomorrow, can lead to financial ruin.

8. *Budget.* One of the best ways to manage money well is to have a budget and stick to it. "He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich" (Proverbs 10:4).

9. *Have faith in God to supply your needs.* Many people focus solely on what *they* can do, and often that's because they don't really expect God's help. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). We must also do our part, of course, but then we must trust Him to do the rest, what we can't do. He says, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?" (Jeremiah 32:27).

10. *Keep praying.* Sometimes God lets us experience financial difficulties for the same reasons that He lets us experience other difficulties: so that we will draw closer to Him, include Him more in our everyday activities, and learn to depend more on Him. When we've done everything else we can do but still lack, He probably wants us to depend on Him more. We can show Him that we are by praying earnestly. When we pray with our whole heart, God promises to go to work in our behalf. "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). ■



THAT'S REAL LOVE!

Jesus is better to us than He was to Himself! "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). Jesus never owned a home, He never had a wife or children, and it seems the only material thing He owned was His clothes.

Jesus said that it was enough that a disciple be like his master (Matthew 10:25), and Paul said, "Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1 Timothy 6:8). Yet look at all that Jesus has given us besides that! All the rest are extras.

To Jesus, our happiness is worth more than money. He's willing to let us have almost anything we want as long as it's good for us. Look how Jesus tries to make it easy for us. As long as we delight ourselves in Him, He gives us the desires of our hearts (Psalm 37:4).

—David Brandt Berg

LOVE and HUMILITY

By David Brandt Berg

You've got to admit, a big part of love is humility. It takes humility to be affectionate and to receive affection. If you want to fall in love and accept real love, you have to be humble enough to let go of your pride and receive that love.

This is true even of our relationship with the Lord. When we first hear that God loves us so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die in our place, we have to humble ourselves to receive God's love. Receiving salvation is a humbling experience. Those who humble themselves receive not only forgiveness, but also an infilling of love they could never have imagined. But those who are too proud miss out on both, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

Humility and love are inseparable. The truly loving are truly humble, and the truly humble are truly loving. You cannot have real love and not be humble, and you cannot have genuine humility without a lot of love. Pride's fear of failure or refusal also prevents us from reaching out to and loving others as much as we should. Not so with humility. Humility has love and faith without fear (1 John 4:18). Love doesn't care what other people think; it just loves in spite of what they think. So be humble—and love! ■

course not going to ask others to do anything that is hurtful or harmful. Whether we're doing the serving or others are serving us, it's all going to be loving and we're all going to benefit. What we ask of others may sometimes be a sacrifice for them, but by the same token, we will be serving them too and sometimes sacrificing for them, so it will be a two-way street.

Jesus said He "came not to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). So what does that make Jesus?—A servant. Jesus "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" (Philippians 2:7).

So Jesus was a servant, and He is still our servant. He is waiting to do our bidding. He says, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find;

knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). In other words, He says, "I'll do your bidding. What do you want? I'm your servant and I will do whatever you want." So if Jesus loves us so much that He is willing to be our servant, how much more should we follow His example and serve each other in His love?

The Bible says that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21), and Jesus also said, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). His Father sent Him as a servant. Jesus had the love and humility to do that for us, and He asks that we follow His example. That takes a lot of humility, but with such sacrifices come great rewards. ■

FEEDING READING

Humility with one another

FOLLOW JESUS' EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY.

Matthew 21:5
John 13:5,12–15
Luke 22:27
Philippians 2:5–8

OTHER EXAMPLES OF HUMILITY:

1 Samuel 25:40–41
Mark 7:25–30
Luke 7:2–7
John 1:27

LOVE AND HONOR OTHERS.

Romans 12:10
Romans 12:16
Philippians 2:3

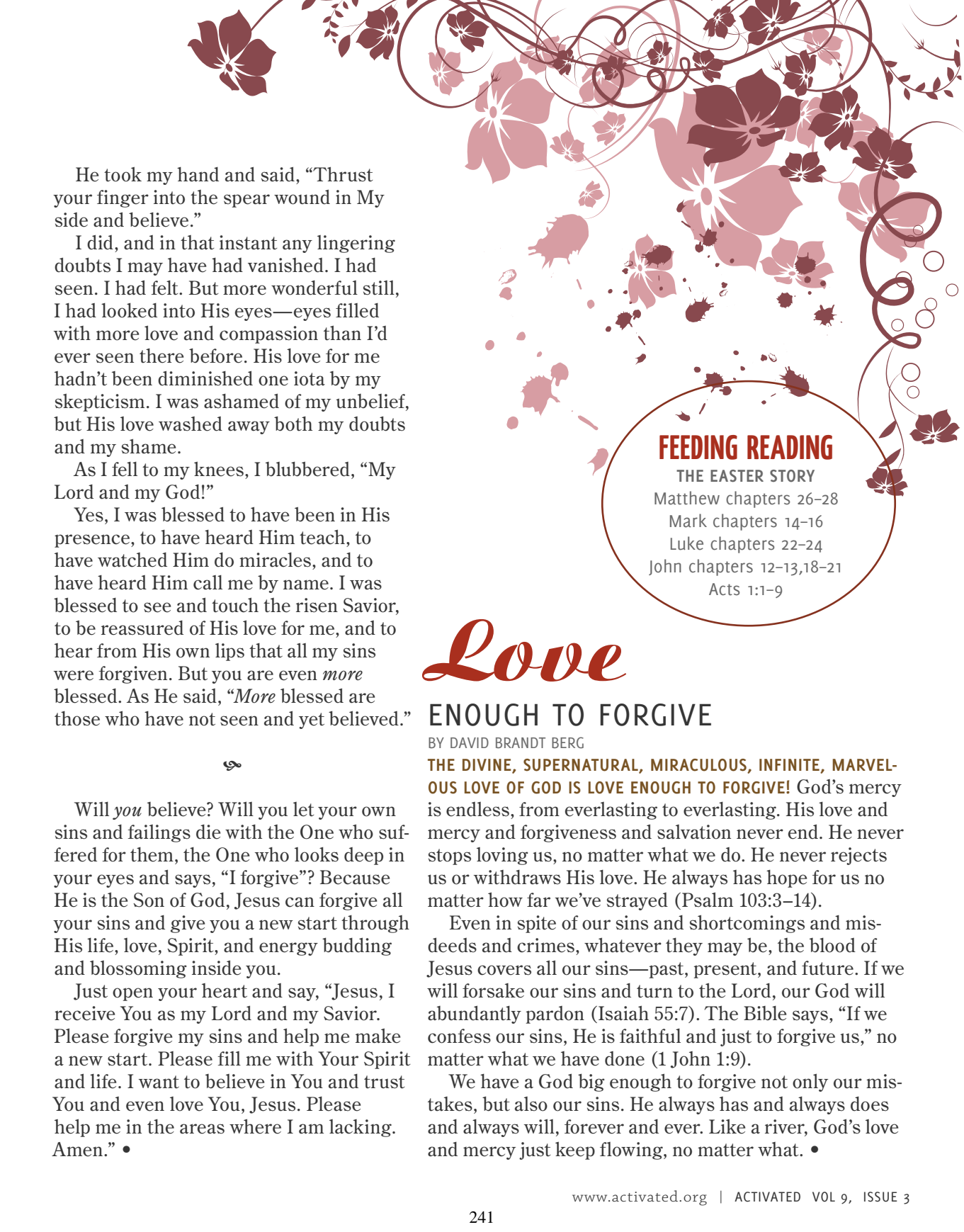
SUBMIT HUMBLY TO ONE ANOTHER.

Luke 22:25–26
Ephesians 5:21
1 Peter 5:5

BE HUMBLE WHEN POINTING OUT OTHERS' ERRORS.

Luke 6:42
Galatians 6:1
2 Timothy 2:25





He took my hand and said, “Thrust your finger into the spear wound in My side and believe.”

I did, and in that instant any lingering doubts I may have had vanished. I had seen. I had felt. But more wonderful still, I had looked into His eyes—eyes filled with more love and compassion than I’d ever seen there before. His love for me hadn’t been diminished one iota by my skepticism. I was ashamed of my unbelief, but His love washed away both my doubts and my shame.

As I fell to my knees, I blubbered, “My Lord and my God!”

Yes, I was blessed to have been in His presence, to have heard Him teach, to have watched Him do miracles, and to have heard Him call me by name. I was blessed to see and touch the risen Savior, to be reassured of His love for me, and to hear from His own lips that all my sins were forgiven. But you are even *more* blessed. As He said, “*More* blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed.”



Will *you* believe? Will you let your own sins and failings die with the One who suffered for them, the One who looks deep in your eyes and says, “I forgive”? Because He is the Son of God, Jesus can forgive all your sins and give you a new start through His life, love, Spirit, and energy budding and blossoming inside you.

Just open your heart and say, “Jesus, I receive You as my Lord and my Savior. Please forgive my sins and help me make a new start. Please fill me with Your Spirit and life. I want to believe in You and trust You and even love You, Jesus. Please help me in the areas where I am lacking. Amen.” •

FEEDING READING

THE EASTER STORY

Matthew chapters 26–28

Mark chapters 14–16

Luke chapters 22–24

John chapters 12–13, 18–21

Acts 1:1–9

Love

ENOUGH TO FORGIVE

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

THE DIVINE, SUPERNATURAL, MIRACULOUS, INFINITE, MARVELOUS LOVE OF GOD IS LOVE ENOUGH TO FORGIVE! God’s mercy is endless, from everlasting to everlasting. His love and mercy and forgiveness and salvation never end. He never stops loving us, no matter what we do. He never rejects us or withdraws His love. He always has hope for us no matter how far we’ve strayed (Psalm 103:3–14).

Even in spite of our sins and shortcomings and misdeeds and crimes, whatever they may be, the blood of Jesus covers all our sins—past, present, and future. If we will forsake our sins and turn to the Lord, our God will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:7). The Bible says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us,” no matter what we have done (1 John 1:9).

We have a God big enough to forgive not only our mistakes, but also our sins. He always has and always does and always will, forever and ever. Like a river, God’s love and mercy just keep flowing, no matter what. •



A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

THE SMILE CYCLE

FOR MANY YEARS, DAVID BERG AND HIS WIFE, MARIA, TOOK VIGOROUS WALKS FOR THEIR DAILY EXERCISE. At one point, they kept crossing paths with a certain older man. They eventually learned that he was a bachelor and that his name was Feliciano, meaning “happy.” He seemed anything but happy, though. “He had the grumpiest look you ever saw,” Berg later recalled. “He was always well dressed in a nice suit, and he seemed to be an important man in town, but he would walk along with his hands folded behind his back, staring at the ground. Whenever Maria or I tried to catch his eye and smile at him, he quickly looked the other way. We wanted so much to turn his frown into a smile that we made that our secret project. It took two years, but finally he smiled back at us. From that day on, Feliciano’s countenance and whole manner changed.”

Thankfully, most people aren’t such tough cases. Your smile can chase away the clouds hanging over someone else, and you’ll brighten your own day in the process. It is almost impossible to smile on the outside without feeling better on the inside. Smiling relaxes you and those around you. Smiling starts a positive cycle: It chases away the blues and helps create a positive atmosphere, which causes everything to go smoother, which gives you more to smile and be happy about, which causes you to thank God for His blessings, which pleases Him and makes Him want to bless you more, which gives you more to smile about. ... You get the idea.

Over the next hour, make an effort to smile more. See if you can keep that smile all day. Try keeping it up for a week, and see what a difference that makes. ❀

Smile, though your heart is aching,
Smile, even though it’s breaking,
When there are clouds in the sky you’ll get by if you
Smile through your pain and sorrow,
Smile, and maybe tomorrow
You’ll see the sun come shining through for you,
if you just smile.

—LYRICS BY JOHN TURNER AND GEOFFREY PARSONS (1954), SET TO
MUSIC COMPOSED BY CHARLIE CHAPLIN FOR HIS 1936 SILENT FILM
CLASSIC MODERN TIMES.

FEEDING READING What is truth?

Today “truth” has come to mean “something honest or factual,” but here it is used in the deeper sense of “a transcendent fundamental or spiritual reality.”

We should seek truth.
Psalm 25:5
Proverbs 23:23
1 Timothy 2:4

God has promised to reveal His truth to us.
Jeremiah 33:6
John 15:26
John 8:31–32

God’s Word is truth.
Psalm 119:142
Psalm 119:151
John 17:17

Jesus is the Word made flesh; He is the truth.
John 1:14
John 1:17
John 14:6
Ephesians 4:21

Don’t be led away from the truth.
Colossians 2:8
2 Timothy 4:4
1 John 4:6

Truth is pervasive and timeless.
Psalm 85:10–11
Psalm 100:5
Psalm 108:4

How to find real Love

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

TO BE GENUINE AND LASTING, ROMANTIC LOVE MUST BE BASED ON A MORE ENDURING FOUNDATION THAN MERE PHYSICAL ATTRACTION OR FLESHLY GRATIFICATION.

It must include an unselfish desire to protect and help and make someone else happy. It must also involve admiration for the other person's finer qualities. A person can be in love with their partner's mind, spirit, sentiments, and bearing—all of which have little or nothing to do with physical beauty. Real love is a spiritual thing; it's not merely physical. It's mostly manifested in spiritual and mental companionship and compatibility, the likes and dislikes and habits that the two people have in common.

When I was a young man, my mother once told me not to put the physical features first in my quest for a soul mate, but to seek something more in a woman than that. "Most of all," she advised,

"seek that indefinable thing called personality. Seek the liveliness of the spirit, the fascination of the mind, the irresistibility of the heart, the magnanimity of the soul." The things of this earth can satisfy the body, but God has made us so that our spirit can only be satisfied by the things of the spirit.

God's Word tells us, "Do not love the world or the things in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."¹ "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."² "For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."³ God didn't say we wouldn't or shouldn't need or desire or enjoy the things of this life, but He admonishes us not to have an inordinate love for them to the point that we put these things before the even greater needs of our spirit.

If you put the desires of the flesh first, then you'll find that nothing ever satisfies, not even the most total indulgence. Those who seek only to gratify their flesh will never find complete satisfaction and happiness. The things of this earth can satisfy the body, but only God and His true love can ever fill that aching spiritual void in the heart, because He created that place for Himself alone.

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

I once knew a woman who was always seeking the man of her dreams but never finding a relationship that satisfied or lasted because she was always seeking to get love, to receive love, to be loved. When I suggested to her that perhaps she needed to learn to give love and to love unselfishly

for the benefit of another, this struck her as an entirely new thought. It had never even occurred to her before! She went out and soon found what she had been looking for all the time—by finding a man she could make happy by giving him her love.

That's the secret: Look for someone to make happy, and then happiness will find you! "He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."⁴ Those are God's laws of the spirit and are just as definite as the laws of physics, such as the law of gravity. God's laws of the spirit never fail. They always work for you or against you, depending on your actions and motives. And the first law is the law of love—unselfish love for Him and others. If you will obey that law and give the love that is His and others' due, you will also receive love, "for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."⁵

Life, liberty, and the giving of happiness to others—these are things that only God can give and the only things that will ever satisfy your spirit. So if you want to be happy and make someone else truly happy, seek the satisfaction of the spirit that can be found only in God and His love! ✨

“Seek that indefinable thing called personality. Seek the liveliness of the spirit, the fascination of the mind, the irresistibility of the heart, the magnanimity of the soul.”

¹ John 2:15–17

² Corinthians 9:6

² Colossians 3:2, KJV

⁵ Luke 6:38

³ 2 Corinthians 4:18



POP THE CORK!

Wine—even the finest—can't be appreciated as long as it's bottled up. Neither can love. Pop the cork. Put your love into words.

The most important words that any of us can learn to say are "I love you." Don't take it for granted that others know you love them. Tell them how special they are. Tell them how much you need them. Tell them how much you enjoy their company. Tell them how happy they make you.—And say it so often they can't forget it.

—Shannon Shayler

Commendation

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

JESUS PRAISES PEOPLE FOR THEIR GOOD QUALITIES AND GIVES THEM CREDIT WHEN THEY DO WELL. In the parables He told, He commended the servants who had invested their master's money well,¹ and He even commended the unscrupulous servant for dealing shrewdly.² He said of Nathanael that there was no deceit to be found in him.³ God commends lots of people throughout the Bible. He said of Job, "There is none like him on the Earth,"⁴ and He apparently told the prophet Samuel that young David was a man after God's own heart, because Samuel said as much when he singled out David to be the next king of Israel.⁵

All the way through the Bible God commended people for their good works, and He promises to reward us for our good

work. It has nothing to do with our salvation. We get salvation as a gift of His love and mercy and grace, but He still commends and rewards us when we do the right things with the right motivation.

When we look to Jesus in prayer and ask Him to help us, He does. He helps us do things we couldn't do on our own, but even then we nearly always need to do something—our part—to bring about the desired result. When we do, Jesus gives us credit. That's apparent when you

consider all the scriptures about rewards and crowns in Heaven and so forth.⁶

He gives us credit when we do the best we can with what He's given us. It's like the story of the farmer who gave a visitor a tour of his farm, and the visitor said, "What a lovely farm God has given you!" "Yes," the farmer replied, "but you should have seen it when *God* had it!" In other words, before the farmer had done all the hard work of clearing the land, plowing the fields, and caring for the crops. Even the Garden of Eden had to have somebody to take care of it, and God gave Adam that job when He put him there.⁷

That principle applies to our natural abilities and talents, our bodies and looks, and all the rest. God gives us the basics to begin with, and He wants to see what we're going to do with them. To be all we can be, we've got to work with what

¹ Matthew 25:14-23

⁴ Job 1:8

² Luke 16:8

⁵ 1 Samuel 13:14

³ John 1:47

⁶ Daniel 12:3; Matthew 6:19-21; 16:27; 25:21; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2

Timothy 4:7-8; Revelation 2:10

⁷ Genesis 2:15

He's given us, and when we do, He commends us.

And that's the way God wants us to be with others. People ought to be commended, and it needs to be genuine. There's a difference between genuine praise and flattery. Almost everybody needs encouragement. Most people are not conceited or stuck on themselves. In fact, I think most people feel insecure or inferior in one or more areas, and they tend to get discouraged with themselves. That's why encouragement is so important.

People thrive on praise. Any wise parent or boss will tell you that. It's more important to praise a child for good work and good behavior than it is to scold for bad behavior, and the same holds true for grown-ups. If you want to bring out the best in people and succeed in your relationships with them, always accentuate the positive.

One of the worst things you can do is to dwell on people's shortcomings, belittling, nagging, and finding fault. That sort of thing will sabotage relationships faster than almost anything, and it's been responsible for many failed marriages. It reminds

me of the story of a woman and a divorce court judge. She simply couldn't live with "that man" one day more, the woman told the judge, and she enumerated her husband's faults. On and on she went.

Finally she paused to catch her breath, and the judge asked, "Well, why did you marry him in the first place? You must have liked something about him then. What was it?"

"Well," the wife said, "he was a good man, a hard worker, and a faithful provider. He was also kind to children, and he was loyal."

"Isn't he still all those things?" asked the judge.

"Well, yes," the wife replied in a huff, "but..." And she started to repeat her grievances. "He's terrible! He throws his clothes on the floor. He never puts anything away. He's always late for dinner. He's hard to get up in the morning. He picks his nose in public. He fusses if I burn the toast. ..." All were relatively insignificant offenses.

"Very well then," said the judge, "here's my preliminary ruling: Go home and think about those good qualities for which you first loved him,

"The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives."—

Anthony Robbins

and try not to think about the things he does that peeve you. If after 30 days you still want the divorce, come back."

The judge never saw the woman again.

We create a problem when we dwell on people's weaknesses and bad traits. "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."¹ Try that the next time you get frustrated or impatient or upset with someone. Remind yourself of his or her good qualities, and try not to think about the bad things.

Don't you appreciate it when people show you that kind of consideration? And doesn't it spur you on to give your best when someone shows you appreciation for a job well done? It's part of living the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.² •

¹ Philippians 4:8

² Matthew 7:12

QUIET MOMENTS

A spiritual exercise

“Trust ... in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”¹

The next time you feel flustered or overwhelmed, find a quiet spot and take five minutes to try this: Close your eyes and focus your thoughts on a restful scene. It can be as elaborate as a sandy beach with warm waves washing over your toes and a balmy breeze rustling the palm trees and your hair, or it can be as simple as relaxing in your favorite chair on your day off. Now picture Jesus joining you for the experience, happy, relaxed, and looking forward to a little downtime with you. Once you have that picture firmly in your mind, try to “be there” for a few minutes. Feel your body, mind, and spirit relax. When you return to the “real” world, you’ll feel more rested and be in a better state of mind for whatever the rest of the day may have in store for you.

HOW TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD IN ONE SIMPLE STEP

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if everyone would simply do what Jesus said to do—love our neighbors as ourselves?² When people don’t treat others with much love, they’re going to have problems—and they do! It can safely be said that the root of all of the evils in the world today is a lack of love. But there’s a simple solution, even in such a confused and highly complicated society as that of the world today: love. If we love God, we can love and respect 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.

So let’s ask God to help us love our neighbors with *His* love. And remember, “neighbor” doesn’t only mean the one who lives next door. It is anyone who needs our help, regardless of race, creed, color, or nationality.

¹ 1 Timothy 6:17

² Matthew 22:39

FEEDING READING

Keys to Good Communication

Keep it positive and uplifting.

Proverbs 15:23

Proverbs 27:9

Ephesians 4:29

Be informed before you speak.

Proverbs 18:13

James 1:19

Timing and tact are everything.

Proverbs 10:32a

Proverbs 25:11

Ecclesiastes 3:7

Ecclesiastes 8:5

*Put yourself in the other’s
place; empathize.*

Matthew 7:12

Romans 12:15

Philippians 2:3-4

1 Peter 3:8

*Put an end to arguments before
they begin.*

Proverbs 15:1

Proverbs 17:9

Proverbs 17:14

Proverbs 20:3a

Don’t gossip.

Titus 3:2

1 Peter 2:1

NEW WORLDS TO DISCOVER

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

OUR LIVES INVOLVE all sorts of relationships. In fact, relating to people is largely what life is about. Relationships, when based on the right foundation and growing in the right direction, are wonderful, rewarding experiences. Each new relationship also brings with it an exciting new set of challenges and surprises. And of course no relationships are as challenging or full of surprises as romantic relationships.

Opening your life to that special someone is like opening the door to a vast new world beyond what you've known so far. You discover the world through another's eyes; you feel the world through their emotions; you view the world from a different perspective. Now you have not only your own but also their feelings, opinions, and preferences to consider. You discover what makes them tick and how they think.



You learn to put their needs before your own, and in the process you also realize things about yourself that you never knew before.

A key asset to a good relationship is honest, open communication. Be honest about your feelings, your needs, and what you like or don't like. Share your desires, hopes, goals, and dreams. Communication will help you avoid misunderstandings and solve many problems while they are still small.

You have to know what to say, how to say it, when to say it, and even whether to say it. But if you build the bond between you on that kind of communication, and if you keep at it through the years, then love will thrive.

IT TAKES TIME AND PRACTICE TO LEARN TO BE OPEN AND HONEST WITH ANOTHER PERSON, WHILE ALSO BEING CONSIDERATE AND WISE.



It is natural, after a while, for couples to think they know each other inside out and therefore need to communicate less. Some couples even stop communicating altogether. But the truth is that two people can't know each other well enough to stop communicating and not have problems, because people change. Everyone has somewhat different needs and thinks somewhat differently today than they did a year ago, or a month ago, or even yesterday. So if a couple stops sharing their minds and hearts because they think they've got everything figured out already, they will miss these changes. When that happens, each person begins to think that the other one doesn't understand them, and that may be true; maybe they understood them last year or last month or last week, but they won't understand them today unless they communicate. Better communication can make the difference between a cold, drab, routine, humdrum existence and a warm, loving, fun relationship.

No matter how new or how old a relationship, there's always something new to discover! ✨

MIRACLES AND HEALING



Feeding reading

Examples of Jesus' power to heal



The nobleman's son

John 4:46–54

The man let down through the roof

Mark 2:1–12

The man at the pool of Bethesda

John 5:1–16

The man with the withered hand

Luke 6:6–11

The centurion's servant

Luke 7:1–10

Jairus's daughter

Mark 5:22–24, 35–43

The woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment

Mark 5:25–34

The ten lepers

Luke 17:11–19

The blind man

John chapter 9

Lazarus

John 11:1–46

Thoughts on healing

From David Brandt Berg

GOD IS STILL ALIVE, WELL AND WORKING just as powerfully as ever among those who trust in Him! God says, "I am the Lord, I do not change," and "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8).

JESUS PROMISED, "HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And these signs will follow those who believe ... they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (John 14:12; Mark 16:17–18). God is still in the business of repairing bodies that need it, as well as transforming hearts, minds, and spirits.

SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE THE WRONG ATTITUDE. They say, "If God will heal me, then I will believe. Show me! I'll believe it when I see it." They're hinging their faith on the answer instead of on God's Word. That's not the way faith works. With faith, believing is seeing!

YOU GET HEALING THE SAME WAY YOU GET SALVATION: by grace through faith. You get healing by trusting God for it and not anything else—grace plus faith plus nothing! "It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

PAIN IS A TOUCH OF HELL; HEALING IS A TOUCH OF HEAVEN. Healing is a sample of everlasting life, renewal of the body, cure of disease. It's a touch of resurrection. •



Feet of Faith

By David Brandt Berg

(Written to a couple whose baby was born with deformed feet.)

MY DEAR LOVED ONES,

Our prayers are with you for your baby's feet. The Lord has a promise for feet: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isaiah 52:7).

Remember that nothing happens by accident! God has a purpose in everything, even if it is only to force us to exercise our faith for healing, and to demonstrate it for the encouragement of others. Maybe the Lord is going to give you such a ministry. He needs more Christians with gifts of healing, not only for our own sake, but to inspire the faith of unbelievers and to encourage them to trust in the Lord.

So "be not faithless, but believing!" (John 20:27 KJV). In prayer for you and your child just now, the Lord reminded me of the following Bible verse, taken from the story of the blind man in the Gospel of John: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9:3). Is anything too hard for the Lord? No, this is a small thing for the God of creation (Jeremiah 32:27). If He can create the baby, He certainly can straighten his feet. The One who made him can certainly fix him!

I suggest that you pray earnestly for your child to be healed, perhaps with others, and then expect a miracle! You do your part by praying, and the rest is up to God.

"With God nothing will be impossible," and "all things are possible to him who believes" (Luke 1:37; Mark 9:23). Trust in the Lord. He never fails. "There has not failed one word of all His good promise" (1 Kings 8:56).

My family and I have had many serious diseases and injuries, but God has never failed to heal them. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19). When I was three years old, an automobile ran over my foot and severely damaged it. The doctors said that many of the bones in my foot were crushed, and that I would never walk again. But my parents believed God and prayed, and I've been walking ever since! The Lord healed it completely, just as though it had never been broken!

I once worked for one of the greatest Christians I have ever known, Dr. A.U. Michelson. I never knew a humbler, sweeter, more compassionate, loving and hard-working man. He was a famous missionary to his fellow Jews in America. He founded the world's first Hebrew-Christian Synagogue, and produced a Gospel program that was heard on hundreds of radio stations around the world—a man who undoubtedly won thousands of people to the Lord, for which I'm sure he has been gloriously rewarded in Heaven!

Yet this dear man's foot was pitifully deformed so that he had to hobble around on crutches, in constant pain. Maybe this is one reason he had such compassion on others. We comfort others with the same comfort we find in the Lord (2 Corinthians 1:4). How can we be more than conquerors?—By being good losers, and even praising God in our affliction! Dr. Michelson had miraculous faith for souls and for the finances needed to support missionaries around the world, and he prayed for many others who were healed, but he never seemed to have the faith for his *own* healing.

If He can
create
the baby,
He
certainly
can
straighten
his feet.

So who knows the will of God? All we can do is believe His promises and pray, and expect some kind of answer. Sometimes these things happen to draw us much closer to the Lord, to keep us humble and more dependent on Him, and sometimes they are to help us learn and grow spiritually. In any case, God has a loving purpose, and when we have learned the lesson that He's trying to teach us or the conditions are ready for the result that He wants to bring, He says He would rather that we be healed (Hebrews 12:13). God prefers to heal. He *wants* to heal us, but He also wants us to learn through our afflictions, and He wants us to let them accomplish His purpose.

In some cases, it took years of patient waiting before Jesus or the disciples came along to bring people healing, but when the time was right, the Lord did the miracle—like the healing of the man who had been lame since birth, which resulted in the conversion of more than 5,000 in a single day and launched the Early Church on paths of glory (Acts 3:1–12; 4:4). So expect a miracle for the glory of God!

Search the Scriptures and see what these verses mean: “The lame take the prey” (Isaiah 33:23). “The lame shall leap like a deer” (Isaiah 35:6). “But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2). Jesus even said that He caused the lame to walk, as one of the proofs of His messiahship (Matthew 11:5). He also promises: “I am the Lord who heals you” (Exodus 15:26), “who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases” (Psalm 103:3). There are no exceptions: God can heal *anything!*

The day of miracles is not past! Our God is still a God of miracles. In

our day-to-day ministry, we've usually emphasized the miracles of salvation and the spiritual transformation of people's lives, but God is still in the business of transforming the *bodies* that need it, as well as the hearts, minds and spirits.

I myself am a living witness to His healing power, having been given up for dead 30 years ago. At the age of 22, my heart was in such bad condition that the doctors said if I would stay in bed, I might live a year. However, I promised to serve the Lord if He healed me—and I've been busy for Him ever since. Now at the age of 52 [1971], I'm in better health than ever. Jesus never fails! God not only *can* do it, but He *wants* to do it! He's more willing to give than we are to receive.

“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:35–36). Believe God! He never fails—even when we are faithless! Hold Him to His word. He says, “Command Me” (Isaiah 45:11). Demand and expect an answer! God has promised it.

And remember that “all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28), and that this, too, has befallen you for the glory of God. Love and trust and praise Him more than ever, and I know He'll not fail. He cannot deny Himself. He is bound by His Word. Remind Him of it, cling to His promises, memorize and quote them continually, and never doubt for a moment that God is going to answer—and He will! He has to! He wants to! Trust Him! And thank Him for the answer, even if you don't see it immediately! Your faith is much more precious than gold (1 Peter 1:7). God bless you! I'm praying for you. •

**Demand
and
expect an
answer!
God has
promised
it.**

You can work miracles!

By David Brandt Berg

JESUS LEFT HIS FOLLOWERS WITH AN AMAZING PROMISE of power—supernatural, superhuman, miraculous power. “Anyone believing in Me shall do the same miracles I have done, and even greater ones, because I am going to be with the Father” (John 14:12 *TLB*).

That promise has stood for two thousand years, and multitudes of other Christians have *done* those “greater things.” God empowered otherwise ordinary people like you and me to work His miracles. Now that same power can work miracles through us, if we will simply believe and act on God’s Word.

The trouble is, most people put God’s promises of power in either the past or the future. The past was wonderful, glorious, and supernatural, with all those heroes of the faith working miracles and angels intervening on behalf of God’s people. And the future is going to be marvelous and “miraculous” in Heaven. But they don’t believe that any of those things could happen in the *present*. “They say, “Of course you couldn’t expect anything like that now.” But that’s *not* what the Bible says!

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). God is still the God of miracles. What He’s done before, He can do again—and not only later, but right now if you need it and have faith for it. If all the little people in the past have already done miracles by the scores and scores, in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as throughout the past two thousand years, then Christians today can do them too! And they don’t have to wait for the Great Tribulation or the Millennium or the New Earth. They can do them *now*.

Too many Christians try to excuse their little faith or get out of the job the Lord has for them by saying, “That’s not us. That’s not me! That was just for the miraculous days of yore. He doesn’t expect that of *me*. Not now!” They try to squirm out of the responsibility to do the things that God has told them to do, including telling others about their faith and doing miracles to help people.

That was the only reason that Jesus did miracles. He didn’t do them to show off His power or dem-

What God has done for others, He can do for you!

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onstrate that He was a great miracle worker, or even to prove He was the Son of God; He did them because He had compassion upon the multitudes (Matthew 14:14).

He did those miracles for *their* sakes because He loved them and hated to see them suffer. That was His motivation. And that has to be our motivation too—not to show off and say, “Look how wonderful *I* am! Look how powerful *I* am! Look at the mighty signs and wonders *I* can do! Believe in me!” We are to go about the Lord’s work quietly, sweetly, and humbly, with lots of love and compassion. We’re to simply try to help people, like Jesus did, then He will do the miracles through us when He knows they’re needed, when the time is right to accomplish His purpose, and when He knows the power and attention won’t go to our heads.

Sometimes the Lord doesn’t give that power to people because He knows they’d become very proud and they wouldn’t be able to handle it. For example, for years I wanted the gift of tongues, the ability to speak in a celestial language, which is one of the more visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit (1 Corin-

thians 12:7–11; Acts 2:1–11). But the Lord didn’t give it to me because I wanted it in order to be able to show people that I had the Holy Spirit, and to prove it through the supernatural, miraculous gift of speaking in tongues. He didn’t give me the gift of tongues then because I wanted it for the wrong reason, because of my pride. But when my heart was right and the time was right, I did get the gift of tongues.

People’s pride is not the only reason a miracle doesn’t happen every time someone prays for one. Sometimes it’s simply not the Lord’s will or His time—when He knows it will accomplish His purpose in the lives of those involved. So don’t be discouraged if you don’t get this supernatural power immediately in every situation.

The important thing to remember is that He has promised *you* that power. God is still alive, well, and working just as powerfully as ever amongst those that trust in Him, so when you or someone you know needs a miracle, let God use you and your prayers to help make it happen. He will if it’s His will and you believe and claim it in Jesus’ name! ○



Healing is for you!

THE DAY OF MIRACLES IS NOT PAST! God is still alive, well, and working just as powerfully as ever amongst those who trust in Him. He says, “I am the Lord, I change not” (Malachi 3:6), and Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

To heal is a small thing for the God of all creation. If He created the body, He can certainly fix it! He says, “I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?” (Jeremiah 32:27).

This is only one of many promises of healing that can be found in the Bible—promises that you can claim as your own and expect Him to fulfill. This is also where your faith for His supernatural healing will come from. Faith comes, it grows, by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Faith is built on the Word, so read it prayerfully and ask God to strengthen your faith.

God not only *can* heal you, but He *wants* to heal you. A leper once came to Jesus and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” Jesus touched the man and said, “I am willing; be cleansed,” and immediately the man’s leprosy was cleansed (Matthew 8:2–3). He’s more willing to give than we are to receive. All He asks is that we honor Him with faith by believing His promises.

**GOD NOT ONLY CAN
HEAL YOU, BUT HE
WANTS TO HEAL YOU.**

Prayer power!

“The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up” (James 5:15). Prayer is powerful. When we pray, things will happen and things will be different. God *will* answer prayer. He promises, “If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14), and “No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11). You’ve got these and all of the other promises in the Bible on your side—“exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4)—so when you pray for healing or anything else, bring those promises with you to remind God of His Word. Doing so is a positive declaration of your faith, which pleases Him.

He says, “Prove Me now, and see if I will not pour out such a blessing that there will not be room enough to hold it” (Malachi 3:10). You usually don’t see the blessing—His healing, in this case—the instant you begin praying for it. You have His promises in His Word, but how do you know He’s going to keep them? You’ve got to *prove* Him. You’ve got to put those promises to the test: You’ve got to challenge God. He even tells us, “Concerning the work of My hands, you command Me” (Isaiah 45:11). So hold Him to His Word. *Expect* an answer. He has promised it. Put your faith in the Lord, and claim Scriptures. He is bound by His Word, so remind Him of His promises, cling to them, and never doubt for a moment that He is going to answer—and He will. He has to! He wants to! Trust Him!

Jesus says, “Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:24). “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything

according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14–15). All we have to do is believe His promises, pray, and expect Him to answer.

The “test of faith”

One of the greatest of healing factors is faith—knowing that God loves us and is concerned about our health and happiness, and that He is going to take care of us no matter what. But He often tests our faith before He heals us, because He wants to see if we’ll believe His promises and continue to love and trust Him even if we think we may never get healed. Before He honors us with healing, He wants to see if we will honor Him with faith.

Ongoing illnesses are sometimes a severe test, and sad to say, they sometimes end in bitterness, complaining, and even holding a grievance against God because He doesn’t heal the way the person wants Him to or thinks He should. “God doesn’t love me, He doesn’t care, because He won’t heal me!” That sort of reaction is the opposite of faith, and “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

God can and wants to heal us, but we must first make the decision that we want what *He* wants and knows is best for us, without reservations. We must also do our part by first correcting any physical or spiritual problems that may be contributing factors. Then you can pray and trust God for your healing, and you’re bound to get results! ■

“CERTIFICATE FOR LIFE”

I am learning so much from our HIV/AIDS support group. Most of us have much for which to be thankful, and yet we complain about minor things which happen in our lives. Some members of our support group believe that it was only when they found out that they were HIV-positive that they started to live, because now they treasure every day. Some say, “That’s when I received my ‘Certificate for Life.’”
—Rachel Scott, AIDS counselor from the Family International in South Africa

MIRACLES COME NATURALLY TO GOD

DAVID BRANDT BERG

WE USUALLY THINK OF THINGS that are beyond our comprehension as supernatural or miraculous, but those things aren't supernatural to God because He operates in the spiritual realm where everything is "natural" to Him. It's like saying there is nothing impossible with God (Luke 1:37). A lot of things God does are beyond our power and grasp of things and what we consider natural, so when they happen we say they are "supernatural." But with God nothing is impossible, so nothing is supernatural to Him!

God can do things that are contrary to what we consider His natural laws. When someone gets healed of an incurable disease, for example, we call it a miracle because we're seeing the evidence or manifestation of some of God's laws that link the spiritual and the physical realms—laws that we know little about. To God, on the other hand, it's simple! He knows how to undo whatever damage the disease may have done and thereby creates what to us is a miracle—a supernatural act that is beyond our capabilities.

God is always ready, willing, and able to work miracles on our behalf—miracles of healing, supply, protection, or whatever else we may need when we ask Him to in faith and claim the promises from His Word. We can't work miracles; we can only pray for Him to do it and marvel at His power when He does. ←

FEEDING READING

POWER FROM GOD

GOD IS INFINITELY MORE POWERFUL THAN WE ARE.

Psalm 8:3–4
Isaiah 40:15,17,22
Daniel 4:35
1 Corinthians 1:25

GOD CAN DO WHAT WE CAN'T DO.

Psalm 60:11
Psalm 127:1
Zechariah 4:6
John 15:5

GOD IS ABLE TO DO ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING.

Job 42:2
Jeremiah 32:27
Matthew 19:26
Matthew 28:18

WE MUST LEARN TO DRAW ON GOD'S STRENGTH.

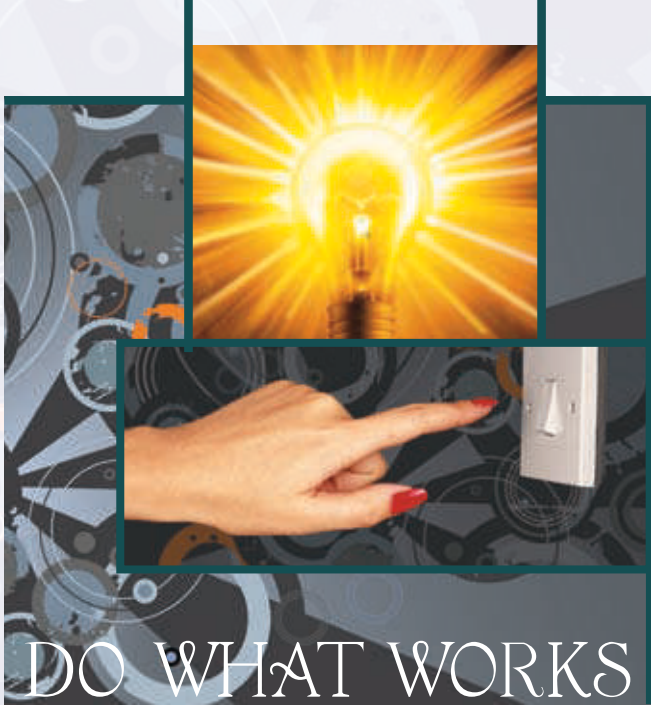
Psalm 20:7–8
Psalm 84:5
Psalm 105:4
Isaiah 26:4
2 Corinthians 3:4–5
Ephesians 6:10
Philippians 3:3

HOW TO RECEIVE GOD'S POWER:

Joshua 1:5–9
2 Chronicles 16:9
Nehemiah 8:10
Psalm 138:3
Isaiah 30:15
Isaiah 40:31
Acts 1:8

Prayer for the day

Dear Jesus, thank You for always working everything out for our good, because we love You and You love us, and because You promised to. Help us to see Your hand in everything, and help us to hold tight to Your hand through everything, knowing that You know best and want only the best for us. Amen.



DO WHAT WORKS

WE ALL ACCEPT THE EXISTENCE OF ELECTRICITY, even though no one has ever seen it or fully understands it, not even the scientists. We only know its laws, its effects, and how to channel it to serve many useful purposes. Even so, we must accept the existence of God even though we don't know where He came from or who made Him or how He got here. We simply know that He *does* exist and that the universe in which we live is governed by laws He established.

Electricity makes all sorts of things possible, but it won't do *you* any good until you flip the switch that connects you to the source. Just so, God's power is there, waiting to make your life easier.

You don't have to take anyone else's word for it. Put God to the test! Flip the switch of decision to connect with Him through His Son, Jesus. Once you have experienced God for yourself, there won't be any doubt in your mind that He is who He says He is—our ever-present, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving Creator.

If you haven't yet connected with the power of God, you can right now by inviting His Son, Jesus, into your life. Simply pray this short prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank You for coming to Earth and dying for me so I can be reconnected to God. I open the door of my heart and invite You in. Amen. ◀

YOU CAN TOO! WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR OTHERS, HE CAN DO FOR YOU!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

JESUS LEFT HIS FOLLOWERS WITH AN AMAZING PROMISE OF SUPERNATURAL POWER. "Anyone believing in Me shall do the same miracles I have done, and even greater ones, because I am going to be with the Father" (John 14:12 TLB).

That promise has stood for two thousand years, and multitudes of Christians have done those "greater things." God empowered otherwise ordinary people like you and me to work His miracles, and that same power can work miracles through us today if we will simply believe and act on God's Word.

The trouble is, most people put God's promises of power in either the past or the future. The past was wonderful, glorious, and supernatural, with all those heroes of the faith working miracles and angels intervening on behalf of God's people. And the future is going to be marvelous and "miraculous" in Heaven. But they don't believe that any of those things could happen in the present. They say, "Of course you couldn't expect anything like that now." But that's not what the Bible says!

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). God is still the God of miracles. What He's done before, He can do again—and not only later, but right now if you need it and have faith for it. If ordinary believers in the past have already done miracles by the scores and scores, in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as throughout the past two thousand years, then Christians today can do them too! ◀



THE FAITH FACTOR

ADAPTED FROM DAVID BRANDT BERG

ONE OF THE GREATEST HEALING FACTORS IS FAITH, KNOWING THAT GOD LOVES US AND IS GOING TO TAKE CARE OF US NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS. Faith eliminates fear and tension, which are two of the greatest causes of disease and ill health. Those and other negative mental states such as worry, hatred, and bitterness can contribute to various psychological and nervous disorders, as well as physiological conditions such as heart trouble, arthritis, and stomach ulcers.

A negative state of mind can have a negative effect on the body, but if we can counter that negativity, we will find peace of mind, which will reduce stress on vital organs and promote health. This is why peaceful meditation, positive attitudes, and concentrating on good thoughts have a good effect on both mind and body. “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”¹

The Bible also tells us repeatedly not to worry or be fearful, but rather to ask God to work things out and to trust that He will. “Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”² “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”³ “In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid.”⁴ “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”⁵ “Do not be afraid; only believe.”⁶

Faith in God gives you peace of mind, contentment of heart, and a sense of spiritual well-being—all of which tend to greatly improve your physical well-being.

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994) WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

1. Philippians 4:8

3. Psalm 46:1–2

5. John 14:27

2. Joshua 1:9

4. Psalm 56:11

6. Mark 5:36

We can never be completely happy or whole until we establish a loving relationship with God through His Son, Jesus. You can do that right now by praying this simple prayer:

“Jesus, I believe in You and want to get to know You better. Please be with me always. Amen.”

THE HEALTH AND HAPPINESS CONNECTION

He who has health has hope and he who has hope has everything.
—*Arabian proverb*

It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.—*Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)*

Happiness is nothing more than good health and a bad memory.—*Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965)*

It is amazing how much crisper the general experience of life becomes when your body is given a chance to develop a little strength.—*Frank Duff (1889–1980)*

A healthy relationship with God contributes to better overall health by alleviating worry. “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”¹—*David Brandt Berg (1919–1994)*

It is against God’s rules of health and happiness to work seven days a week.—*David Brandt Berg*

God wants you to be a well-balanced, well-rounded individual, physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. That means not going to extremes. Use a little common sense. —*David Brandt Berg*

It tells us that mind and body are linked and that attitude has an impact on the final outcome, death.—*Toshihiko Maruta, lead researcher of a decades-long study by the Mayo Clinic in which optimistic people lived about 19% longer than pessimists*

1. Philippians 4:7

2. John 13:17

GOD'S HEALTH PLAN

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

It’s better to stay healthy than to have to be healed. Remember, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. A fence at the top of the cliff is better than a hospital at the bottom. The best way to prevent illness is to obey God’s natural health laws: live right, eat right, work right, play right, rest right, love right, and maintain a right relationship with Him.

You cannot violate God’s health rules or abuse your body and expect to be healthy, because God made you with built-in mechanisms to make you wish you hadn’t if you do. It’s not that God enjoys punishing you or seeing you suffer. To the contrary, He made His health rules because He loves you and wants to protect you from harm. The rules are to help you be happier and get more out of life by making sure you do what you can to keep yourself healthy and whole. “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”²

God created you, and He knows what is best for you. Take care of God’s creation by following His commonsense rules, and He will bless you with good health. ■

**OPTIMISM
AND
THANKFULNESS**

the outlook

may not always be easy, but the uplook is great!

And so I rested,
because God
said to.

leave you nor forsake you; just cast your burden on Me.”

And so I rested, because God said to. And I cast my burden on Him, because He said to do that, too. I forgot my anger, rolled over, went to sleep, and I endured the next few days of doing battle with the measles. I also managed a faint smile most of the time, because there really wasn't any point in taking out my frustrations on those around me.

Now I see God's perfect timing in everything. The day after I had completely recovered, I was thrown into a hectic schedule and thanked the Lord for that week of spiritual and physical rest. I had also found that it doesn't work to blame disaster on God; where I have a question, He has a very good reason why.

And I found out one more thing: He keeps His promises. The agent called again to set up another appointment. The Lord promised that in the message my friend got for me when I was sick, didn't He? It proves that when you spend time with the Lord and put your trust in Him, He plans a perfect schedule. •

You can't just be God's fair-weather friend. If you are only going to be willing to believe and trust the Lord as long as everything goes all right, you won't be believing or trusting very much, because "many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psalm 34:19).

The *good* news is that when you hit bottom, that's when you can start on your way up—if you look to the Lord and let Him help you! When things look darkest, don't look down, look up! Start praising the Lord, and you will often praise your way right out of the pit into which the Devil is trying to cast you! When the Devil tempts you to get down and discouraged, fight! Don't even listen to him, much less surrender!

It all depends on which way you point your antenna. If you're downhearted and cast down, it's because you've got your antenna pointed down toward Hell instead of up toward Heaven. Doubt, fear, discouragement, and complaining kill, but faith, trust, courage, and praising the Lord make alive. Look to Jesus and live!

Just open up your heart and let the sunshine in! When you look up, the sky is the limit. Up there the sun is always shining!

—David Brandt Berg

Coming next ...

Need help with your uplook? Want to learn how to live above the problems and disappointments that can cloud your days? Don't miss the next issue of *Activated*.



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!

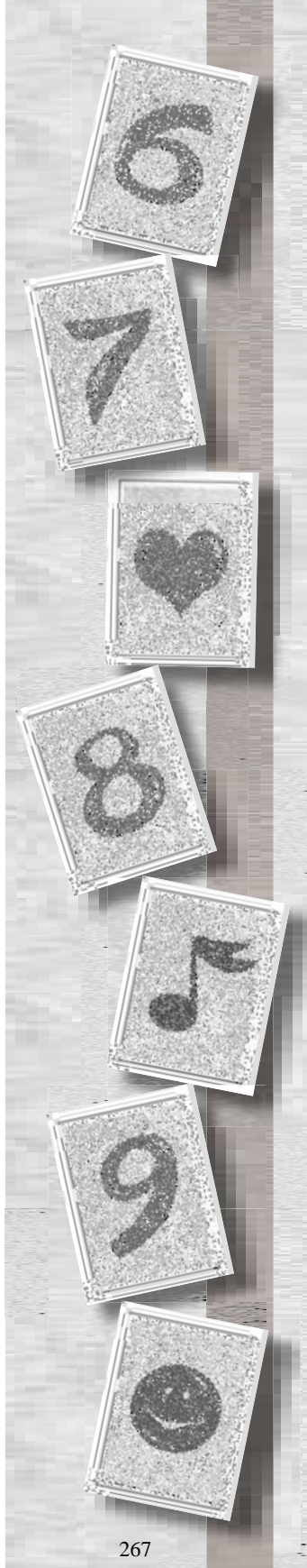
about anything at all, if we would start this little “Count Your Blessings” game immediately, our “plight” would compare so favorably with that of others or worse situations that we’ve been in ourselves that we would come out shouting for joy for how good the Lord has been to us.

When we play this game, we should always compare ourselves favorably, never unfavorably. If you look at those who seem to be *better* off than you, you’ll go into the depths of despair. This is usually what we are doing when we complain—looking at others who are better off or thinking of ourselves at another time when we were better off. But if we would think of all those who are *worse* off than we are, then it would be very difficult for us to complain about our lot, since there are nearly always many, many more who are worse off!

No matter how “bad off” we are, if we have and love the Lord and know that He loves us, we are among the most blessed people on earth! Even our problems we can be sure are for a good purpose, and we can find cause for rejoicing in the knowledge that they will ultimately accomplish some good in our lives. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). “Most gladly I will ... boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Take the *positive* approach. Count your blessings!

(MARIA FONTAINE IS THE CO-LEADER OF THE FAMILY, ALONG WITH HER HUSBAND PETER AMSTERDAM.)



THINK ON THE GOOD

It’s the Devil who tries to get us to unfavorably compare ourselves to others. The Lord tells us that we shouldn’t think about those negative things at all: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Whether abounding or abasing, we should be thankful for whatever we’ve got (Philippians 4:11–12). “Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord” (Psalm 150:6). “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:2). We could all praise the Lord more and be more positive. Thank God for the health you do have. Thank God that you’re not completely incapacitated. All kinds of things could be wrong with you, so thank the Lord for the blessings you do have. Stay positive, thankful, and full of praise to Jesus!

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

you are
Unique!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

DO YOU KNOW WHO THE HAPPIEST PEOPLE ARE? Those who just accept themselves the way God made them, who learn to be happy with what they have and are not overly concerned about what others think. Struggling to live up to what you think others expect of you puts a real weight on you, but there's freedom in humility.

If you were honest, I think you'd admit that you really admire people who have the courage to just be themselves, rather than try so hard to be something they're not in order to fit in or impress others. Of course, those who make such decisions and take such stands often face loneliness and a feeling of isolation from others around them, which is sad.

You know, when I was young I didn't like the way I looked. I thought my nose was too big and that I was too skinny and ugly. I had quite an inferiority complex about that, and it took me a long time to get over it. Part of it was my pride, and part of it was comparing. But then as I grew older, I realized it really didn't matter. I understood that the Lord made me the way He wanted me, and that He made me that way because He loved me.

He loves you the way He made you, and you're beautiful in His eyes. We're



all unique and special. In His eyes there is no ugliness, no matter what we look like.

Building self-esteem often has a lot to do with your relationship with the Lord. The closer you draw to Him and the more at peace you are with Him, the more content and at peace you'll be with yourself, the happier you'll be, and the more relaxed you'll be. When you're living close to the Lord, you're handsome or beautiful because His love and His light shine through.

I have a suggestion for you: Sit down sometime and let the Lord speak to you about yourself. Or ask someone else to pray and ask Him to tell you how He sees you, what your inner beauties are, what your inner strengths are, and what gifts and abilities He likes to bring forth in you, that He likes to see shine for others. Let Him encourage you, and you'll find that you can actually be quite happy being His unique creation.

(DAVID BRANDT BERG [1919–1994] WAS THE FOUNDER AND LEADER OF THE FAMILY.)

He loves you
the way He
made you,
and you're
beautiful in
His eyes.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

You could have made me perfect by my standards or someone else's, Jesus, but You didn't. Instead, You made me just the way You wanted me—perfect according to Your standard. To doubt that is to doubt Your love, but to realize that is to find perfect peace, security, and rest in Your love. Take me now, just as I am, into Your heart of hearts. Amen.

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

DUMPS



THIS MORNING I WAS DISCOURAGED and frustrated about something. My wife sensed it, so she cheerfully began to sing this chorus:

Cheer up, you saints of God, there's nothing to worry about,
Nothing to make you feel afraid, nothing to make you doubt!
Our God has never failed, so why not trust Him and shout?
You'll be glad you trusted Him tomorrow!

The problem is that when you're downcast, if you start talking about the situation, you usually end up voicing your complaints and doubts and speaking defeat. That's what I did when I replied half-jokingly: "Fold up, you

saints of God, there's nothing to be happy about!" I was just singing it lightheartedly, but it was really the way I was feeling—and it was kind of nice for a while. "Poor me!"

When you have the poomes, you're usually just trying to get attention and sympathy. When the children of Israel complained in the wilderness, they were trying to make Moses and the Lord feel sorry for them (Exodus 16:2-3). Your pride is wounded, your ego has been a little deflated, your self-confidence has been a little shaken, and you begin to wonder then if everything is a mistake. Maybe you are

IN COME
MR. AND
MRS. DOUBT
AND ALL
THE LITTLE
DOUBTLETS,
AND MR.
AND MRS.
DEVIL AND
ALL THE
LITTLE
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YOU PULL UP
A CHAIR AND
INVITE THEM
TO TALK IT
OVER.

never right about anything! In come Mr. and Mrs. Doubt and all the little Doubtlets, and Mr. and Mrs. Devil and all the little Devils, and you pull up a chair and invite them to talk it over—and pretty soon you start agreeing with them. “Yes, that’s right! I never was very much of a Christian after all! How could God use me? I don’t really have a very victorious, overcoming life, and I’m not perfect. I’m just a big mess. I might as well quit!”

It’s because you get your eyes on yourself instead of the Lord—introspection instead of “Heaven-spection.” You think so much about yourself and your own faults, frailties, mistakes, and sins that your “self” really gets you down. The Devil, your spiritual foe and the enemy of happiness, can tell you a lot of truth about yourself that’s horrible, not to speak of the lies he tells you, so if you start listening to the Devil, there’s no end to it. If you listen to him, he can make you sound even worse than you really are, and that’s pretty bad!

Then you start listening to your critics, or perhaps some friend or member of your family makes some casual remark that they don’t really mean or that you misinterpret, and the Devil exaggerates the situation until you get disheartened and feel like giving up.

It reminds me of King David when he said, “Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul” (1 Samuel 27:1). How could David have made a

song out of that? It would have sounded terrible! “Someday I shall surely die! Someday I will be defeated. Someday the Devil will get me. Someday my enemies will kill me. Maybe it’s not worth it after all! God has failed me. I’m a failure. I might as well quit!”—Which was exactly what the Devil wanted to persuade David to do by that barrage of doubt and self-pity.

How could David have made a song out of that? What kind of doleful dirge, sung in a mournful minor key, would that have been? I guess that’s why you never find that in one of David’s psalms. David evidently said it, because he’s quoted in the Bible as saying it—one of those brief little outbursts prompted by the Devil that manages to get through before we catch ourselves and realize how bad it really sounds. But David had enough sense not to make a song out of it and keep singing that tune. Instead, in the book of Psalms he takes a positive approach, defying his enemies and praising God in spite of his troubles, because he knew that God would work everything out, because He always had and because He promised to.

When you’re discouraged, the Devil makes you mad at the truth because he’s about to be defeated by it. He makes you angry when people try to cheer you up, and makes you upset at the very people who are trying to help you, because you can’t enjoy your misery as much if they’re trying to make you happy. You’re ashamed because your defeatism looks so bad alongside their victorious attitude, so you attempt to cover up in a fit of fury against them, or you try to find fault with them and others and everything—even God—to excuse yourself for being such a grouch.

So this morning I was tempted to get mad at my wife when she tried to cheer me up with that song, and I responded, “Oh, yeah?” and jokingly began to sing the reverse: “Fold up, you saints of God, there’s nothing to be happy about; everything to make you feel afraid, everything to make you doubt.” That far was a little funny because it was so obviously defiant and my sin was so apparent, but when I got to the next line and saw what the reverse of the song was leading to, it scared me and I didn’t

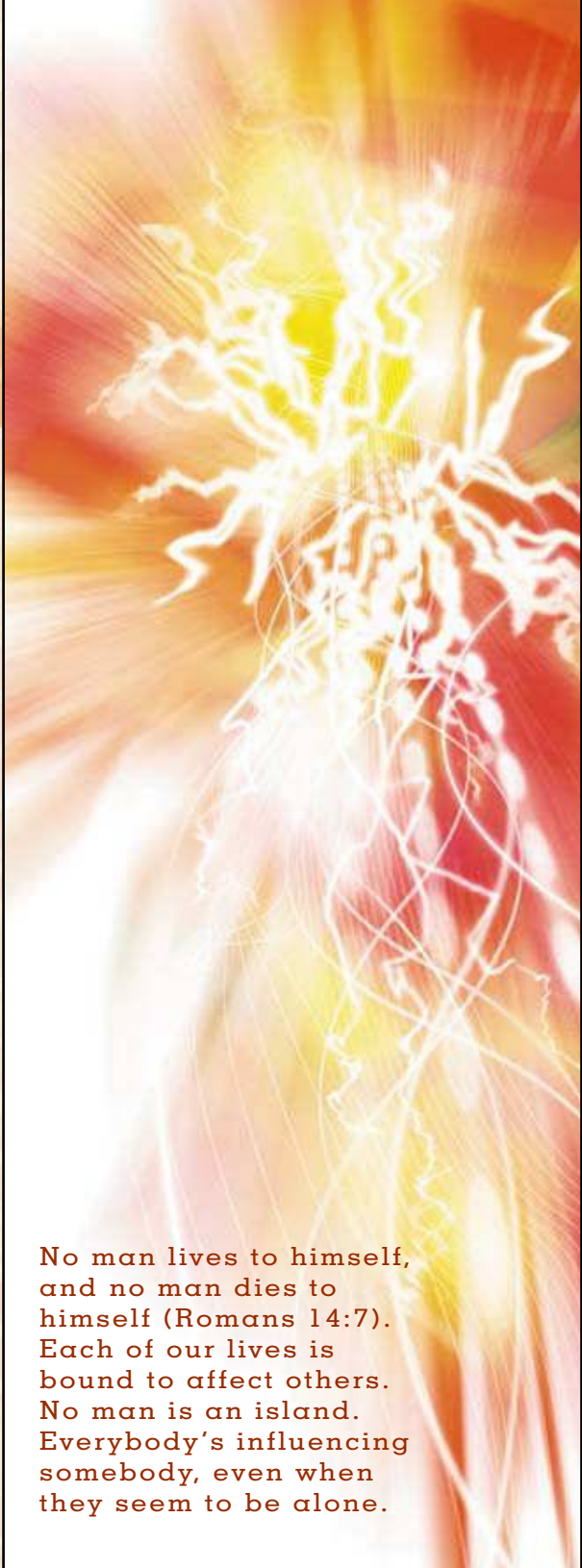
care to go on singing it. I knew God wasn't wrong and He had never failed. So how could I sing, "Our God has always failed, so why not murmur and doubt? You'll be sorry you trusted Him tomorrow!" If there's anything I know, it is that God has never failed and I've always been glad I trusted Him tomorrow. So I knew that was a lie and I just couldn't possibly sing the song in reverse, no matter how bad I felt. It just wasn't the truth!

Look what a horrible lie even that little song is, if you sing it in reverse. That's the way the Devil operates: He starts out seemingly innocent and honest with something that doesn't seem too bad. "Fold up, you saints of God, there's nothing to be happy about"—which is the way we sometimes feel when we get discouraged. But it's the horror that this leads to that shakes us up and shocks us into realizing what a liar the Devil is and how bad a state we're getting into.

Thank God for His shock treatments when we realize what a terrible thing we're saying or doing as a result of some little doubt or fear or disobedience that we started with. One of the things that helped snap me out of it was when I realized what a terrible example I was being to my wife, who was trying to lift me up and encourage me, while I was resisting it. Even if I was half joking, the danger of dragging her down with me finally woke me up. I realized that I had to get the victory for her sake, if nothing else!

My grandfather used to say, "If you must go to Hell, at least don't let somebody else stumble over you into Hell too!" But this isn't possible, because if you're going to Hell you're bound to drag others with you. Everybody has influence. No man lives to himself, and no man dies to himself (Romans 14:7). Each of our lives is bound to affect others. No man is an island. Everybody's influencing somebody, even when they seem to be alone.

Sometimes just a word or a glance or a smile can make a big difference—how we act or sound or seem. If it's not cheerful and victorious and uplifting, then it could easily hurt others and pull them down with us. We're either going to



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pull people up to our level or drag them down to it, one or the other.

Just a little bit of doubt, a little bit of fear, a little bit of complaint, a little bit of discouragement, can grow and grow until you are completely defeated and a terrible influence on others. You never stop until you hit bottom—unless you repent and snap out of it and ask God to forgive you and throw out the Devil’s whole pack of lies and all your doubts and fears and discouragement, and follow Jesus and His Word, and hold on to His promises. The future is as bright as the promises of God!

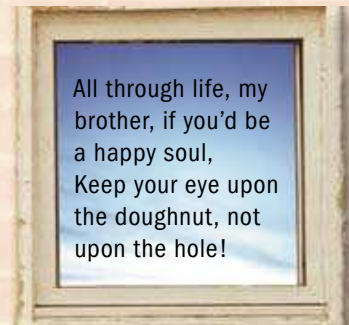
You’re going to either be positive or negative, one or the other. You can’t be just a little bit of both. That’s what the Devil will try to tell you: “It doesn’t hurt to be just a little disheartened, to feel just a little bit sorry for yourself. After all, you deserve to enjoy a little bit of discouragement so you can get some sympathy from others. Why not? Misery loves company! Let’s make everybody else a little bit miserable, too, so we can all enjoy it!”

The minute you start listening to the Devil you’re done for, because there’s no end to it, no stopping place! He’ll never

quit until he’s dragged you to the very bottom and left you utterly defeated, a terrible reproach to the cause of Christ and a drag on everybody around you.

So, if you’re discouraged, friend, for God’s sake don’t murmur, complain, and voice your doubts and fears to others! They may already have burdens more than they can bear. Yours may be the last straw.

If we don’t keep our eyes on the Lord and our mind on His Word, we’re doomed to defeat, doubt, disillusionment, and final failure!



Keep your eyes on Heaven. Keep your eyes on the goal, and the victory in your soul. Always shout, never doubt! When the Devil tempts you to get down and discouraged, fight! Don’t even listen to him, much less surrender. Start doing something positive. Start saying something cheerful and encouraging—like my wife did for me this morning, when she began to sing, “Cheer up, you saints of God” in her sweet way, the best she could, trying to remind me to trust the Lord.

Only Jesus, only Jesus, only He can satisfy.
Every burden becomes a blessing,
When I know my Lord is nigh! ■

“DUMPS” WAS EXCERPTED FROM THE ARTICLE OF THE SAME NAME. THE FULL VERSION IS AVAILABLE IN *GREATER VICTORIES*, A BOOK FROM AURORA PRODUCTION.

praise POWER

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

MY WIFE, MARIA, WAS FEELING VERY TIRED AND HAD SUCH A HEADACHE THAT SHE HAD BECOME DISCOURAGED ABOUT HER HEALTH.

As I prayed for her, I was reminded of the verse that tells us not to be weary and “faint in our minds” (Hebrews 12:3 KJV). I think the Lord wanted to inspire her to have a little more fight.

Our spiritual enemy, the Devil, really fights us, but as long as we keep fighting back, he can't win. It reminds me of a song my mother used to sing when the going got tough:



Keep on believing; God answers prayer.
Keep on believing; He's still up there.
Sorrows and troubles will soon disappear:
Nothing can harm you when Jesus is near.

Keep on believing; the storm will pass,
Look for the rainbow; 'twill come at last.
Trust in His promise: 'twas written for you.
Keep on believing and praise your way through!

TAKE A POSITIVE STAND
against the Devil
and his attacks.

The original lyrics say, “Keep on believing and *pray* your way through,” but my mother was a great one for praise so she sang it, “*Praise* your way through.” That’s how you get the victory! If you believe in prayer, you’re going to start praising the Lord for answering your prayers even before you see those answers.

So I said to Maria, “You need to fight, and you need to praise the Lord more instead of talking about your weakness and headaches. As long as you’re thinking about the Word and the Lord and you’ve got a song of praise on your lips, you can’t complain and moan and groan about how bad you feel.

“You need to attack the Devil! When you feel down, quote Scripture or sing a praise song! You need to refuse to talk about your problems. Praise the Lord and thank God for the health you *do* have!”

God will keep in perfect peace, those whose minds are fixed on Him (Isaiah 26:3). If you keep your mind on the Lord, that keeps you from thinking about your troubles. Whatever you do, don’t go around moaning and groaning and complaining and spreading the Devil’s doubts and lies! The minute you feel like doing that, go on the attack by praising the Lord. Sing! Quote Scripture! Do something positive!

Maria asked, “Isn’t it being dishonest to act like I’m not sick when I am?”—And immediately the story in the Bible about the prophet Elisha and the Shunam-

mite woman came to mind (2 Kings 4:8–37).

One day the woman’s young son died of sunstroke out in the field. Immediately, his mother took him into the house and put him in the room she had built for Elisha to stay in whenever he passed that way. She laid the boy on the prophet’s bed and ran off to Mount Carmel, some miles away, where she found Elisha. He greeted her and asked, “Is it well with you?” and she answered, “It is well.” Then Elisha asked, “Is it well with the boy?” and she said, “It is well.” Was she lying?—No. She had faith that even though the boy was dead, he was in God’s hands and it was well with him. Then she told Elisha what had happened and asked the prophet to come and pray for her son, who was then miraculously raised from the dead.

It’s not that the Lord wants you to hide the fact that you’re sick. You should humble yourself and admit that you’re sick so others can pray for you to be healed, but you shouldn’t go around complaining about it. Admit it and ask for prayer, but then try to be cheerful, encouraging, and show you have faith. Be positive and praise the Lord.

You need to take a positive stand against the Devil and his attacks. Resist the Enemy, God’s Word tells us, and he will flee from you (James 4:7). If you just resign yourself to feeling ill, that’s bad—and if you complain about it, that’s even worse

because then you’re testifying to the Devil’s handiwork.

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” but most of them are minor, thank the Lord. They are just enough to keep us close to the Lord and praying and trusting and praising the Lord and asking the Lord for help. King David also said, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your Word,” and, “Unless Your [Word] had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction” (Psalm 119:67,92). That’s probably why the Lord allows His children to have many afflictions—because that’s what keeps them righteous.

When you seem to be excessively tired or have frequent headaches or other troubles, it’s natural to wonder why you’re feeling bad. Well, now you know: It’s so you can go on the attack and resist the Devil, because it’s *him* fighting you. Also, the Lord may be trying to teach you something else through your suffering. That passage in Hebrews chapter 12 that talks about not fainting in your mind also says a lot about chastening, or training. I think dear Maria is learning her lesson, because I haven’t heard her complain again about her health.

The Bible tells us that God dwells, He is enthroned, in the praises of His children (Psalm 22:3), and that we are to come into His presence with thanksgiving and praise (Psalm 100:4). “In *everything* give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). ■



HAPPINESS!

HALLELUJAH FOR HAPPINESS! BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

IN SOME CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS, AS WELL AS IN SOME OTHER RELIGIONS, THE MORE THE DEVOTEES SUFFER AND THE SADDER THEY ARE, THE MORE RELIGIOUS THEY ARE CONSIDERED

TO BE. But for the born-again Christian, it's supposed to be just the opposite! One measure of Christians' spirituality or religiosity is whether they're truly happy, both inwardly and outwardly.

God hasn't made religion difficult and grievous, and Jesus certainly didn't make it that way. That's always been the fault of religious leaders and teachers who changed things and interpreted things to suit themselves, to exalt themselves and to try to get a tighter control on the people—who, as Jesus said, “bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Matthew 23:4).

I don't see how any people are ever going to be truly happy without the Lord. Even if they have all of their physical needs supplied, they have to have something to satisfy their spiritual needs and their hunger for happiness. Thank God that's what we have in Jesus!

I enjoy everything God has given, and I'm very happy! Even our work makes us happy—if it's work that we know is doing some good and helping people. Our religion makes us happy, our work makes us happy, our play makes us happy, and we have very little that makes us unhappy, except the fact that some other people are not happy.

Sometimes I wonder if I made the right decision or did the right thing, which concerns me and causes me for a little while to not be as happy as I should be. But I always come out of the woods afterwards to find out that the Lord helped everything work out for the best and I shouldn't have worried after all (Romans 8:28).

And we are sometimes sick, of course. That may not make us feel very happy for a while, but even that doesn't destroy our total happiness. Our physical condition may leave a little something to be desired—health and strength—but it doesn't make us all that unhappy. We can still be very happy in spirit and mentally.

When I see people who aren't happy, I always figure there must be something wrong with their religion. That's why we should take every opportunity we get to urge others to enjoy the same happiness that we have. If they haven't got it and they see that we do, they're going to wonder what the difference is, and they're going to want it too—and the difference, of course, is Jesus!

So, hallelujah for happiness! Thank God for a happy religion and a happy life! Thank the Lord for being able to

enjoy all the physical pleasures He gives us, as well as the spiritual pleasures. We've got everything! The only thing I can think of that I want is for other people to be as happy as I am. That's the only real longing or need that I have—the desire to help others understand all that Jesus has to offer, and to help make them happy.

Thank God for happiness and enjoyment of life, our religion, and the Lord! As I often sing:

Happy now, happy now,
Since I found the favor of my loving Savior.
All the past, gone at last,
And I don't care when or how, praise God!
I'm happy now, happy now,
I have lasting joy!
Oh, the Devil's deserted,
And I am converted,
And I'm happy, happy, happy, happy now! ■

THE SOURCE

So many people today don't know what to believe. They don't know where they came from, who they are, or where they're going. They're in absolute confusion—because they've lost touch with the only concrete frame of reference, and that's God and His plan for their life as explained in the Bible. They've either never had or lost faith in God, so therefore they lose faith in love and life and people—in everything!

But we who have found God's love in Jesus have found a God that cannot fail and a love that lasts forever. We know Him, whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3). We've been born again and now have an entirely new outlook on life. His coming into our lives not only purifies and regenerates our spirits, but also renews our minds, breaking old connections and reflexes and gradually rebuilding and rewiring our mind into a whole new computer system with new reactions to nearly everything around us.

Besides the wonderful happiness, life, and love that Jesus gives us, we've also found a real purpose in living and Someone to live for. We now find a thrill in our newfound faith, the greatest of satisfaction in our work for Jesus, and pleasure in the fellowship of our spiritual family.

THANK GOD FOR THE GOOD

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

You're a very special creation of God's love, so don't worry about a few blemishes. Imagine how self-righteous and proud we would be if God had made us all perfect! Instead, He gave us all a few blemishes. God doesn't want us to look at the blemishes; He wants us to look at the *good*.

Every time you're tempted to think negatively about yourself, thank God for something He blessed you with instead—good health, a sound mind, or some quality or talent that others admire in you. There are so many things you could thank God for! Think how much worse off you could be—and think of others who are. Pray for someone who is battling a long-term illness or coping daily with a debilitating handicap. Job was delivered from his problems when he prayed for his friends (Job 42:10).

Take a positive approach and pretty soon the instigator of your negative thoughts, the old Devil himself or one of his henchmen, will give up. When your spiritual enemy sees that your praises and prayers are defeating him every time, he'll think twice before tempting you with negative thinking—and you can be thankful for that! ♦

BLESSINGS FROM BATTLES

BY MARIA FONTAINE

Because “many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psalm 34:19), it's certainly comforting to know that “*all* things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). In fact, in order to come through our many trials, difficulties, battles, and temptations victoriously, it is imperative that we make this promise in Romans 8:28 a vital part of our life.

We need to get this principle so deeply ingrained within us that it becomes impossible for us to forget, neglect or overlook it. Romans 8:28 is something that should be as much a part of our conscious and even subconscious thoughts and way of looking at things as the necessity of prayer, the importance of the Word, the inevitability of tests and trials, and the certainty of God's love.





A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

THE SMILE CYCLE

FOR MANY YEARS, DAVID BERG AND HIS WIFE, MARIA, TOOK VIGOROUS WALKS FOR THEIR DAILY EXERCISE. At one point, they kept crossing paths with a certain older man. They eventually learned that he was a bachelor and that his name was Feliciano, meaning “happy.” He seemed anything but happy, though. “He had the grumpiest look you ever saw,” Berg later recalled. “He was always well dressed in a nice suit, and he seemed to be an important man in town, but he would walk along with his hands folded behind his back, staring at the ground. Whenever Maria or I tried to catch his eye and smile at him, he quickly looked the other way. We wanted so much to turn his frown into a smile that we made that our secret project. It took two years, but finally he smiled back at us. From that day on, Feliciano’s countenance and whole manner changed.”

Thankfully, most people aren’t such tough cases. Your smile can chase away the clouds hanging over someone else, and you’ll brighten your own day in the process. It is almost impossible to smile on the outside without feeling better on the inside. Smiling relaxes you and those around you. Smiling starts a positive cycle: It chases away the blues and helps create a positive atmosphere, which causes everything to go smoother, which gives you more to smile and be happy about, which causes you to thank God for His blessings, which pleases Him and makes Him want to bless you more, which gives you more to smile about. ... You get the idea.

Over the next hour, make an effort to smile more. See if you can keep that smile all day. Try keeping it up for a week, and see what a difference that makes. ❀

Smile, though your heart is aching,
Smile, even though it’s breaking,
When there are clouds in the sky you’ll get by if you
Smile through your pain and sorrow,
Smile, and maybe tomorrow
You’ll see the sun come shining through for you,
if you just smile.

—LYRICS BY JOHN TURNER AND GEOFFREY PARSONS (1954), SET TO
MUSIC COMPOSED BY CHARLIE CHAPLIN FOR HIS 1936 SILENT FILM
CLASSIC MODERN TIMES.

FEEDING READING What is truth?

Today “truth” has come to mean “something honest or factual,” but here it is used in the deeper sense of “a transcendent fundamental or spiritual reality.”

We should seek truth.
Psalm 25:5
Proverbs 23:23
1 Timothy 2:4

God has promised to reveal His truth to us.
Jeremiah 33:6
John 15:26
John 8:31–32

God’s Word is truth.
Psalm 119:142
Psalm 119:151
John 17:17

Jesus is the Word made flesh; He is the truth.
John 1:14
John 1:17
John 14:6
Ephesians 4:21

Don’t be led away from the truth.
Colossians 2:8
2 Timothy 4:4
1 John 4:6

Truth is pervasive and timeless.
Psalm 85:10–11
Psalm 100:5
Psalm 108:4

Commendation

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

JESUS PRAISES PEOPLE FOR THEIR GOOD QUALITIES AND GIVES THEM CREDIT WHEN THEY DO WELL. In the parables He told, He commended the servants who had invested their master's money well,¹ and He even commended the unscrupulous servant for dealing shrewdly.² He said of Nathanael that there was no deceit to be found in him.³ God commends lots of people throughout the Bible. He said of Job, "There is none like him on the Earth,"⁴ and He apparently told the prophet Samuel that young David was a man after God's own heart, because Samuel said as much when he singled out David to be the next king of Israel.⁵

All the way through the Bible God commended people for their good works, and He promises to reward us for our good

work. It has nothing to do with our salvation. We get salvation as a gift of His love and mercy and grace, but He still commends and rewards us when we do the right things with the right motivation.

When we look to Jesus in prayer and ask Him to help us, He does. He helps us do things we couldn't do on our own, but even then we nearly always need to do something—our part—to bring about the desired result. When we do, Jesus gives us credit. That's apparent when you

consider all the scriptures about rewards and crowns in Heaven and so forth.⁶

He gives us credit when we do the best we can with what He's given us. It's like the story of the farmer who gave a visitor a tour of his farm, and the visitor said, "What a lovely farm God has given you!" "Yes," the farmer replied, "but you should have seen it when *God* had it!" In other words, before the farmer had done all the hard work of clearing the land, plowing the fields, and caring for the crops. Even the Garden of Eden had to have somebody to take care of it, and God gave Adam that job when He put him there.⁷

That principle applies to our natural abilities and talents, our bodies and looks, and all the rest. God gives us the basics to begin with, and He wants to see what we're going to do with them. To be all we can be, we've got to work with what

¹ Matthew 25:14-23

⁴ Job 1:8

² Luke 16:8

⁵ 1 Samuel 13:14

³ John 1:47

⁶ Daniel 12:3; Matthew 6:19-21; 16:27; 25:21; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2

Timothy 4:7-8; Revelation 2:10

⁷ Genesis 2:15

He's given us, and when we do, He commends us.

And that's the way God wants us to be with others. People ought to be commended, and it needs to be genuine. There's a difference between genuine praise and flattery. Almost everybody needs encouragement. Most people are not conceited or stuck on themselves. In fact, I think most people feel insecure or inferior in one or more areas, and they tend to get discouraged with themselves. That's why encouragement is so important.

People thrive on praise. Any wise parent or boss will tell you that. It's more important to praise a child for good work and good behavior than it is to scold for bad behavior, and the same holds true for grown-ups. If you want to bring out the best in people and succeed in your relationships with them, always accentuate the positive.

One of the worst things you can do is to dwell on people's shortcomings, belittling, nagging, and finding fault. That sort of thing will sabotage relationships faster than almost anything, and it's been responsible for many failed marriages. It reminds

me of the story of a woman and a divorce court judge. She simply couldn't live with "that man" one day more, the woman told the judge, and she enumerated her husband's faults. On and on she went.

Finally she paused to catch her breath, and the judge asked, "Well, why did you marry him in the first place? You must have liked something about him then. What was it?"

"Well," the wife said, "he was a good man, a hard worker, and a faithful provider. He was also kind to children, and he was loyal."

"Isn't he still all those things?" asked the judge.

"Well, yes," the wife replied in a huff, "but..." And she started to repeat her grievances. "He's terrible! He throws his clothes on the floor. He never puts anything away. He's always late for dinner. He's hard to get up in the morning. He picks his nose in public. He fusses if I burn the toast. ..." All were relatively insignificant offenses.

"Very well then," said the judge, "here's my preliminary ruling: Go home and think about those good qualities for which you first loved him,

"The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives."—

Anthony Robbins

and try not to think about the things he does that peeve you. If after 30 days you still want the divorce, come back."

The judge never saw the woman again.

We create a problem when we dwell on people's weaknesses and bad traits. "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."¹ Try that the next time you get frustrated or impatient or upset with someone. Remind yourself of his or her good qualities, and try not to think about the bad things.

Don't you appreciate it when people show you that kind of consideration? And doesn't it spur you on to give your best when someone shows you appreciation for a job well done? It's part of living the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.² •

¹ Philippians 4:8

² Matthew 7:12



STUNTED GROWTH

BY PETER STORY

Just imagine a world full of people who truly believe that anything is possible

WHEN I WAS A KID, I saw plenty of goldfish in the houses of my friends, and I remember wondering why so many people would want to keep such small, unexciting creatures as pets.

Then one day, when I was about ten years old, I went on a school field trip to a botanical garden that had a pond stocked with fish. One especially large, brilliantly colored fish stood out to me.

“What kind of fish is that one?” I asked our guide.

“That’s a goldfish,” she replied.

I was confused. “Aren’t goldfish supposed to be small?” I asked with a note of 9-year-old sarcasm.

“Not at all,” she replied.

“Goldfish will grow even larger than these. It really just depends on the size of their environment.”

I took in the information and determined to never again show myself so ignorant about goldfish, but it was years before I understood the broader lesson.

How often have I been like a goldfish in a fishbowl? How

often have I limited myself by my perception of my world? Worse still, how many times have I put others in a small bowl in my mind? How many times have I written off someone as insignificant or unexciting? How many times have I failed to see others’ potential to grow?

How much more could I achieve if I forgot my perceived limitations and dared to swim

beyond the boundaries I’ve set for myself? And what would happen if I moved others from their small bowls into the ocean of limitless possibilities that Jesus offers?

Just imagine a world full of people with that perspective, who truly believe that anything is possible and reach out to claim it. Together we could do astounding things. Together we could work miracles. ✂

CIRCUMSTANCES

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

When you’re stuck in a situation that’s not to your liking, you’ll be amazed sometimes at what a little positiveness can do. It’s only natural to see all the things that are wrong with the situation, or to remember all the times you had it better, or to look at those who currently seem to have it better, but you’re not going to be happy that way. You *will* be happy, though, if you decide that you’re going to be thankful for what you have, rather than dwelling on what you don’t have.

When you look for the good in a situation and focus on that, the things that you don’t like about it fade into the background. The circumstances may not have changed a bit, but if you change your attitude, it will be as if the circumstances have changed too, because your perception of them will be different. ✂

be happy!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

THERE'S SUCH A THING AS BEING TOO SOBER AND TAKING THINGS TOO SERIOUSLY, ESPECIALLY OURSELVES.

The ability to laugh at ourselves is a great asset and helps keep us humble. People who can't laugh at their own mistakes or take the mistakes of others with a sense of humor are either too proud or have too severe a sense of life.

God intended for us to enjoy living, and He has given us the ability, senses, and environment to do so. In fact, our main purpose in life is, as Martin Luther once said, "to love God and enjoy Him forever."

If there's anything we Christians are supposed to be, it's happy people.¹ We've got more to be happy about than anybody else in the world. We have the happy love of Jesus, who takes all of our burdens, carries all of our cares, and lightens all of our sorrows. Jesus says that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.²

If you're finding His yoke too heavy to bear, then maybe you're not "casting all your care upon Him."³ Maybe you're trying to carry too much and pull too hard on your own, instead of letting God do it by His power, His love, His grace, and His strength. He says, "Without Me you can do nothing."⁴ "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you."⁵

1. Psalm 146:5

2. Matthew 11:28–30

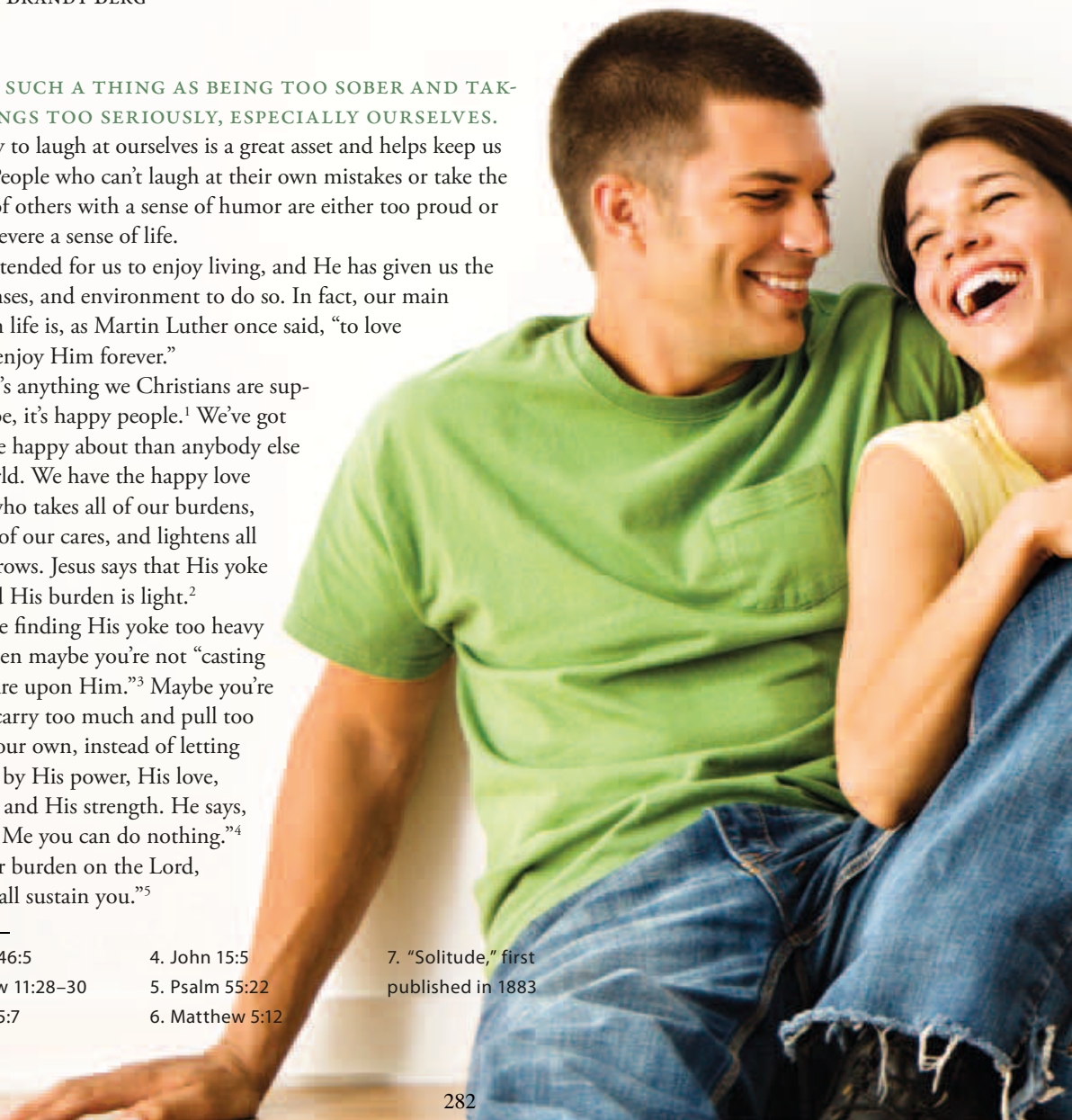
3. 1 Peter 5:7


4. John 15:5

5. Psalm 55:22

6. Matthew 5:12

7. "Solitude," first published in 1883





When I was a young man, a missionary who had evangelized a country that was closed to the Gospel stayed with my family for a while. As he helped wash the dinner dishes one evening, I marveled at his humility, grace, and happy, cheerful spirit. Here was a man who had done great things for the Lord, humbly washing dishes with me.

Since I was planning to become a missionary myself, I asked a question that I expected he, of all people, would know the answer to: What quality do you think a missionary needs the most? I expected some solemn and profound answer from his vast wealth of wisdom

and experience, so you can imagine my surprise when he paused, hands in sink, looked at me with a smile, and said, “A sense of humor—the ability to laugh when you feel like crying.”

So let’s always be able to smile through our tears. A ray of sunshine is even more beautiful in the midst of rain. Let’s have a little more sunshine and laughter, and not so much gloom and doom. The world knows enough hell; let’s show them a little more heaven. “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven.”⁶ As the American poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote, “Laugh, and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone. For the sad old Earth must borrow its mirth, but has troubles enough of its own.”⁷

Let’s be happy! Don’t be gloomy and sullen, lest you be like old Jenny the mule. After a Sunday of constantly hearing “no” and “don’t” at the farm of his religiously strict grandfather, poor little Johnny wandered wistfully out to the barnyard and stroked Jenny’s long nose.

“Dear Jenny, you must be *awfully* religious,” he said, “because you have such a long face—just like Grandfather’s!” That’s some people’s idea of religion. Don’t let it be yours! ■

HOLY HAPPINESS

God is not a sad God; He’s a happy God who wants us to be happy too. The Bible says, “Happy are the people whose God is the Lord.”¹ This is the whole point of salvation, to relieve us of suffering, pain, and death. God is not a monster who’s trying to deny you everything and make you miserable. He loves life and created it for your pleasure. He made this beautiful world as a home for you to live in and enjoy, and He gave you a wonderful body, mind, and heart with which to enjoy it. He even promises you the desires of your heart when you delight yourself in Him.²

—David Brandt Berg

I have a happy religion. I believe with all my heart that Jesus loves us and wants us to be happy. Not only that, but He wants us to genuinely enjoy ourselves, and He wants to enjoy our lives along with us. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”³ His liberating truth and the freedom of His Spirit allow us to enjoy many of the pleasures of life while remaining close to Him. We don’t have to choose between happiness and pleasing the Lord. We can have both!

—Maria Fontaine

1. Psalm 144:15

2. Psalm 37:4

3. 2 Corinthians 3:17

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

the difference-maker

SOME CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS, AS WELL AS SOME OTHER RELIGIONS, TEACH THAT SUFFERING AND SADNESS ARE MEASURES OF SPIRITUALITY OR RELIGIOSITY, but it's supposed to be just the opposite. God doesn't intend for religion to be grievous, and Jesus certainly didn't make it that way.

I don't see how people can be truly happy until they have their deepest needs met. Even if they have everything they could wish for materially, they need something to satisfy their spiritual hunger. Thank God, Jesus does that!

My religion makes me happy, and even my work makes me happy because I know it does people some good. When I'm sick or suffer loss or face other serious problems, I may not feel very happy for a while, but even that doesn't destroy my overall happiness. My physical condition or present circumstance may leave a little

something to be desired, but I can still be happy in spirit.

I have very little to be unhappy about. The only thing I can think of that I want is for other people to be as happy as I am. That's the only real longing or need that I have—the desire to help others understand how much Jesus has to offer, so they can be happy too. That's why I take every opportunity to urge others to open their hearts and lives to Him, because I know they will discover the same happiness I have found. If people see that I'm happy and they're not, they wonder what makes that difference, and they want it for themselves. The difference, of course, is Jesus.

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994) FOUNDED THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. “THE DIFFERENCE-MAKER” IS ADAPTED FROM “HALLELUJAH FOR HAPPINESS,” FIRST PUBLISHED IN MAY 1975. ■



JOY OF THE LORD

Having the joy of the Lord is part of our example as Christians, but that's not the only reason we should pursue it; we also need it ourselves. “The joy of the Lord is your strength.”¹ That joy is found in spending time with Jesus—“In Your presence is fullness of joy.”² It's found in taking in His Word—“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”³ And it's found in putting the Word into practice—“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”⁴—*Maria Fontaine*

THE HIGH ROAD

True, lasting contentment isn't found in our possessions or circumstances, but in staying close to God and following His plan for our lives.—*Virginia Brandt Berg*

1. Nehemiah 8:10

3. John 15:11

2. Psalm 16:11

4. John 13:17 KJV

**PRAYER
AND
COMMUNION
WITH
GOD**



Mountain Men

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

WHEN Jesus climbed the mountain, He left the multitude behind. “And seeing the multitudes, He [Jesus] went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.”¹ Mountain peaks are never crowded. Why? Because it’s hard work getting there. Not very many people desire to climb mountains.

There is more light on the mountain. Long after the valley is in darkness, you can still see the sun. The valley is almost always dark—full of people and things, but usually in darkness. The mountain is windy and cold, but thrilling.

If you’re going to climb a mountain, you have to have the feeling that it’s worth dying for. Any mountain—the mountain of this life, the mountain of accomplishment, the mountain of obstacles, of difficulty—has to be worth braving wind and cold and storm, symbolic of adversities.

Only pioneers climb mountains—people who want to do something that few have ever done before, people who want to get above the multitude and go beyond what has already been

accomplished. Pioneers must have vision—vision to see what no one else can see; faith—faith to believe things no one else believes; initiative—initiative to be the first one to try it; courage—the guts to see it through!

On the mountain you feel like you’re living in eternity, whereas down below they’re living in time. You see the world in its proper perspective, with range after range to be conquered and a world beyond the vision and horizon of normal men. You see distant peaks yet to be climbed, distant valleys yet to be crossed. You see things that the men in the valleys can never see, or even comprehend.

In the valley, people get so caught up in the multitude and the little make-believe world of materialism that they can’t see anything but time and creatures of time and things of time, which are soon to pass away. But if you thrust your head above the multitude, you become like a mountain

¹Matthew 5:1

in their midst, and they will resent and resist and fight you because they can't understand you and don't want you.

They don't even want to know that there *are* mountains! They don't want others to hear there are mountains, nor to have a breath of fresh air from those crystal peaks. They want to keep everyone shut in down in the valley, in the mud and mire. They don't want it to be known that there is any other place to go than the valley, and they will do everything they can to discourage you from climbing the mountain.

Man dominates the valley, but only God dominates the mountain, and the men living on the mountains know this. But men living in the valleys think they are God, because they dominate themselves. They have become so secure that they think they don't need God. They have forgotten there *is* any God, for they can't see the sky any longer.

Beaten paths are for beaten men, but mountain peaks are for mighty pioneers.

What do you hear on the mountain? Things that are going to echo around the world. What do you hear in the stillness? Whispers that are going to change the course of history!

The greatest laws ever given to man, whereby most of the world is still ruled, were given to one man alone on a mountain. Moses came down from a mountain with the Ten Commandments, and the Hebrew nation was never the same, nor was the world!

The greatest sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount, was given to a handful of mountain men by the greatest mountaineer of all, Jesus, who finally climbed His last mountain, Mount Calvary, Golgotha, and died alone for the sins of the world. That was a mountain that only He could climb for you and me, but He made it!

After Jesus' disciples heard His Sermon on the Mount, they came down and changed the world.

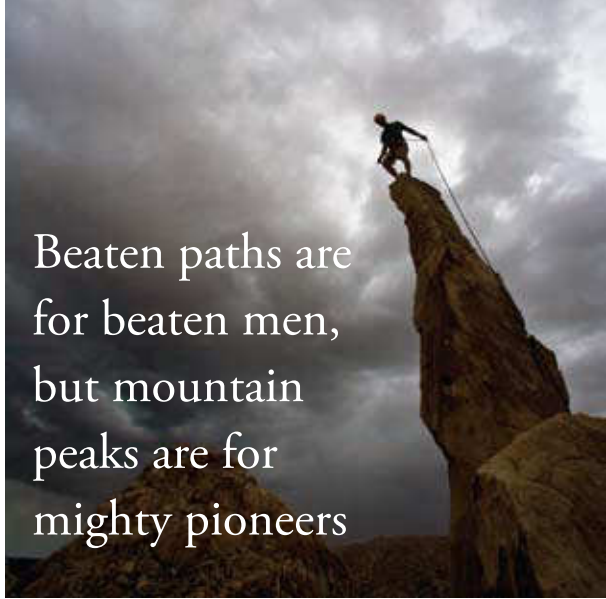
²Matthew 5:3

³Matthew 5:6

⁴See Luke 1:53

⁵Matthew 5:8

⁶Psalms 11:1



Beaten paths are
for beaten men,
but mountain
peaks are for
mighty pioneers

They were never the same. What changed them that changed the world? They heard the voice of God teaching them things that were completely contrary to what was being said in the valley!

In the valley they were saying, "Blessed are the Romans—the proud and the powerful. Look what they've done! They've conquered the whole world!" But on the Mount, Jesus was saying just the opposite:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit [the humble], for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."² Simple little illiterate fishermen were listening to a carpenter tell them something that would make them greater rulers than the Caesars of Rome!

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."³ The people on the mountain hunger and thirst for the truth, and only God can satisfy them. The people down in the valley can't see any further than the end of their nose and are satisfied with themselves and are *full*—and He sends them away empty.⁴

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."⁵ There's no smog on the mountain. The air is pure. The water is pure. The people are pure in heart. They see God.

Life is on the mountain! Get out of the valley!
"Flee as a bird to your mountain."⁶ 🐦

(THE ABOVE WAS EXCERPTED FROM DAVID BRANDT BERG'S ARTICLE BY THE SAME TITLE.)

Stop! ... Look! ... Listen!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

PEOPLE WOULD MAKE better decisions and arrive at them a lot easier if, instead of trying to reason things out themselves, they would pray. God has all the answers. Prayer is not just getting down on your knees and speaking your piece, but more importantly, letting God speak His. If you'll do that, He'll tell you what to do.

If you really want to hear the Lord, He will talk to you. But in order for Him to get through, you're going to have to get quiet by yourself, somewhere, somehow, sometime. He says, "Be still, and know that I am God."¹ "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."² How many "quiet times" do you have?

You don't have to be down on your hands and knees, praying frantically, to be heard by God. Prayer should be something you're doing all the time, no matter what else you're doing. Quiet times are important, but you can't always wait until conditions are perfect or you're through doing this or that to pray. Sometimes you have to pray as you go. It's like thinking on your feet.

If you're confused, worrying, fretting, and fuming, then you're not trusting; you don't have the faith you ought to have. Trusting is a picture of complete rest and peace of mind, heart, and spirit. You may have to continue working, but your attitude and spirit is calm.

When you truly trust the Lord, you can have peace in the midst of storm and calm in the eye of the hurricane. It reminds me of an art contest that was held in which the artists were asked to illustrate peace. Most of the contestants handed in paintings of quiet, calm scenes of the countryside—absolute tranquility. Well, that's a form of peace, but the hardest kind of peace to have was illustrated in the picture that won the award. It depicted the roaring, foaming torrents of a storm-swollen river, and on a little tree branch overhanging the rapids was a nest where a tiny bird sat, peacefully singing in spite of the raging river. That's when your faith gets tested, in the midst of turmoil.

Look at all the people in the Bible who had to learn to hear from God and to wait for Him to





You cannot do the Master's work without the Master's power, and to get it, you must spend time with the Master

work—David, Moses, Noah, Abraham, the apostle John, and Jesus Himself, to name a few.

David spent 24 years working under blunderbuss King Saul, and the Lord really taught him a lot from Saul's bad example. Saul often became impatient and tried to do things in his own strength, and he found he wasn't strong enough. David learned that he had to let God do everything, and wait for Him.

When Moses was a smart young man, 40 years of age, he really thought he knew how to do the job—but he made a terrible mess out of it and had to run for his life! It took God 40 years to straighten Moses out and show him that he had to depend on Him.³

Later, Moses had several million people sitting out in the middle of the desert, waiting for him and wondering, "What are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? Where are we going? What are we going to do?" And what did Moses do? He climbed to the top of a mountain and stayed there alone with the Lord for 40 days!

What if he had been fretting all the time, "What if something happens? I have to get back. What if Aaron makes a golden calf?"—which he did! And when Moses did get upset, he broke the stone tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments and had to go back up the mountain and get quiet for another 40 days to receive them from God again.⁴

It took Noah 120 years to build the Ark. I wonder how much of that was spent in prayer. He must have taken some time with the Lord, or he never could have gotten all the precise instructions on how to build the vessel. God probably gave him the exact specifications for every part of that boat. Noah just went calmly about his business, building the Ark. He could have panicked and hastily slapped it together, thinking rain was coming any minute, but he didn't. Many of us would probably think we were spending a lot of time preparing for something if we just spent 120 days on it, but Noah spent 120 years hearing from the Lord and building the Ark. Noah had faith!⁵

Think of the years Abraham, "the father of faith,"⁶ spent out in the fields watching flocks. No wonder he heard from the Lord; he had time to listen.

Jesus spent 30 years of His life in preparation and only a little over three years in His public ministry. On the eve of His ministry, He went out and spent 40 days and nights in the wilderness, being tested by the Devil. He had to defeat the Devil first.⁷ If you don't get alone with the Lord and beat the Devil first, you won't get far.

¹Psalm 46:10

²Isaiah 30:15

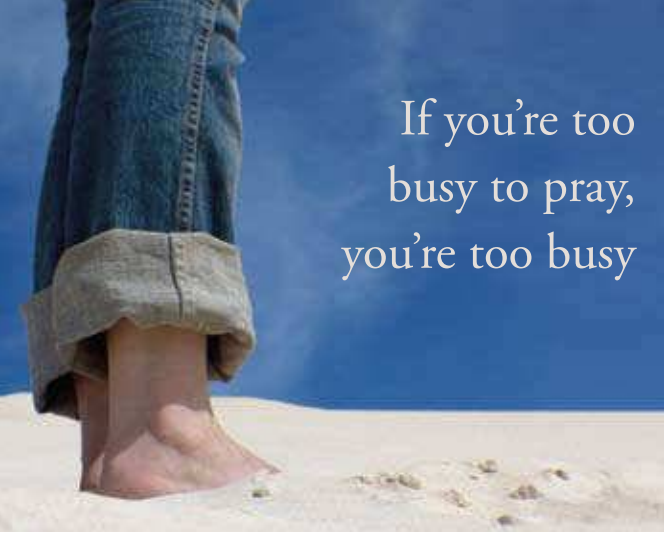
³Exodus chapters 2 and 3

⁴Exodus 24:12–18, and chapters 32 and 34

⁵Genesis 6:11–22 and chapter 7; Hebrews 11:7

⁶Romans 4:11,16

⁷Matthew 4:1–11



If you're too busy to pray, you're too busy

The apostle John wrote the Gospel of John, and it must have taken some time with the Lord to do it. However, John's greatest masterpiece, the book of Revelation, was virtually written by the Lord Himself while John was banished on the Mediterranean island of Patmos. John's biggest work was just letting the Lord do all the directing, the speaking, the revealing—everything!

Farmers need a lot of patience and faith. They can't expect everything in one day, but must patiently wait for the plants to grow and the animals to produce. God does the biggest part of the job: He sends the sun and rain and makes the crops grow, and He's the One who causes the animals to produce. About all the farmer can do is trust the Lord and not worry about it. We should take a lesson from the farmer.

Some people have to be in motion all the time; they've got to be doing something. But if you're too busy to pray, you're too busy! If you're too busy to get alone with God and pray, you're too busy! It's as if a servant told his king, "I'm sorry, I can't come and listen to your orders today because I'm too busy serving you." The most important job you have is listening to the King of Kings.

It's not up to the king to go chasing after his subjects, screaming and hollering at them to try to get them to follow his instructions. Rather, his subjects should come to him with quietness and respect, present their petitions and then wait silently for the king's answer. You need to respect and reverence the Lord, and treat Him like the king He is.

You show that you have faith by stopping your own activity and waiting for God to work. "Be still and know that I am God."⁸ "Study to be quiet."⁹ "Let all the earth keep silence before Him."¹⁰ There will even be silence in Heaven on one occasion.¹¹

But the world is always in a hurry. That's the Devil's own plan: Speed up the world—anything to make everything move faster. The earth has hardly varied in its speed since God created it. God isn't in a hurry. He hasn't sped up the days or seasons, but man is speeding up things—and the result is a world hell-bent for destruction.

So let's try to slow things down. Relax! But most of all, stop, look, listen ... and wait. Warning signs like this are posted at dangerous places such as railroad crossings—places of crisis where there is an interruption of your routine, your way, your road—otherwise you might drive across the tracks when a train is coming and get hit.

"But," you say, "I don't have time to stop, look, and listen!" Well, if you don't, you may never make it. Which is easier, to try to beat the train, to try to plow through the train, to jump over the train, or to stop for a few minutes and watch it go by? It will soon be gone, and you can go peacefully on your way.

Trying to force the situation just won't work! It doesn't pay to rush around trying to get someplace or to do something when you're supposed to be waiting on the Lord to find out where He wants you to be and what He wants you to do.

If you're hurrying and rushing around, fretting and impatient, you'll never be able to focus your full attention on the Lord and get His solutions to your problems and His answers to your questions, and thereby make the best decision in each situation. You must stop, look, listen, and wait in communion with Him until you get His answers. When you have learned to do that, you will have learned how to make Spirit-led decisions.

He gives the very best to them who leave the choices up to Him! ❧

⁸Psalm 46:10

⁹1 Thessalonians 4:11 KJV

¹⁰Habakkuk 2:20

¹¹Revelation 8:1

temple time

(Describing a vision:)

I see a picture of a group of people under a dome in a big central room. They're all looking up, like they expect something. There are other people rushing around busily out in the wings [in service to God], but the people under the central dome are just standing there quietly, looking up. They're bathed in a beautiful golden glow from above, and they take deep breaths of the heavenly air that descends on them. It's the Lord's temple.

(Prayer:) Oh Lord, for a breath of Your heavenly air to refresh us and clear our minds and inspire our hearts and give us visions that thrill us, that set our heads awl for You, Jesus!

The people who are so busy rushing around get tired and have to come under the dome to get refreshed and refilled.

(Prayer:) Help us to be like that, Jesus. Help us to remember we can't go on without the heavenly vision You give, without a breath of heavenly fresh air, without the sound of that sweet music. We just can't go on without hearing Your voice and getting inspired by the upward look!

We wouldn't worry and fret so if we spent more time with the

Lord, looking up through that starry dome, breathing that heavenly air, and hearing that beautiful music. We'd find peace and rest for our soul. It would totally renew us and refresh us and give us new vision and fresh inspiration, new strength, rest and peace and joy.

Have you been there?

Have you taken time to get quiet before God as you slip into the temple of the Spirit? Have you been there to get a fresh breath of air from Heaven? If you haven't, you've really missed something! You'll get awfully tired and weary and upset and fearful and doubtful and discouraged and worried and flurried and hurried. You'll get out of touch with the Lord and run out of strength and wisdom and love and patience—all because you haven't come into the



He can clarify all your thoughts with just one sweet strain of heavenly music.

temple to be refreshed and renewed by His Spirit.

Are you too busy? Are you in too big a hurry? Is your work too important to stop for a few minutes of inspiration and refreshing from on high, spiritual renewal, physical rest—a little love feast with the Lord? You'll never make it if you don't stop for a while under the dome. If you don't get in there and catch a little of His light, you're not going to reflect much of it to others.

Make a temple of your heart!

All you have to do is get alone with the Lord and look up at all His beauties and breathe His heavenly air and hear His heavenly music and see His heavenly visions.

It doesn't have to be at any set time. You can look up through the dome any time of day, anywhere, wherever you are, whatever you're doing. Just take a few quiet moments with the Lord. Anytime, anywhere, you can come swiftly out of the wings and enter the temple in spirit (John 4:24). Look and live! Look up! Make a temple of your heart. See what God can do in that beautiful realm of the spirit.

You just can't do that very well in the midst of the other voices and

the clamor of business. Those other things may be necessary, but you have to keep coming back into the rotunda in spirit to get your batteries recharged. You can't do it without Him. You'll never make it without His power. You may run for a while, but unless you come back and get hooked up to the current again, you'll run slower and slower till you have nothing left and are just plumb flat!


It can be downright hard work out in the wings, and you'll never have the strength or the vision or the inspiration that you need to do that work unless you keep coming back in under the dome.

He can solve all your problems in one little glimpse. He can refresh your whole spirit with one deep breath. He can clarify all your thoughts with just one sweet strain of heavenly music. He can wipe away all your fears and tears with just one little restful moment in that perfect peace He gives when your mind is stayed on Him and Him alone, because you trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3).

It just takes one little glimpse of Jesus to make it worth it all—and to help you be able to *do* it all. Take time in the temple today!▪

Prayer for the Day

Thank You so much, dear Jesus, for helping me bring my cares to You in prayer and to give them to You so You can carry the weight. When I do, it shows You that I love You and need You and trust You, and then You're able to help me accomplish much more than if I tried to do it all in my own strength. Thank You for taking my burdens and dealing with them one by one before they become bigger problems. Thank You so much for Your simple solutions, Jesus!



We need to learn to save the first place in our hearts and lives and time for Jesus. We belong to Him first of all, and the first place must belong to Him—for rest and prayer and fellowship with Jesus, and for feeding from His Word. We cannot do the Master’s work without the Master’s power—and to get it, we must spend time with the Master. Then we must let *Him* do the work through us. Many people give their needs and problems to the Lord in prayer, but then turn around and try to meet those needs and solve those problems on their own, without depending on the Lord to work on their behalf.

We ought to take a lesson from the oil lamp: It must be the oil that burns and not the wick, for if the wick burns without oil, it will destroy itself. We must immerse ourselves in Jesus and let *Him* burn to light the way, because if we try to do that ourselves, we’ll soon burn out.

The flame of the lamp burns so beautifully and brightly and clearly when the *oil* burns, but it gets smoky and stinky when just the wick burns. The lamp’s wick must be deeply immersed in the oil. Most of the wick is in the oil, and only a tiny tip of it is exposed to the air and the flame. That way, it’s mostly oil that burns and very little of the wick—almost none. The oil flows freely through a wick that is deeply soaked in the oil. Then it is the oil that burns and not the wick, and it gives bright, pure, clear light.

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). It is not I that burn, but Christ must burn within me. You can be a beautiful wick, but you’ll burn black with too little oil. You must soak yourself in the oil, so *you* burn not, but He burns through you. Then you’ll give pure light, smokeless light,

THE Oil Lamp

clear light, beautiful light to all that are in the house (Matthew 5:15–16).

When I was a boy, they had beautiful kerosene lamps in every home, on every table. They had lovely glass bowls for the oil, so you could see their wicks and the level of the oil and knew when to replenish them. The lamp burned best when full of oil. When the level got low, too much of the wick would be out of the oil for the wick to be thoroughly soaked. Then the wick itself would begin to burn faster, and the lamp would give off smoke. We sometimes try too hard, work too hard, and try to do everything ourselves. To paraphrase the chorus of an old Gospel song:

Let go and let God have His wonderful way,
Let go and let God have His way.
He'll fill with His Spirit and burn day by day.
Let go and let God have His way!

Most people don't know much about oil lamps anymore, but some-

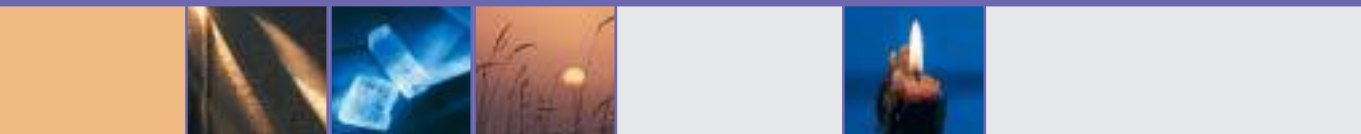
thing that everyone can relate to is a water faucet. When you turn on a faucet, is the faucet “working”? No, it's not! The faucet is doing nothing. It's pressure *behind* the water that causes it to flow through the faucet. All you do is turn the handle on the faucet, and the water flows out with effortless ease. The faucet is just the channel, just a hole, to let the water out. You say the faucet's working? The faucet is *not* working. It's the water pressure that is doing the work. The faucet is just letting it flow. The power isn't in the faucet; the power comes from the gravity feed or pump. The pump or the weight of the water in a tank creates pressure in the water pipe, so all you have to do is turn the tap to release it, and out it flows. You're like the faucet; the Lord is the water pressure. Just open the faucet and let it flow!

So stop trying to do the work yourself, and let God do it. Let go and let God! Just let the Lord through. Let the oil burn. Let the water flow. Let the *Lord* do it! ○

WHY STRUGGLE?

Robert G. LeTourneau (1888–1969) invented and manufactured the world's first large earthmoving equipment. He was also a dedicated Christian. One evening he needed to design a piece of machinery that was supposed to be built the next day, but some of the young people from his church were also counting on him to join them in one of their outreach projects. LeTourneau later wrote: “The Lord and I had quite a struggle while I was trying to decide what to do. Although I could not understand how I was going to get the plan drawn for the next morning, I went with the young people and we had a profitable time. I returned home about ten o'clock. Up to that time I had been unable to make a single plan. I sat down at the drafting board, and in about five minutes the outline and plan was as plain as it could be. What is more, the little piece of machinery designed that night has been the key machine in all that I have been building since. It pays to put God first!”

DON'T EVER THINK BECAUSE THERE'S SO MUCH DARKNESS THAT IT'S NO USE TO HAVE JUST A LITTLE LIGHT, BECAUSE EVEN ONE CANDLE CAN BE SEEN A MILE AWAY WHEN IT'S DARK.



GOD PUT ON A “LIGHT SHOW” THE OTHER DAY, and we were there to see it. He said a lot of things, too, and we tried to listen. I’m sure He must have shown it before, but we were all too busy to watch.

The Lord let three tiny rays of sunlight beam their way into our dark room—not through the shutter, which was obstructing the light, but through pinholes, letting it in. It’s like your life for the Lord: The smaller you are, the clearer others can see Jesus. The less there is of you, the more His light shines through!

The rays were many different colors, all showing a different color of God’s light, but the same light. It is similar to what the Bible says about each Christian being given different gifts, but all from the same Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4). Each of us reflects in our own way the light of God—each one letting our light shine, showing our particular kind of works to cause men to glorify the beauty of God (Matthew 5:16).

We’re like little rays of light in this spiritually dark world. Even a few rays of light can make a difference. Don’t ever think that because there’s so much darkness it’s no use to have just a little light,

because even one candle can be seen a mile away when it’s dark.

Even a speck of dust, as small as it is, can sparkle like a diamond if it will get in the sunshine—and the greater the darkness, the brighter the light! A little diamond of dust or a little ray of sunshine shows up best when the room is very dark. “Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Romans 5:20).

You don’t dare look right at the sun; it’s so bright it could blind you. But you see its reflection in the things that it shines on. Just so, people can only see God as His children reflect Him, like little diamonds of dust. They can’t look at God, because He’s too bright. They have to look at us believers to see God in our reflection of Him.

God’s light can only be seen if you reflect it! People can only see God in you as you reflect Him. So “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven” (Matthew 5:16). If the dust weren’t there, you couldn’t see the light, and if the light weren’t there, you couldn’t see the dust. It takes both.

You may never see one of those

little diamonds of dust again, for some of them just float into the light, sparkle for a moment, and then vanish back into the darkness. Some only have their moment of truth, but if only once in its life that grain of dust scintillates with the light of the Lord, it's worth it! Even if only once in its life, it is life and joy to someone, it's worth it! But if it could

is only in one direction. Likewise there is only one way to the Source, God, and you've got to follow that way or you won't make it! Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). He's the only way. Only in Him is there light—the straight and narrow beam that points to the love of God—and unless you get in that beam of love, you'll never shine. Jesus

DIAMONDS OF DUST

By David Brandt Berg

stay in the Lord's light, it could sparkle its life out to the end, like one candle gives light to the whole house until it is finished. The longer that little grain of dust stays right in the light, the longer it shines and the longer it stays a diamond.

Those diamonds of dust can sparkle so short a while, and then they're gone—like a man's life that is like the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is gone! For what is your life? It's but a vapor that reflects His rays of light for a little while and then it's gone (Psalm 103:15–16). You have no guarantee of tomorrow, so you'd better sparkle now while you have the light, or you may fade into oblivion (James 4:14). Hardly anyone will know you even existed, because so few ever saw God's light reflected in you, shining through you, because you didn't stay in the light. "He who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:21).

The path of the light, the ray we see, is very straight and very narrow. It only shines in one direction, and its source

said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Think how much God can show you from even a little beam of light if you're just simple and childlike enough to appreciate it. Unless you become as a little child, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:3).

To learn from the Lord, you have to stop, look, and listen. If you don't, you'll get run over by all the cares of this life, instead of running over with His truth, His love and His joy. You'll be overcome by the world, instead of overcoming the world through Him. If you're too busy or in too big of a hurry or too full of your own doings, your own things, you'll never learn anything.

Watch the diamonds of dust: They don't try to sparkle and shine. They just let the light shine on them. They don't work at shining or moving. They're not trying to get anywhere. They're not in a hurry. They just float so quietly on God's air.

So stop—look—listen—and let your dust become a diamond that shows the beauty of God! •

god's CHESSPIECE

—You Can't, but He Can!



God doesn't want you to try or pretend to be something you're not and couldn't possibly be. However, He teaches in His Word that almost anybody can be almost anything if they have faith and it's according to His will. Anybody can be somebody or somebody can be anybody, because with God nothing is impossible and all things are possible to those who believe (Luke 1:37; Mark 9:23).

A lot of Christians make idols of the great men and women of God of the past. They idolize the heroes of the Bible, the patriarchs and the prophets, the Christian saints and martyrs, and they exalt them to such heights that they make it almost impossible for others to believe they could ever do the same things. And sad to say, it seems that all too often people do that to excuse themselves.

They say, "It's impossible to be like that today. That sort of thing is reserved for Bible times, or saints or patriarchs or prophets. Ordinary Christians aren't supposed to try to be like that. It's impossible. Don't even try! People today can't expect to do miracles or have other gifts of the Spirit like the apostles and great Christians of the past had. The day of miracles is past!"



And one of the biggest lies the Devil tells people is, “You can’t be that way because you’re sinful and make mistakes, and you cannot be both good and bad.” Well, God’s Word says, “There is none righteous, no, not one. . . . For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10,23). And that includes whom?—Not only you and me, but the saints and the prophets and the apostles and the patriarchs, and everyone else except the Lord Himself.

Now that changes the picture! That brings the apostles, prophets, and heroes of the Bible down to our level, and that means it’s possible for us to become more like them. Regardless of our sins and mistakes and faults or whatever, we too can be used of the Lord. So if the Devil tells you that you’ll never amount to anything for the Lord because you’re so bad, don’t listen to him. That isn’t so!

God created man and put him on earth in part to demonstrate His power in giving him salvation—to show that in spite of all our faults and shortcomings He can save us and make us useful. He can even use you. The fact that God can use *you*, bad as you are, gives the glory to Jesus when you do anything good or right. As the old hymn says,

I’ll give all the glory to Jesus,
And tell of His love, His wonderful love.
I’ll give all the glory to Jesus,
And tell of His wonderful love!

Even the great apostle Paul lamented, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He as good as said, “I stink! I’m a horrible mess!” But then the Lord encouraged him with the answer to his dilemma: “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 7:24–25; 1 Corinthians 15:57).

Now, doesn’t that give you some hope? When the Devil reminds you of your mistakes and faults and shortcomings, it helps to remind yourself that, yes, you’re no good; yes, you’re a sinner; yes, except for the love and mercy and grace and goodness of God, you’d never make it!

It takes a miracle of the grace of God! It all has to be a miracle! Your thoughts, your love for the Lord and others, your work for the Lord—all of it is a miracle of God’s grace, “faith working through love” (Galatians 5:6). It’s *God’s* work. You just have to have the faith that God is going to do it through you.

For many years I was convinced that I was nothing and nobody and could never do anything! I was

too sinful, too carnal, I didn't read the Bible enough and didn't pray enough. How could I ever hope to do anything for God?

Be honest. Isn't that the way you feel sometimes? I'm sure the Devil lies to you like that too. When he does, slap him in the face with Scriptures, like Jesus did when the Devil tempted Him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Where sin and human faults and failings abound, God's grace does more abound (Romans 5:20). That's what it's all about!

Why do you think the Lord lets you make mistakes? Why do you think God let Adam and Eve fall prey to temptation in the Garden of Eden?—To prove that they needed God, and to prove that *you* need God! You can't do it on your own! And what does that do?—It glorifies the Lord!

Of course you can't do it! Of course you can't save yourself! Of course you can't live a perfect Christian life! Of course you can't be good or do anything good of yourself! Jesus Himself said, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). A lot of people have been taught the false doctrine that they're supposed to do most of it with just a little help from God, but I want to tell you right now, God does it all! Isn't that a comforting thought?

You don't have to have faith to do things that the Lord isn't asking or expecting of you. You just have to

have faith to be what He's made you to be and to do the job He has for you, whatever that may be. Don't try to be somebody you're not, but don't let the Devil lie to you that you can't be who God can make you, or do what God wants to do through you. God won't ask you to do anything more than He knows you can do, with His help.

Too many Christians have been taught two conflicting doctrines: first, that they can't be saintly and perfect, and second that they can't be saved unless they are. Both are the Devil's own doctrines! It's no wonder that a lot of Christians give up trying to be or do anything for the Lord!

But the wonderful truth of the matter is that you can do anything with Jesus' help. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). With His help you can do anything, go anywhere, and be anybody God wants you to be.

God has given us a free will, but to be successful for the Lord or even as happy as He would like to make us, we have to continually yield that will to Him. We have to find out from Him what His will for us is—what He knows is best for others and us—and then choose that.

Everybody has their place and job for the Lord, like the pieces on a chessboard. Chesspieces have no will of their own. When a player picks up a chesspiece and moves it to another square, the chesspiece doesn't protest; it yields and goes where it's sent, right? Well, you're in God's hands! Think of that whenever the Devil tempts you to worry about this or that. You're in the hands of

It's wonderful
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the Master Player and He's going to put you wherever He wants you, so just trust the Lord.

You don't have to make all the decisions; you only have to be yielded. But you're a free moral agent and you can choose *not* to be yielded. When it comes right down to it, the only decision you have to make is to choose to do God's will, whatever it might be. Simply yield to His moves and let Him do the thinking and the choosing. He can see the whole game, the whole chessboard, and all the pieces. You've got very limited vision and very limited power, but He sees and has it *all*.

Simply be what God wants you to be. Don't worry about what you can be or can't be or will be or won't be, like I did for nearly 50 years! I spent over half my life worrying about what I would be, when all the time I was being exactly what God wanted me to be and learning all the things God wanted me to learn.

There have also been times when *I've* chosen to do this and do that, and God's had to change my mind or do something else in spite of me—and I always found out in the end that He knew best.

It's wonderful to let God decide, because He always has our best interests at heart and He knows what's best. He never fails. Even if He should let us get His instructions wrong or do something wrong, He's able to use even that to teach us some lesson and bring about some good if our hearts are right with Him (Romans 8:28).

So quit worrying about what God's going to do. You're in God's hands. "Rest in the Lord, and do

good" (Psalm 37:3 KJV). "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5–6). "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:21).

When a guide leads you down a path that's new to you, he doesn't tell you what you're going to need to do before you get to the turn or the fork in the way. He waits till you get to the point where you need to know before he tells you what to do or where to go next—and that's the way it is with the Lord. In most cases, you don't need to know all the details of what you're going to do tomorrow. Jesus said not to *worry* about tomorrow. You often have to plan ahead, but you're not to worry about tomorrow. Just do what God knows you can do and what God asks you to do today, and be prepared to do the same tomorrow.

God made you a particular kind of chesspiece, and He's given you powers accordingly. God is the player; you're just the chesspiece. You're His piece, and all you have to do is what God tells you to do. He doesn't even expect you to do it yourself. He'll reach down and take ahold of you and move you where He wants you to go. *You* can't do it, anyway—but you can with His help! You can't, but He can! ■

(Excerpted from *More Than Conquerors*, a collection of 10 articles by David Brandt Berg, available from any of the addresses on page 2 of this magazine.)

The mind is the great battlefield where **relentless** spiritual **war** is waged—the war for the control of people’s **thoughts** and, through their thoughts, their **actions**.



MOST OF THE THINGS THAT BRING PEOPLE DOWN start in the mind: pride, jealousy, selfishness, hatred, covetousness, bitterness, worldliness, self-righteousness, unbelief, etc. They begin in the mind, take root in the mind, and fester in the mind—all through putting on the mind of man and the mind of the world instead of the mind of God.

The Bible has much to say about the need to guard our thoughts, about finding and putting God’s will above our own will, and about putting on the mind of Christ:

- “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).
- “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).
- “Do not be conformed to this

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

- “To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).
- “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

It is through the mind that Satan gains entrance, through the mind that he tries to influence people, through the mind that he works to recruit the lost of the world to his side, and it is through the mind that he controls and manipulates his own.



*It is through
the mind
that Satan
gains
entrance.*

And the Devil doesn't stop with his own, of course. He also attacks God's children, trying to hinder their happiness and well-being and usefulness to God by interjecting his negative thoughts into their own. But when they choose the Lord's light over the Devil's darkness, when they allow Jesus to control them by asking Him to give them His thoughts, anything good is possible.

How close we stay to the Lord and how much He is able to bless us as a result is determined in our mind, because this is where our will is set. This is where we choose Him and His ways, where we choose to believe His word above the Devil's, where we are able to put on the mind of Christ.

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thesalonians 5:17), the Bible tells us, and one of the best prayers we could continually pray is for the Lord to direct our thoughts and rid our minds of the Devil's input, because for the Lord to bless and use us as much as He would like, He needs full control.

His thoughts cannot coexist with our natural minds, which are at odds with His mind. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). Our natural minds are easy prey for the Devil's doubts and lies and propaganda, and can stifle the Lord's Spirit.

This is the crux of the matter: If we're going to be the kind of Christians the Lord wants us to be, we must be wholly His, and in order to be wholly His, we must put on His mind; we must more fully think His thoughts. How do we do this?—By

putting *off* the mind of man, the mind of the world, the thoughts of Satan, the propaganda of Satan, the vanity of the carnal mind.

We must "gird up the loins of our minds" (1 Peter 1:13). That means to put up barricades to shield us from the Devil's attacks through our thoughts. It means to allow Jesus full control. When we do, He is able to live in us and work through us like never before! □

HUDDERSFIELD

THERE WAS ONCE A RICH LAND-OWNER who decided to buy the entire village of Huddersfield, and over time he bought every piece of land in the area—every piece, that is, except one little plot. One stubborn old farmer refused to sell his tiny piece of land, and nothing would change his mind. The landowner even offered the farmer much more money than his property was actually worth, but the farmer was so fond of his land that he absolutely refused to sell. When the landowner finally gave up, he tried to encourage himself by saying, "What difference does just one little plot of land make? I've bought everything else, so Huddersfield is *mine*. It belongs to me!"

But the stubborn old farmer overheard him and said, "Oh, no it doesn't! *We* own Huddersfield. It belongs to you and *me*!"

Don't let the Devil be able to say that of you to God! "Aha! Look, God! Even though he belongs mostly to You, a little bit still belongs to me!"

>> DAVID BRANDT BERG (D.B.B.)

ATTACK YOUR FEARS!



what to do when fear strikes

>> BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

FEAR!—WE DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH OF IT IS SUBCONSCIOUS until we analyze it and try to put it into words, yet we're often afraid to talk about our fears or even confess to ourselves that we're afraid because that would expose our innermost selves.

The fear of failure is probably one of the greatest fears people have—the fear of failure in life, love, labor, and—for Christians—failing the Lord. For the Christian, the fear of failing God is perhaps second only to the fear of failing others, because we know that God will forgive us, but others sometimes find it hard to forgive. The fear of hurting others because of our failure, the fear of letting them down, disappointing them, disillusioning them, discouraging them—the fear that because of our failure, others will also fail—this is hardest to bear.

But whatever your fears are, it pays to face them and to draw a line of distinction between the truth and the lie, between reality and the imaginary, between fact and fear.

An incident from my childhood illustrates this principle: As a boy, I delivered papers and handbills door to door, and I frequently encountered big dogs that would chase me and nip at my heels. Occasionally they actually bit me, but most of the time their bark was worse than their bite. I soon discovered that if I turned my back on them and tried to run from them, they were more apt to bite me than if I faced them.

Once when I was about 12 years old, I had gone into a certain yard to deliver a handbill, when out from the back yard came a huge Great Dane, barking and growling furiously. He was coming at me full speed, leaping and bounding, and I thought, *This is it!* I knew I didn't dare turn my back on him or he would bite me for sure! Thank God I remembered to pray for the Lord's help. I suddenly jutted out my hand toward him and yelled, "I rebuke you in Jesus' name!"—And did he put on the brakes! He skidded to a stop and looked absolutely startled, turned tail, and ran!

He was coming at me full speed, leaping and bounding, and I thought, This is it!

The camel's nose

ACCORDING TO A BEDOUIN FABLE, an Arab and his camel were crossing the desert. Night came and the temperature dropped. The Arab put up his tent, tied his camel to it, and went to sleep.

The temperature dropped further, and the camel asked the Arab for refuge from the cold.

The Arab was adamant. "There is only room in the tent for one!"

The camel was quiet for a few minutes, but soon asked again. "Please, Master! Just my nose. If I could just put my nose in your tent, it would keep me from freezing out here."

The Arab reluctantly agreed.

The camel's nose became warm, but after a while the temperature went down even more. The camel woke the Arab and asked, "Please, can I just put my forelegs in the tent? They are very cold!"

Again the Arab reluctantly agreed.

"Only your forelegs, nothing more!" So the camel nudged his forelegs into the tent and they became warm.

After some time, the camel woke the Arab again. "Master, I must put my hind legs in the tent. Otherwise I fear that they will freeze and I won't be able to finish our journey tomorrow. What good is a camel with frozen hind legs?"

So the Arab agreed once more, and the camel moved his hind legs in. But since there was only room in the tent for one, the Arab was forced to move out into the cold, where he barely survived the night.

Depression is like that camel. It just needs a small opening to get started—usually a thought that seems to have some basis in truth or reason—but if you entertain that thought, pretty soon it and a whole lot more like it move in and take over. Don't let the camel get its nose inside your tent. •

WHO ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

THE LORD IS NOT THE ONLY ONE TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION or direct your thoughts, so you must learn to watch your thoughts and make sure you're on the Lord's channel. "Test the spirits" to make sure that what you're hearing in your mind or spirit is from the Lord (1 John 4:1). If your thoughts cause you to be discontent, bitter, dissatisfied, unhappy, or critical of others, they are not from the Lord but from the enemy of your soul, the Devil.

One of your best protections is to fill your mind and heart with positive, encouraging, strengthening, and faith-building thoughts from God's Word. Memorize Scriptures and quote them to yourself and even to the Devil when he tempts you with negative thoughts. Give no place to the Devil (Ephesians 4:27).

—DAVID BRANDT BERG (D.B.B.)

POWER FOR A PURPOSE

Shortly before His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus promised His disciples that He would send them a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to strengthen, empower, lead, and guide them in their spiritual lives and personal relationships with Him.

When Jesus was with them in body, His disciples loved Him and knew that He loved them. They enjoyed being in His presence and hearing the comforting sound of His voice, but they didn't yet know Him the way they were to know Him later in spirit.

But after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, when the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples found that even though His body was gone from them, His Spirit was with them in greater power than ever before—and not just *with* them, but *in* them!

✱

Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He told His followers to not depart from Jerusalem, but to “wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me. . . . And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me’” (Acts 1:4,8). So they waited in Jerusalem, fasting and praying (Acts 1:14).

“Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with



BY DAVID
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BERG

one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1). About 120 people, both

men and women, were numbered with the disciples at that time (Acts 1:15), and they were all together and united in mind, heart, and spirit.

Jesus had them wait in Jerusalem so that when the infilling of the Holy Spirit came, they would be in a position to win many others to Him. That was the main purpose of the Day of Pentecost—not just the supernatural manifestations that took place. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples was a means to an end.

“And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages they had never learned or spoken before], as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:3–4).

Because this took place on an annual holy day, the Feast of the Harvest, Jerusalem was filled with Jews “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). “And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:5–6).

“So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine’ (Acts 2:12–13).

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit .

drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day [9 AM]. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh. ... And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved’” (Acts 2:14–17,21).

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about 3,000 souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41). Thousands of people accepted Jesus and were saved! That’s the most important thing that happened on the Day of Pentecost. Power for witnessing is the main purpose of the Holy Spirit.

“Continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46–47).

Then came another one of God’s great setups. God picked somebody that everybody in town knew—a lame man who daily sat begging on the Temple steps. Along came Peter and John, and God performed another great miracle. The man was instantly healed, and the people were filled with wonder (Acts 3:10).

“So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers,



glorified His Servant Jesus. ... And His [Jesus'] name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts 3: 12–13,16).

“Many of them which heard the Word believed,” and another 5,000 people received Jesus as their Savior (Acts 4:4).

What was it about those first Spirit-filled disciples that convinced so many that Jesus was who He had said He was, the Messiah? “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they

*It shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh.*

had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Peter, John, and the others didn't let their backgrounds or anything else hold them back. They just went ahead and witnessed boldly, and they had tremendous power that got tremendous results. It was obvious that they had been with Jesus. They had the Master's power to carry on the Master's work!

✱

Have you been filled with the Spirit of God's love?

Before the time of Christ, God only anointed certain leaders, kings, and prophets with His Spirit, but now the Holy Spirit is available to *all* who receive Jesus. “It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on *all* flesh” (Joel 2:28).

Ever since the Day of Pentecost, when the first disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Lord has made the same Holy Spirit power available to every Christian. Now everybody can have the Holy Spirit and be led directly by the Lord. Now we can *all* enjoy Him anywhere, everywhere, any time, all the time, in all His power and fullness, and we can all be reached equally, fairly, and simultaneously through the communication of the Holy Spirit.

Everyone who receives Jesus as their Savior is given a certain amount of the Spirit, but receiving a complete infilling—or “baptism”—of the Holy Spirit is usually a subsequent experience to that of salvation. This is why the apostle Paul inquired

of certain disciples he met, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since

you believed?” (Acts 19:2). If you are saved, this power from God is yours for the asking. Like salvation, it is a gift of God. “Your heavenly Father [will] give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13).

Be filled with the Holy Spirit, and you will be closer to Jesus and understand His Word better. The Holy Spirit will also give you the boldness you need to share your faith with others. If you haven't already, you can receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit right now by praying this prayer:

Dear Jesus, please fill me to overflowing with the Holy Spirit so that I can love You more, follow You more closely, and have greater power to tell others about Your love and salvation. Amen. •

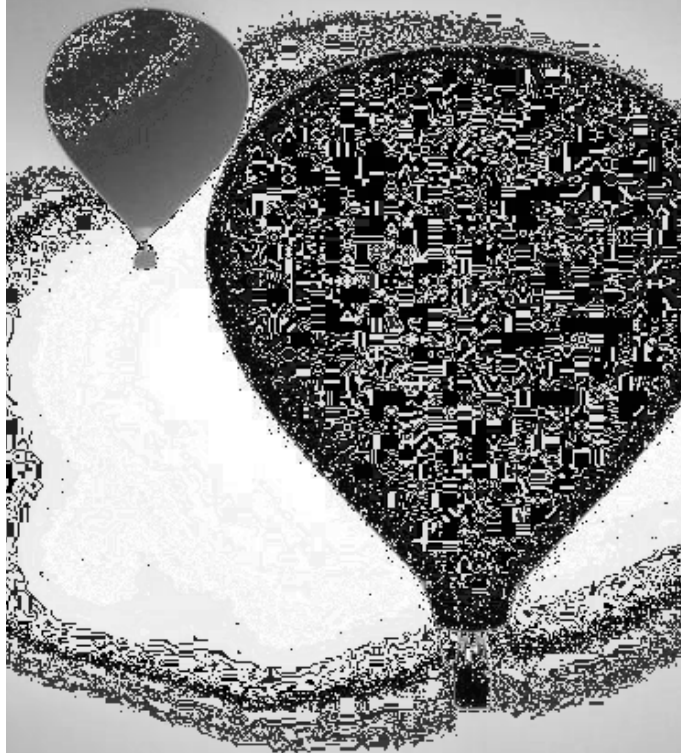
go slow

YOU'LL GET THERE QUICKER

“IN QUIETNESS AND CONFIDENCE shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15). There is nothing in the Bible promoting hurry. The only verse I know that seems to advocate rushing is, “The king’s business required haste” (1 Samuel 21:8). But for that one Scripture, I think there must be a hundred that tell us to go slow, or words to that effect—even to take it easy!

Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30). When you get under too much pressure and too much tension, too heavy a burden and too hard a yoke, it’s not God’s fault. It’s somebody else’s fault, or your own.

Maybe that’s why God created donkeys—as an object lesson. They are plodders. They are very slow, but they have more endurance and can carry heavier loads than horses. They are the workhorses of the backwoods. They can negotiate trails that horses would kill themselves on, carrying loads for miles that a horse couldn’t—especially not a racehorse.





FEEDING READING

RESTING IN THE LORD

The Lord promises His people spiritual rest.

Exodus 33:14
1 Kings 8:56a
Hebrews 4:9

Resting in the Lord brings complete rest—rest of body, peace of mind, contentment of heart, and spiritual well-being.

Psalm 23:2–3a
Psalm 55:18a
Psalm 116:7
Isaiah 28:12a

There is one condition for receiving the rest the Lord promises: “Come to Me!”

Matthew 11:28–30
Hebrews 4:11a

We cannot do the Master’s work without the Master’s power.

2 Chronicles 20:12b
Psalm 20:7
Psalm 84:5a
Psalm 127:1a
2 Corinthians 3:4–5
Isaiah 40:29,31

To get the Master’s power, we must spend time with the Master.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Psalm 105:4
Psalm 138:3
Isaiah 30:15a
Isaiah 41:1a

Resting in the Lord means giving our cares and concerns to Him and letting Him carry them.

Psalm 55:22
1 Peter 5:7
Hebrews 4:10

Resting in the Lord means taking time to meditate on the Lord and His wonders.

Genesis 24:63a
Job 37:14b
Psalm 104:34
Psalm 143:5

Resting in the Lord means humbling ourselves before Him.

Psalm 46:10
Isaiah 57:15
Micah 6:8

Take time to be holy—wholly His.

Luke 10:38–42
Psalm 27:4
Psalm 84:10a
Proverbs 8:17
John 14:21b
John 16:27a
James 4:8a

Racehorses can sprint for a few rounds around the track, and that’s it! They’re extremely high-strung, nervous, and are just not workhorses. They’re not plodders, and they’re not load carriers. But pack mules and donkeys are—and they’re as stubborn as they come! You cannot rush them. You have to do it slowly, in their time. They just plod along, but they do it and they get there. It’s like the old story of the tortoise and the hare: The tortoise was slow, but he got there.

You may choose intensity and speed; I’ll take the low road and the slow road. You can take the high road and get there first if you want to—if you get there at all—but I’m going to take the low road and the slow road, and I’m determined to get there in one piece, no matter how long it takes.

I can’t count the times I’ve told taxi drivers, “Go slow and you’ll live longer. Live fast and you’ll die quicker.” That certainly is true. Doctors and health experts have said that pressure and tension are killing people, and that many of today’s illnesses are from pressure and tension. Pressure and speed are killing people through heart trouble, nervous trouble, and high blood pressure.

Lord help us to go slow! We shouldn’t waste time, but we need to trust the Lord instead of being rushed and impatient. Patience indicates slowness, plodding along, doing our work persistently and not wasting time, but also not getting fretful and worried and all worked up about it. Impatience is marked by speed, hurry, rush, haste, push, pressure, tension! Patience shows faith. Impatience shows lack of faith. Impatience shows that we don’t think the job is going to get done unless we hurry and push it and rush it.

But if we’ve got faith that Jesus is going to help us take care of it somehow, we can afford to be patient and go slow and do it right. •

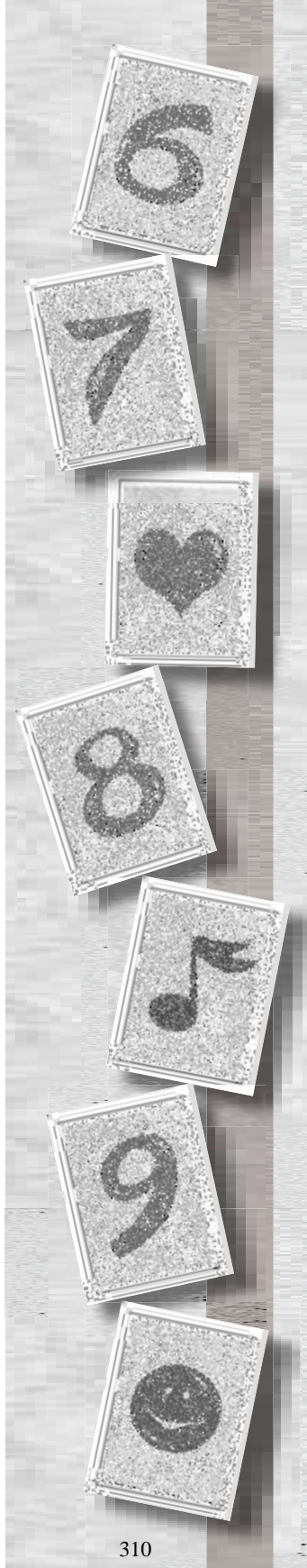
about anything at all, if we would start this little “Count Your Blessings” game immediately, our “plight” would compare so favorably with that of others or worse situations that we’ve been in ourselves that we would come out shouting for joy for how good the Lord has been to us.

When we play this game, we should always compare ourselves favorably, never unfavorably. If you look at those who seem to be *better* off than you, you’ll go into the depths of despair. This is usually what we are doing when we complain—looking at others who are better off or thinking of ourselves at another time when we were better off. But if we would think of all those who are *worse* off than we are, then it would be very difficult for us to complain about our lot, since there are nearly always many, many more who are worse off!

No matter how “bad off” we are, if we have and love the Lord and know that He loves us, we are among the most blessed people on earth! Even our problems we can be sure are for a good purpose, and we can find cause for rejoicing in the knowledge that they will ultimately accomplish some good in our lives. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). “Most gladly I will ... boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Take the *positive* approach. Count your blessings!

(MARIA FONTAINE IS THE CO-LEADER OF THE FAMILY, ALONG WITH HER HUSBAND PETER AMSTERDAM.)



THINK ON THE GOOD

It’s the Devil who tries to get us to unfavorably compare ourselves to others. The Lord tells us that we shouldn’t think about those negative things at all: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Whether abounding or abasing, we should be thankful for whatever we’ve got (Philippians 4:11–12). “Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord” (Psalm 150:6). “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:2). We could all praise the Lord more and be more positive. Thank God for the health you do have. Thank God that you’re not completely incapacitated. All kinds of things could be wrong with you, so thank the Lord for the blessings you do have. Stay positive, thankful, and full of praise to Jesus!

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

THE PARABLE
OF
THE
PHARISEE

{ PUBLICAN
AND
THE

Heaven

is full of

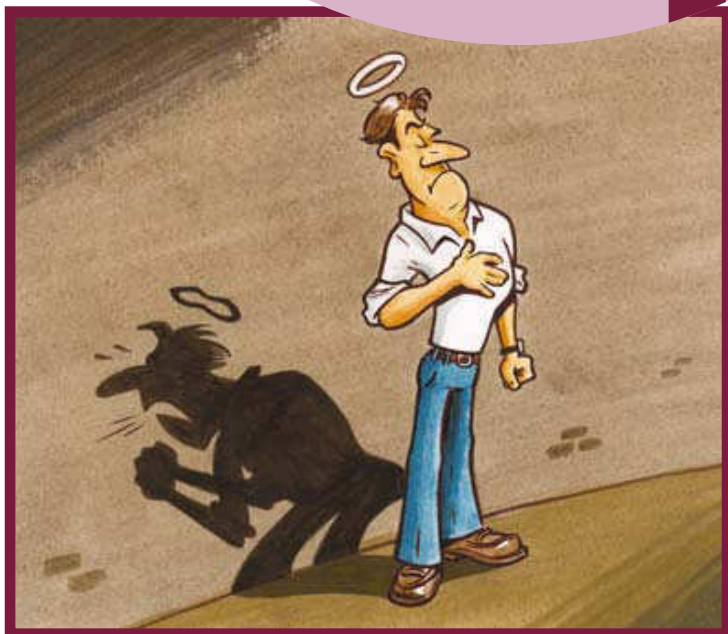
SINNERS

JESUS OFTEN TAUGHT IN PARABLES. One of the shortest yet most profound was the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Bible tells us that Jesus “spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luke 18:9).

The Pharisees were the most influential of all the Jewish religious sects of Jesus’ day. The word “Pharisee” means “the separated ones,” which sums up the basic nature of their beliefs. They were strict legalists who pledged to observe and obey every one of the countless restrictive rules, traditions, and ceremonial laws of Orthodox Judaism. They considered themselves to be the only true followers of God’s Law, and therefore felt that they were much better and holier than anyone else. Thus they separated themselves not only from the non-Jews—whom they absolutely despised and considered “dogs”—but even other Jews.

The publicans were tax collectors for the foreign occupier and ruler of Palestine, Imperial Rome. The Romans would instruct the publicans how much to collect from the people, and then the publicans could charge *extra* for their own income. So publicans were usually extortioners and were therefore considered traitors and absolutely despised by other Jews.

So when Jesus told this parable, comparing a Pharisee and a publican, He had chosen the two most opposite figures in the Jewish community. The one was considered the best, most righteous, most religious, most godly of men, whereas the other was considered the worst scoundrel imaginable.



The parable:

Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector [publican].

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.”

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 18:10–14).

Which of these two men did Jesus say was justified before God?—The Pharisee who appeared to be so righteous and holy, and who no doubt felt that he was a very righteous and good man?—Or the tax collector, the sinner, who was despised by others and who apparently even despised himself?—The tax collector who knew he had no goodness of his own and needed God’s mercy.

So often, God’s way of looking at things is very different from ours. He says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Although that publican’s sins were undoubtedly many, because of his honest and humble confession that he was a sinner who needed God’s help, Jesus said this publican was the one who left the Temple justified that day.

In God’s sight, self-righteous pride like this Pharisee manifested is the greatest sin of all—that hypocritical holier-than-thou attitude that causes people to look down on others who they think aren’t as good as they are. When people get this way, others usually find them to be the hardest people to be around—narrow-minded, intolerant, critical, and judgmental.

The Gospels also tell us that when the Pharisees saw Jesus sitting down and

eating with publicans and sinners, they were enraged and accused Jesus to His disciples. When Jesus heard that, He said to the Pharisees, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Matthew 9:10–13). In other words, “I would rather see you have love and mercy, and not just your dutiful keeping of the Law. I’d rather you’d give love to others than to be so self-righteous and condemning!”

None of us have any goodness of our own. Anything good about us is only the Lord, and *His* goodness. His Word says, “*All* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Even the apostle Paul said that there was nothing good in himself (Romans 7:18).

Jesus got so infuriated by the hypocritical, self-righteous hypocrisy of the Pharisees that He told them that they were worse than the drunks and prostitutes, publicans and sinners they despised, and that there was more chance for such sinners to make it to Heaven than there was for them (Matthew 21:31). He even told His own disciples, “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:20). And the only way to be better than the Pharisees is to have

***So often,
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The worst kind of people in the sight of God are those who pretend to be good and look down on everybody else.

Jesus' righteousness—salvation, through accepting His pardon for your sins—because the Pharisees were as “good” as anyone could possibly be in the natural.

Jesus so hated the hypocritical pretense of the Pharisees that He denounced them publicly. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matthew 23:25–28).

The thing that made the Pharisees so self-righteous and hypocritical was their pride. They were too proud to confess that they were sinners like everyone else. In fact, they not only couldn’t confess their sins, they couldn’t even see their sins. Therefore they became “blind leaders of the blind” (Matthew 15:14).

It’s a big relief to honestly admit that we can’t be good or righteous in ourselves. After all, God has said in His Word that nobody is good: “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

The worst kind of people in the sight of God are those who pretend to be good and look down on everybody else. We

just need to be honest and confess, “I’m no good. I’m a sinner. Of course I make mistakes! Anything good about me is only Jesus!”

God’s idea of righteousness is not the supposedly sinless perfectionist, but the pitiful, hopeless, humble sinner who knows he needs God. Those are the ones He came to save.

God’s idea of goodness is *godliness*—a sinner who knows he needs God and depends on Him for salvation—not the self-made, self-righteous, hypocritical Pharisees who think they can save themselves by their own goodness.

God’s idea of saintliness is a sinner saved by grace, a sinner who has no perfection, no righteousness of his own at all, but is totally dependent on the grace and the love and the mercy of God. Believe it or not, that is the *only* kind of saints there are!

You cannot save yourself by your own works, your own goodness, your own attempts to keep God’s laws and to love Him, or even your own endeavors to find and follow His truth. You cannot save yourself no matter how good you try to be. There’s nothing you can do to get it except receive it by faith—that’s all! You have to humble yourself and acknowledge that you *don’t* deserve it, that you’re just a lost sinner, and that there’s no way you can be saved except by the grace of God.

The worst sinners in the world can go to Heaven through faith and God’s forgiveness, and the seemingly best people can go to Hell because of unbelief and unwillingness to confess their need for God. Heaven is full of sinners, saved by grace through faith. •

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Jesus, self-righteousness is pride and pride is the opposite of love and humility, so please give me love and humility today. Help me not to criticize or condemn others, but to love and forgive and encourage. You said, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” Help me to have that kind of love for others, to be quick to forgive others’ sins and shortcomings, as You have forgiven me. Help me to be as merciful to others as You are to me. Amen.



FLESH OR SPIRIT?

THE MOST RAGING RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY the world has ever known has been between the do-it-yourself religions and the God-alone-can-save-you kind. Man has always been trying to save himself, to work his way to Heaven, with just a little help from God thrown in. That way he can give himself most of the credit and go his own way.

The first murder was committed by a religionist of the do-it-yourself kind, Cain, the oldest son of the first couple, Adam and Eve. Cain decided he would sacrifice to God whatever he wanted, instead of the lamb that God had asked. He would set his own standards, and that would be his religion. But Cain's sacrifice—fruits and vegetables from his garden, the fruit of his own labors, his own righteousness—displeased God and was rejected. Meanwhile

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his brother Abel simply and humbly sacrificed a lamb—exactly what God had asked. When Abel’s sacrifice was accepted and his own rejected, Cain became so enraged that he killed Abel (Genesis chapter 4). This was the beginning of the persecution of the true Church by the false Church. Cain was religious—very religious. He tried very hard to save himself in his own way, even sacrificing to God and claiming to worship God. He did his best to earn his own salvation, but his best wasn’t good enough, because his way was not God’s way but rather the way of all false religions.

Those who follow false religions all depend on self-righteousness and their own way. Most of them claim to be worshiping God and seek a little help from Him to make it. But because they work so hard at trying to earn it, they figure they deserve it, with or without His help, and are quite offended if He doesn’t seem to appreciate their goodness. They say, “Why, look at all we’ve done for You, God! You ought to give us a medal! We really deserve to be saved! If You’re ever going to save anybody, You should save us! If anybody’s going to make it to Heaven, we should certainly make it!”

On the other hand, Abel just did what God told him to do—and he “offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Hebrews 11:4): the sacrifice of pure faith as demonstrated in doing what God had told him to do. By sacrificing a lamb, which was a foreshadowing of Jesus dying on the cross for the sins of the world (John 1:29), Abel showed that he was trusting God alone to save him. He knew he had only God’s righteousness and none of his own, and that salvation was purely a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Abel’s humble sacrifice made such a fool out of the hard-working Cain—the self-made man and devout religionist, devoted to his own form of worship—and so totally exposed the futility and hypocrisy of Cain’s hard work that Cain was furious. After all his labors of the flesh, his legalistic reasoning and his demands for salvation in return for all he was doing, Cain was so humiliated that he tried to wipe out the awful truth that his religion had failed to save him—and he did so by killing the man whose simple faith in God’s grace had exposed him.

Thus began the battle royal between pride and humility, between the damned religionists and the saved sinners—the perpetual warfare that has been waged ever since between flesh and spirit, works and faith, law and grace, self and God.

This conflict has resulted in some of the greatest misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the Scriptures that have ever existed. Most people have been trying to save themselves ever since, with as little thanks to God as possible, and they have twisted the Scriptures to try to prove they could do it! But God can’t help them to save themselves. He does not help those who think they can help themselves, but only those who know they can’t. They can’t save themselves, no matter how much they try to get His help to do it their way.

As a young Christian, I too was deceived for a time by the delusive doctrine of “on and off, now it’s here, now it’s gone” eternal insecurity taught by some churches and “works” religions. But then one day as a teenager, I was thrilled to discover the simple truth of John 3:36. After years of discouragement and defeat and lack of assur-

“Look at all we’ve done for You, God! If anybody’s going to make it to Heaven, we should certainly make it!”

The Devil's message has always been, "Save yourself! You're your own god, your own savior. Why depend on another?" But God's message is, "Only I can save you. You cannot save yourself!" God doesn't save those who think they can save themselves, but only those sinners who know they can't!

—D.B.B.

ance of my own salvation, I found that all I had to do was believe. That was enough! Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life"—right now! No ifs, ands, or buts about it! No "providing you're a good boy or girl and go to church every Sunday," and none of this "sinless perfection" business.

I just hadn't been able to make it on my own, and I knew it. It seemed that the harder I tried to be good, the worse I got! As the apostle Paul lamented, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24–25).

That was all there was to it. There was nothing else, no other way, no righteousness of my own, none of my own good works. None of these could keep me saved any more than they could save me in the first place! Only Jesus could do it! Not only had He had to save me, but He also had to do the good works through me. It was all Jesus, and nothing of myself or my own goodness or self-righteousness—just Jesus. I was so relieved to learn that, as I knew I could never make it otherwise. It had to be God. I just couldn't do it, so He did!

The trouble with many Christians today is that they're still living in the Old Testament. Their Christianity is a works religion. Years ago I remember hearing about some missionaries who had gone overseas. Upon arrival they were asked by the local people, "Are you Old Testament or New Testament Christians?" At first the missionaries didn't understand what they meant, but they soon found out that "Old Testament Christians" referred to those who placed a great deal of importance on church buildings, ceremonies, formalism, and tradition—those whose

religion was primarily a works religion. A "New Testament Christian" was one whose major emphasis was not on things that are seen (buildings and pomp and circumstance), but rather on the unseen things of the spirit and the simplicity of everyday Christian living, like that of Jesus and His disciples. What a comparison, and how true!

In the Old Testament, God had a hard time getting the children of Israel away from the idolatry of Egypt. He used the Mosaic Law as their schoolmaster to teach simple truths through object lessons and rituals: the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, and animal sacrifices. These were types and shadows, analogies, mere pictures of the spiritual realities and eternal truths He was trying to lead them into, almost like you would do with little children. He had to take what they understood—the forms and ceremonies that they were familiar with in the religions of Egypt and other heathen nations around them—in a fatherly attempt to audio-visualize for them the genuine spiritual truths of the true mature worship of God Himself. As the apostle Paul says, these were all types of the true (Romans 5:14), mere visual likenesses or illustrations of the unseen realities of the spirit world!

Paul says, "When that which is perfect has come [when we join Jesus in Heaven], then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (1 Corinthians 13:10–12).

Paul was saying that even the gifts of the Holy Spirit of this New Testament era are almost like toys, gifts from a loving Father to His simple little children to help communicate understanding of Himself and His will. How much more, then, were the material object lessons of the temple worship of the Old Testament childish toys for even tinier children spiritually, to help them understand their heavenly Father's love? But "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

When Jesus came, He told the Samaritan woman at the well, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). This is the spiritual era in which we are now living.

But Paul goes even further than this in his prediction to the early Christians of Corinth when he says that the time is coming when we shall see Jesus face to face and put away even these childlike gifts of communication in the spirit. For "whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Even what we have now is only a sample of the glorious realities to come!

In the Old Testament were the illustrations, and in the present New Testament era are the spiritual truths that we have now by faith alone (John 1:17). But when Jesus comes again, we shall see Him as He is and literally be like Him and actually experience the fullness of the realities of God and the world to come!

"Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). •

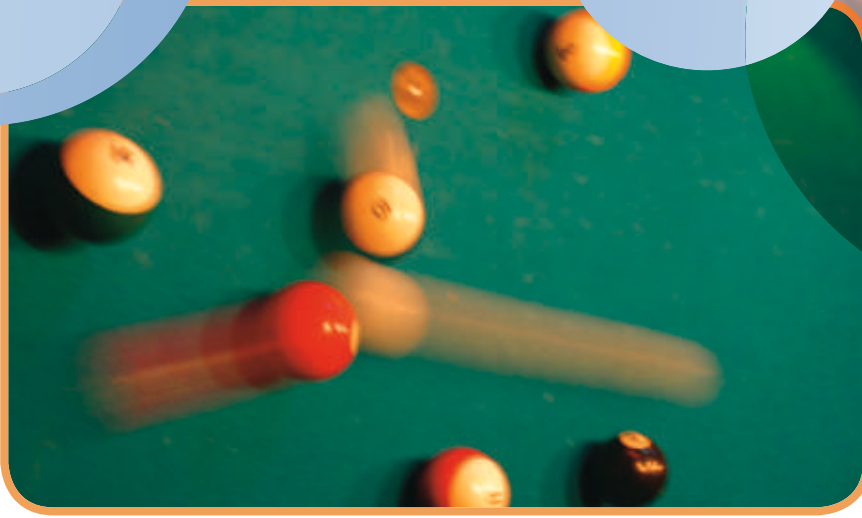
(THE ABOVE ARTICLE AND 11 OTHERS ARE AVAILABLE IN *MORE LIKE JESUS*, FROM AURORA PRODUCTION.)

The most encouraging thing about King David's example, believe it or not, was his human failures, sins, and shortcomings, which gave God a chance to get all the glory and show there's hope for you and me. I never got much encouragement from the perfectionism of people like Enoch, who walked so close to God that he got completely out of touch with humanity, so God had to take him out of this world (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5). I take a lot more heart from the pathetic stories of the drunks and the harlots and the publicans and the sinners who came to Jesus for love and mercy, who He treated kindly and forgivingly. They didn't go to the harsh, rigid, self-righteous, unyielding, unforgiving, critical, and condemning religious leaders who told them to be perfect or go to Hell, but they came to Jesus for His love, mercy, forgiveness, encouragement, and patience.

—D.B.B.

By David Brandt Berg

PRAYER POWER



need to visualize the people we're praying for and pray specifically for the Lord to do this or that for them.

THE LORD LEAVES A LOT UP TO US AND OUR CONCERN AND PRAYER. If we only pray halfheartedly, we only get half an answer. But if we pray with our whole heart, we get a wholehearted, strong answer. If we turn it on real strong, then it reflects strong. Like a beam of light focused on a mirror, prayer will reflect or be answered with the same intensity that it originates with. It will bounce back with as much power as it began with.

something about it. A lot of people have a lazy attitude and seem to think the Lord will do it all no matter what, but the truth of the matter is, a lot depends on us. He wants us to show concern and pray, and to be specific about what we want Him to do.

If we really believe, every prayer is heard and answered. But if we don't pray, it is not done. An awful lot depends on us. We

The very intensity with which we pray and really mean it or desire it is reflected in the answer. Like a radio beam that hits a satellite, our prayer is reflected according to the intensity of the original beam. The power with which it is sent determines the power that is reflected and the power that is

The Lord leaves a lot up to us—our faith, our prayers and what we want done. If we stir ourselves to pray for a needy person or situation, then God will stir Himself to do



received. The result of our prayer—the answer or help that the person we pray for receives—is determined by the power of our prayer for him. He is not going to receive any more than we send.

Why do certain answers take longer to come than others? Some prayers are like radio waves being bounced off a distant planet: It may take years to get the answer, but it *will* eventually come.

Also, while we would like for our prayers to be answered immediately, the Lord may know that it's not the best time. It's sort of like sending a spacecraft to the moon, the timing of which is dependent on both the position of the earth and the position of the moon. Why do they pick a certain day to send it? Because the moon needs to be at its closest point to the earth when the spacecraft arrives, so that when it's time to leave, the moon will still be close enough for the spacecraft to get home.

The game of pocket billiards, or pool, also makes a fitting analogy. There are a number of variations of the game, but all are played on a six-pocket billiard table and have the same basic object: to use a cue ball to knock other balls into the pockets.

The player controls the original force and direction in which the cue ball is set in motion, and that determines everything else that happens. The most common variations of the game start off with 15 numbered object balls arranged in a tight triangle toward the far end of the table. One player takes the opening shot, or break shot, to scatter the balls around the table. Then each player, in turn, tries to

knock as many of the object balls as he can into the pockets. He is not allowed to move any of the balls by hand from the positions they land in—not even the cue ball, except in special situations. He must try to shoot the cue ball in such a way that it strikes another ball at just the right angle to knock it or one of the other object balls into a pocket, using one or more of the side cushions, if necessary.

Prayer works much the same way. God wrote the rules of the game, and He fired the break shot. People and situations are out there in the positions He destined them to be in, and we have to play by His rules. He sets the original scheme of things, and we need to try to do something with what He has set up.

The position of each of the people or situations involved has a major bearing on what happens next, but the way in which we pray for them also helps

determine the outcome. The way we word or express our prayer and the way we ask God to answer are like the way we hit the cue ball. The force, the angle and the spin we put on it all work together to help determine the outcome.

Depending on the variation of the game that is being played, the players must hit the numbered balls into the pockets in a certain sequence. They can't hit a certain ball into a pocket until its number comes up, and of course the One who created the game numbered the balls.

As one of the players, you don't control where on the table that numbered ball or the cue ball are going to be when it's your turn to shoot. Those factors are determined by the way the balls were scattered in the first place, and what's happened since then. You have to wait until the cue ball and your target ball are in good positions in relation to one of the pockets, and then you must shoot just right to get the target ball to go where you want it to.

The lead player is God. He made the break shot

**GOD WROTE THE RULES OF THE GAME,
AND HE FIRED THE BREAK SHOT.**

that scattered the balls originally. Shot by shot, He and you and the other players keep changing the position of the balls. The only difference is, God is not trying to beat you. He's actually trying to help you win, if you're on His side.

It's like playing doubles: Your partner is God, and your opponents are the Devil and his ilk. Your partner, God, tries to set up your next shot for you. But of course, it doesn't matter how good God sets things up, if you don't shoot straight, it won't do any good.

And no matter how good your aim is, that target ball (the person or situation you're praying about) has to be in a certain position for you to be able to hit it right. You may be doing everything right, but if the path to the object of your prayer is obstructed, your prayer is not going to get through. A lot depends on the recipient of your prayers, too. To get the benefit of your prayer, *you* have to be in the right position and *he* has to be in the right position.

Let's take radio waves for another illustration:

Say you're going to send a radio message via satellite, for someone on the other side of the world to pick up. First of all, your transmitter won't have any power unless it's plugged into the current. Next, your transmitter has to be in good condition. If it's faulty or out of whack or tuned to the wrong frequency, it won't transmit properly and it won't get the message through clearly. Also, the antenna has to be aimed so that the message is beamed in exactly the right direction to hit the relay satellite.

In this illustration, you are the transmitter and antenna, the Holy Spirit provides the power, and God's will is the satellite. God controls and limits the direction of your prayer, in a sense, because if you don't beam it in the general area of His satellite, it will miss altogether. The satellite of God's will is on a fixed orbit that you can't change—like God's overall plan that is fixed. You must use your antenna to aim your prayer within the limits of that fixed orbit. It

won't do a bit of good if you're firing off in some other direction. You've got to be on target.

If you're in tune, the Holy Spirit directs your prayer. If your set is automated so that the Holy Spirit is in control, then it's automatically tuned just right—power, beam, direction, everything—by the Lord's own computer, and it can't miss! But if you've been fooling around with the dials and the settings, you can mess up the whole works by trying to do it *your* way. Also, the satellite of God's will has to be in just the right position to bounce it down to the intended recipient, and the recipient has got to be in just the right position and have his receiver turned on in order to receive it.

There are several factors that affect the whole process of prayer, any one of which could explain why we don't always get the answer we ask for right away. The trouble may be with us, or maybe it's not God's time because His satellite isn't in the right position yet, or the trouble may be at the other end.

Prayer depends on these four principal factors: your position, God's position, the



position of the person or situation you're praying for, and the way you pray.

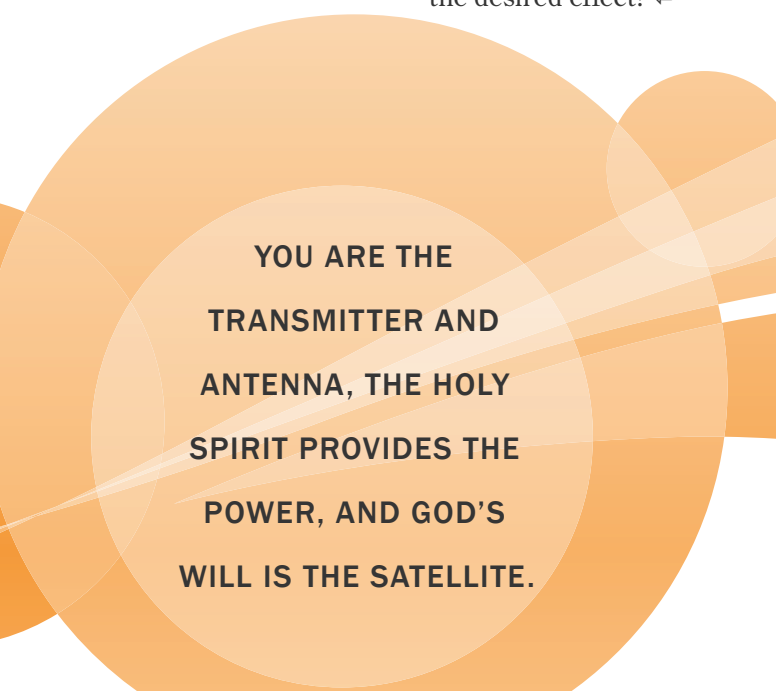
In the pocket billiards illustration, it depends on the positions of the cue ball, the target ball, the pocket, and the way you shoot. You don't control the outcome completely, the person you're praying for doesn't control it completely, and God has specifically limited Himself not to control it completely, but to let it be affected by these other factors.

In the radio transmission illustration, the position of His satellite is set, but how it is used depends on you and the recipient. In other words, God has set the position of His overall plans, but how you fit into the plan depends on your

position, the position of the person or thing you're praying for, and whether or not your beam is aimed right to hit the satellite.

So God has left a lot up to *you* and a lot up to *them*. He will always do His part. His orbit is set, and His satellite will always be where it's supposed to be at any given time. So the only things that will change the outcome are your position, the recipient's position, and the power and direction of your transmission.

So that's how prayer works. If it's according to God's will—what He knows is best for everyone concerned—and you and the object of your prayer are in the right position and you aim straight, your prayer will hit the target and have the desired effect! ↩



**YOU ARE THE
TRANSMITTER AND
ANTENNA, THE HOLY
SPIRIT PROVIDES THE
POWER, AND GOD'S
WILL IS THE SATELLITE.**



FEEDING READING

MEDITATIVE PRAYER

MEDITATIVE PRAYER BRINGS US INTO GOD'S PRESENCE.

Psalm 4:4

Psalm 46:10

Psalm 63:5-6

James 4:8

MEDITATING ON THE LORD BRINGS FAITH, HOPE, AND PEACE OF MIND.

Psalm 16:8-9

Psalm 104:34

Isaiah 26:3

Isaiah 30:15

Philippians 4:6-7

MEDITATIVE PRAYER PUTS US IN POSITION TO HEAR FROM HEAVEN.

Job 37:14

Jeremiah 29:13

Jeremiah 33:3

Matthew 6:6

MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD.

Joshua 1:8

Psalm 1:2

Psalm 119:15

Psalm 119:99

Psalm 119:148

1 Timothy 4:15

EVEN JESUS NEEDED TIMES OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

Mark 1:35

Mark 6:46

Luke 5:16

Luke 6:12

THE BEST YOU CAN DO THING FOR OTHERS

GOD HAS HIS REASONS for allowing problems in life, and one of the main reasons is to teach us to pray. He lets us come to the end of our rope, the end of our strength and what we think we can do to solve the problem at hand, so we will realize that *He* is the One who has got to do it and then pray for *Him* to work, by His power.

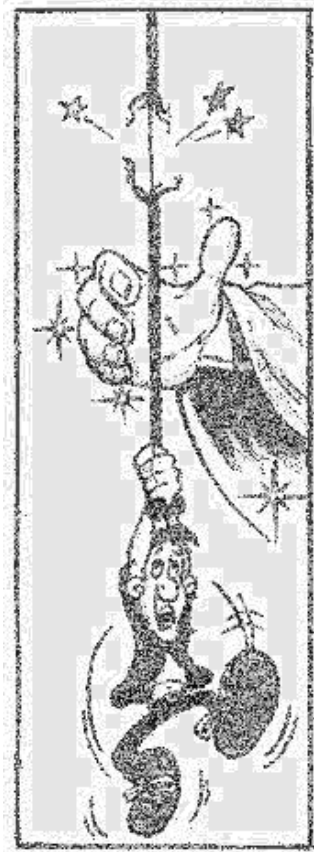
If there's something we can do to help the situation and we ask Him what that is and how to go about it, He will show us and help us do it. But in the end, the thing that will help more than anything and without which all our labors are incomplete is prayer—to pray for *Him* to do the work in the *spirit*.

He's the only One who can change hearts and minds. He's the only One who can bring people to the point where they're willing to change or do whatever's necessary to make progress or fix the problem. So the best thing we can do to help people in problem situations is to pray for them. We can't do the miracle that's needed, but the Lord can. Our prayers move His hand and make things happen in the spiritual realm that change things in our physical realm. Praying for the person or situation not only helps to set things up for the miracle

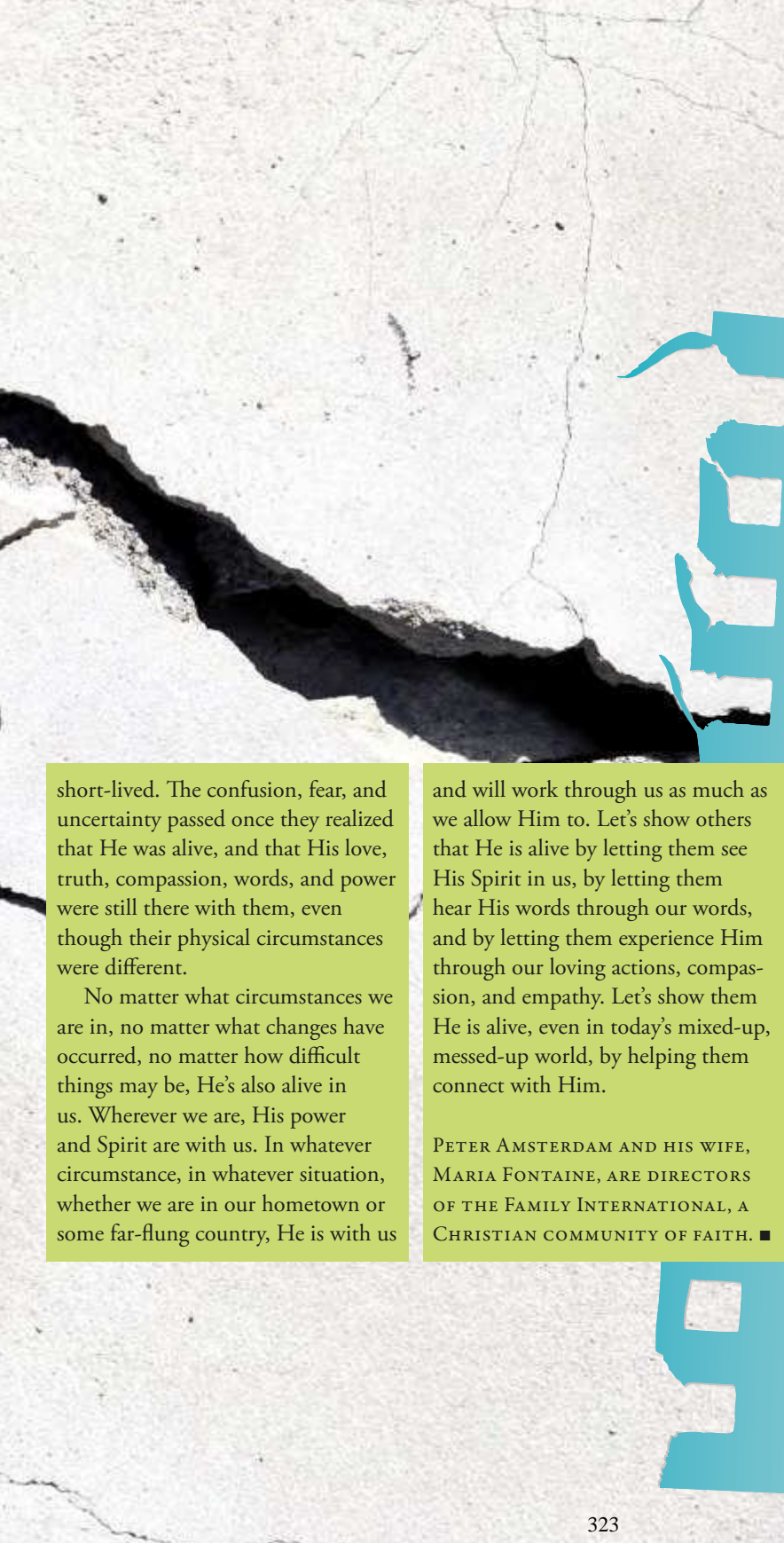
to happen, but it gives us peace of mind that we've done the best thing we could possibly do. When we commit things to the Lord in prayer, then we can trust that whatever happens is in His hands and under His control.

People don't fully realize how important prayer is, especially people who are by nature accomplishment oriented. It's all the harder for them to pray and not always be trying to do something in the physical. We need to understand and believe that only God can work in the spirit to change people and situations, and the best thing we can do to help God help others is to pray for them. If we don't pray, He often has to wait before He can bring about the needed change. His Word says, "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). Prayer is a very mysterious spiritual phenomenon. It's impossible to fully understand how the Lord chooses to work, how He chooses to answer prayer, why some prayers are answered quicker than others, or why He does an obvious miracle in one situation and not in another. We can't expect to know everything about God's business, but we can be sure that we have His ear and that our prayers have a big effect. •

**People don't
fully realize
how important
prayer is**



BY DAVID BRANDT BERG



PARDON GRANTED

—Thoughts on Easter

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

We don't have a Jesus on the cross; He's left the cross! We have an empty cross. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"²⁰ We don't have a Christ in the grave; we have a live Jesus living in our hearts.

He rose in victory, joy, liberty, and freedom, never to die again, so that He could redeem us as well and prevent our having to go through the agony of death of spirit. What a day of rejoicing that must have been when He rose and realized it was all over. He had won the victory; the world was saved!



The miracle of Easter is that because Jesus didn't remain in the grave, we don't have to, either. We don't have to suffer in hell to pay for our sins, or experience eternal separation from God. He took that payment for us, and then rose to a new life. And His new life can be inside us, giving us hope and peace, as we are filled with His love. ■

short-lived. The confusion, fear, and uncertainty passed once they realized that He was alive, and that His love, truth, compassion, words, and power were still there with them, even though their physical circumstances were different.

No matter what circumstances we are in, no matter what changes have occurred, no matter how difficult things may be, He's also alive in us. Wherever we are, His power and Spirit are with us. In whatever circumstance, in whatever situation, whether we are in our hometown or some far-flung country, He is with us

and will work through us as much as we allow Him to. Let's show others that He is alive by letting them see His Spirit in us, by letting them hear His words through our words, and by letting them experience Him through our loving actions, compassion, and empathy. Let's show them He is alive, even in today's mixed-up, messed-up world, by helping them connect with Him.

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

THREE SPHERES OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

BASED ON THE
WRITINGS OF DAVID
BRANDT BERG

Our spiritual life can be divided into three principal spheres: praise, prayer, and performance.

Praise

Praise is a form of love. It's us telling God how much we love Him and how thankful we are for all He does for us. So when we turn our attention from the business of the day to focus on the spiritual and the needs of our spirit, what is the first thing we should do? Praise God for His goodness. "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name."¹ Praise opens a channel to the heavenly realm.

Praise benefits both parties. Not only does God love praise, but praising Him puts things in proper perspective for us as well. When we pause to consider God's love and all that He's already done for us, it changes our outlook; it clears our mind, relieves stress, and refreshes our spirit—and the benefits don't stop there. We don't just praise our way to peace of mind, body, and spirit; we also praise down more tangible blessings of God in the form of answers to our prayers. The blessings come down as the praises go up!

Prayer

Some people only pray when they need something from God. They tell Him all their problems and what they want from Him, and they try to push their program on God without ever giving Him a chance to say a word—except they hope that when they get done, He will say yes to whatever it is they're asking Him for. But prayer is meant to be much more than that.

Prayer is two-way communication with God, the means by which we connect and converse and commune heart to heart with Him. Like the loving Father He is, God takes a personal interest in us and wants to be involved in our daily life. He knows that we have questions and problems, and He wants to give us answers and solutions. He wants to speak to us through His written Word as we prayerfully read it, and He wants to speak personal words of love and encouragement directly to our mind. Most of all, He wants us to know how much He loves us.

What matters most in prayer is not how we position our body, but how we position our heart. We don't have to get down on our knees or close our eyes or bow our head or fold our hands to pray, although all of those are ways of showing God due

¹ Psalm 100:4



respect. They also can help close out other thoughts and distractions. The point is to focus on the Lord.

There are more ways to pray than you probably ever imagined. Prayers can be long or short, silent or spoken or sung. Some prayers don't even need words. Prayers can be fun, off-the-cuff exchanges, or hallowed, formal veneration. They can be spontaneous, carefully planned, or written. Write them yourself, or take them from the Bible (many prayers can be found in the book of Psalms) or a devotional book. They can be for yourself or others. They can be prayed in private or with others. They can be simple acknowledgments of your need for the Lord's blessing as you go about your routine, or they can be earnest petitions for His guidance as you tackle the seemingly impossible. They can be happy, thankful praises, or impassioned prayers of repentance from a broken and contrite heart. They can be prayed on your knees or on the go. The ways to pray are as many and varied as your needs. Whichever way you choose, the point is that it's a personal expression of your heart to God—it's making a connection.

The more we make prayer a part of our everyday thought pattern, the more in tune and in touch with God we'll be, the better He will be able to guide our lives, and the happier we'll be.

Let prayer flow through you as naturally and automatically as your heart beats and your lungs breathe. Then you will have discovered the full, dynamic power of prayer.

Performance

Praise and prayer bring us closer to God and put us in position to get His guidance and help in matters both big and small, but there's another key to a healthy spiritual life: *doing* what He tells us to do. "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."¹

A big part of putting spirituality into practice is sharing God's love with others. Jesus told His closest followers, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."² He says this still to His followers of today, calling them to give their lives daily in loving concern and care for others, to share His heart and love with those who are seeking for "the way, the truth, and the life."³ ●

¹James 1:23-25

²John 20:21

³John 14:6



An audience with Jesus

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

Jesus said, “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life!”¹ God’s Word, the Bible as well as Bible-based devotional and inspirational material like this *Activated* magazine, nourishes our spirit and keeps us alive and healthy spiritually. Just like we have to eat in order to have physical strength, we have to feed from the Word to have spiritual strength.

The challenge that many of us face when we sit down to read is that we’re too easily distracted by the thoughts of the day. Sometimes the answer lies in simply putting forth a little more effort. This spiritual exercise may help.

Next time you sit down to read God’s Word, imagine that Jesus is sitting next to you. Instead of merely reading the words on the page, imagine that Jesus is personally telling you these things face to face, in a personal audience with you. He *is* always with you in spirit,² but if He were with you in bodily form, if you could see Him, you would surely be hanging on His every word.

That’s how you should look at your time reading God’s Word, as a personal audience with Jesus, the King of all kings, during which He is presenting you with special words of wisdom, instruction, guidance, inspiration, and encouragement.

—
“Your [God’s] words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.”—*Jeremiah 15:16*

¹John 6:63

²Hebrews 13:5

START YOUR DAY OFF RIGHT

—HEAR FROM JESUS!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

You ought to try a little prayer time every day, early in the morning before beginning your day’s work, asking Jesus to help you. When you first wake up, before you do anything, talk to Jesus. Get your orders from Him for the day, and you’ll be amazed at how He’ll solve or prevent a lot of your problems before the day even starts.

But if you go plunging into all your problems and troubles and your day’s work without stopping to talk to Jesus and get your directions from Him, you’ll be like a musician who decided to have his concert first, and then tune his instrument. Begin the day with the Word of God and prayer, and first of all get in harmony with Him.

Don’t ever think that it’s too hard to pray or that you don’t have time to pray. The busier your day, the more reason you have to pray and the longer you ought to pray. If you’ll spend a little more time praying, you will find that you’ll spend a lot less time working to get things done later. If your day is hemmed with prayer, it is less likely to unravel. It’s that simple!

PROPHECIES

ON

THE

FUTURE



DANIEL TWO

A Picture of the
Past and Future

THE PROPHET DANIEL WAS A TEENAGER when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, besieged Jerusalem for the first time in 605 B.C. Daniel and other Jews of royal blood were taken captive and brought to Babylon, where they were trained to become counselors of the king. "And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined [Daniel and his three friends, whom the king renamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego], he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm" (Daniel 1:20).

Daniel chapter 2 recounts a prophetic dream and its interpretation, and in so doing gives a concise overview of the history and future of the world, from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the Second Coming of Jesus and beyond.

The dream

Nebuchadnezzar had a mysterious dream that left him troubled. When his magicians, astrologers, and others were not able to tell him both what he had dreamed and the interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar sentenced all of his counselors to death. But when the king's guard came for Daniel and his companions, Daniel said that he could tell the king his dream and its meaning. Daniel and his friends prayed, and "the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision" (verses 1–19).

"There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets," Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, "and He has made known to you what will be in the latter days" (verse 28). Daniel then told Nebuchadnezzar what the king had dreamed and what it meant.

"You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ... And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (verses 31–35).

The interpretation

The head of gold: Babylon. "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. ... You are this head of gold"

(verses 37–38). Babylon was also known as the “golden city” of ancient times, and is referred to as such in another Bible passage, Isaiah 14:1–4.

The chest and arms of silver: Medo-Persia. “After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours” (verse 39a). We know from history that Medo-Persia conquered Babylon in 538 B.C. It is appropriate that the kingdom of Persia is depicted here by two arms because the Medes were the first nation to be incorporated into the Persian Empire, and many Medes held important positions in the Persian Empire.

The belly of bronze: Greece. “A third kingdom of bronze ... shall rule over all the earth” (verse 39b). Again, we know from history that in 333 B.C., over 200 years after this prophecy was given, Alexander the Great and the Greek army conquered the Persian Empire. It is interesting that Greece is symbolized here as the belly and thighs of the image, because the Greeks were known for being uninhibited about sex and nudity.

The legs of iron: Rome. “And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others” (verse 40). Rome conquered Greece and held iron rule over the entire known (western) world for nearly 500 years. It is appropriate that it was represented as two legs because it was often administered as two regions and in its decline was divided into the Western Roman Empire, with its capital in Rome, and the Eastern Roman Empire (later called the Byzantine Empire), with its capital at Constantinople. The Romans were also great on marching and were the first world empire to build an extensive

network of highways—important for deploying armies to quell revolts.

The feet and toes of iron and clay: *strong and weak governments of the End-time.* “Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. ... They will mingle ... but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay” (verses 41–43). Since the fall of the Roman Empire, no single empire has ruled the entire known world. Instead, there has been a mix of smaller nations and empires with both strong and weak governments. However, the soon-to-arise empire of the Devil-possessed dictator known as the Antichrist will, for a very brief period, unite all nations and rule the world in some kind of One World Order. The nations represented by the 10 toes will be united under the Antichrist.

The stone and the mountain: Jesus and the kingdom of God. The stone that was cut out of a mountain represents Jesus, and the great mountain that filled the whole earth is the soon-coming kingdom of God on earth. The rock striking the image on the feet, rather than on the head or elsewhere, signifies what time the kingdoms of man will be destroyed: the time in which we are now living, the “latter days” (verse 28), also known as the Endtime. “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (verse 44). •

The toes were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile.

WHEN YOU PRAY THE LORD'S PRAYER, have you ever really thought about the part, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven"? (Luke 11:2). We who know and love the Lord already have Heaven in our hearts, thank God, but is there really much Heaven on Earth today? No, there is mostly confusion and selfishness and unhappiness and war and fighting and hell on every hand!

But one day soon, the Lord is going to change all that when He sets up His own kingdom of peace and goodness and fairness and mercy and love. Then His kingdom won't only be in our hearts, it will be all around us. God's kingdom really is going to come in all of its power and glory, right here on Earth!

in Heaven (Revelation 19:7–9), while the wicked Antichrist and his followers back on Earth suffer the horrific Wrath of God (Revelation chapter 16). Bloodied but unbowed, the Antichrist and his forces will be poised to try to crush their opponents—all the people left on Earth who have refused to worship the Antichrist or receive his Mark of the Beast (Revelation 13:16–18)—when Jesus and His children return to defeat the Antichrist and his forces at the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:14,16; 17:14; 19:11–15).

Then at last Jesus will put an end to man's cruel and destructive rule and set up the kingdom of God on Earth for 1,000 years. Jesus will rule in person, and all of His saved children will rule with Him (Jeremiah 23:5–6; Revelation 19:5; 20:6).

tomorrow's wonderful world

But before that can happen, some other things have to happen: The evil Antichrist world leader must come to power and rule for seven years, the second half of which will be a time of trouble called the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14), when the Antichrist and his forces will persecute but not completely overcome God's children (Revelation 13:7; 11:3–5). Then Jesus will supernaturally gather all of His saved children, dead and alive, and instantly give them all powerful new resurrection bodies (Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:51–52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). He will whisk them away to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

The surviving peoples of Earth will then have the blessing of living under the most perfect, righteous and fair government the world has ever known (Isaiah 11:1–5).

All wars will finally cease. Men will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4). Man will live in peace and plenty, like God planned for him to live in the beginning, and nothing will hurt nor destroy in all of God's kingdom (Isaiah 11:9).

There will be no carnivorous beasts or poisonous insects or serpents, or any such pests. Man

and beast will no longer need to eat meat, and all will be at peace with each other. Even a little child will be able to lead the formerly wild beasts around, playing with the lions and tigers and leopards and elephants as pets! “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den” (Isaiah 11:6–8).

Neither will there be any more of the thorns, thistles, weeds or poisonous plants that came as part of

horses, camels, wagons, sailing ships, etc.

There will also be no more smoke-belching factories or destructive modern machinery. The world is going to go back to those beautiful days when people took the time to appreciate the beautiful creation of God around them and the wonderful creatures of God to help them plow and harvest their food and provide transportation. It won’t be a primitive society, but it will certainly be a peaceful one!

There will also be very little, if any, disease or sickness, because the Bible says that if somebody dies at the age of 100, he will still be considered a child (Isaiah 65:20). People may again live nearly a thousand years, as they did in the days before the Flood.

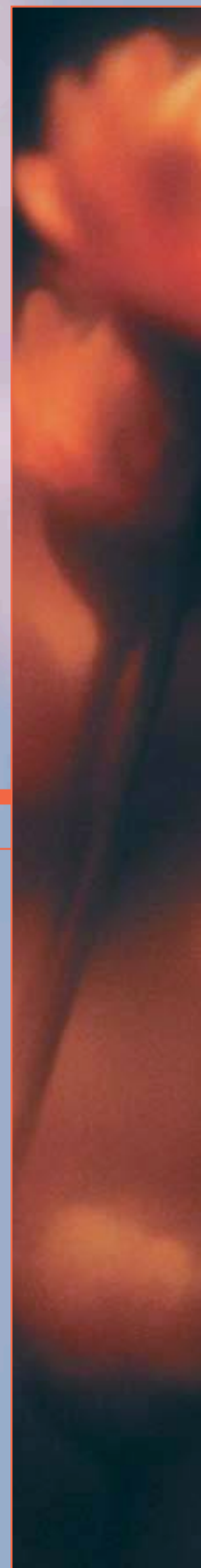
the Curse, because of the Fall of Man (Isaiah 55:13; Genesis 3:17–18).

Earth will be a beautiful, heavenly paradise—the restored Garden of Eden. In that day you’ll be able to enjoy all the pleasures of paradise to the full! What a wonderful place to live!

There will be no more gasoline-powered, pollution-spouting, environment-hurting and life-destroying transportation. We’ll be free from today’s rat race, where everything moves at such breakneck speed that there’s no time to even enjoy life anymore. Instead, the world will in large part return to God-created, God-ordained peaceful modes of transportation—

But remember that during this time, all of God’s saved children will already have received their new eternal super-bodies that will *never* die. And they will be helping Jesus teach God’s ways to the millions—perhaps even billions—of normal mortal, human beings during these 1,000 years. “Earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

If you’ve received Jesus as your Savior, you can look forward to the brightest and happiest future you could ever imagine—ruling and reigning with Jesus as one of His supernatural supermen or superwomen during this wonderful time! •





HEAVENLY VICTORY

IN THE GREAT TRIBULATION

The Bible warns us that a powerful one-world government will arise in these final days of man's reign on Earth, led by a demonic dictator—the Antichrist—who will actually be possessed by Satan himself! The last three and a half years of his rule will be a time that the Bible calls the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14). This Antichrist government will use a universal electronic credit system to try to cause everybody to come under the control of the Antichrist, because no one will be able to buy or sell without a personal credit number, or “mark of the Beast” (Revelation 13:16–18). The Antichrist will also set up an idol, an image of himself, and somehow cause those who refuse to worship the image to be killed (Revelation 13:14–15).

But God's children will refuse to worship the Antichrist or receive his mark—and God will take care of them! (Revelation 12:6,14). Although some Christians will die as martyrs, the Antichrist will not be able to overcome them spiritually. The Lord

says, “And they”—the Christians—
”overcame *him* [the Antichrist] by
the blood of the Lamb [Jesus] and by
the word of their testimony; and they
did not love their lives to the death”
(Revelation 12:11).

“If God is
for us, who
can be
against us?”
(Romans 8:31)

God's Word also promises that during this time “the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits,” and that “those of the people who understand shall instruct many” (Daniel 11:32,33). In those days many will be seeking the truth and a way out of their desperate situations, and those who know the Lord and understand His Word will be able to explain to them what's happening. Those in the know will lead and encourage God's other children till the very end.

The Lord has also promised to come to His people's defense with mighty signs and wonders. When you read in Revelation chapters 8 and 9 about of the "trumpets of

The Lord is also going to give many of those who believe in Him miraculous powers ...

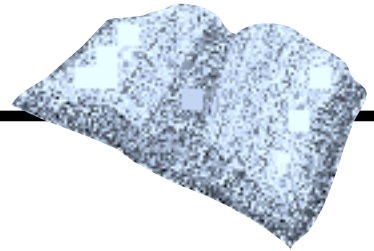
tribulation" and the horrific plagues that they herald, you need to remember that God is sending these plagues to torment the *wicked* and

ungodly. Those who have the "seal of God"—that is, those who believe in and love Jesus—have nothing to fear! (Revelation 7:2–3; 9:1–5). The Lord is also going to give many of those who believe in Him miraculous powers to defend themselves, survive, continue to proclaim the truth and lead others to Him right up till His return (Revelation 11:3–6).

So don't worry about the Great Tribulation! It's not going to be some kind of a lopsided, rampaging victory for the Devil! God's people are going to win supernatural victories over him and all of his powers! ■

Feeding Reading

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW TRIALS AND TESTS?



To draw us closer to Him

Psalm 107:12–13

To see if we will remain true to Him

Deuteronomy 8:2
Deuteronomy 13:3–4
Jeremiah 17:10

To draw us closer to His Word

Psalm 94:12
Psalm 119:67,71

To make us more fruitful

John 15:2

To train us

Hebrews 5:8
1 Peter 4:1–2

To make us more useful vessels

Jeremiah 18:4
2 Timothy 2:21

To purify us

Psalm 66:10
Job 23:10
Isaiah 48:10
Daniel 11:35
1 Peter 1:7

To prepare us for the future

Deuteronomy 8:16
Psalm 105:17–22

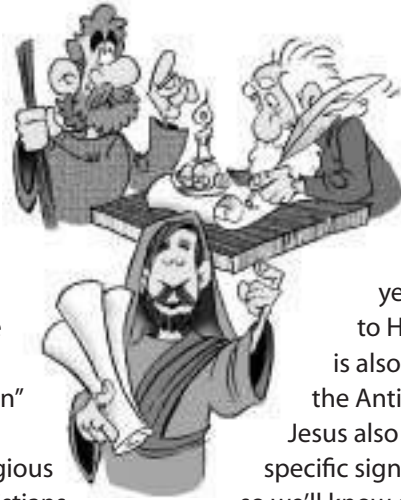
To teach us patience

Romans 5:3
James 1:3–4

To teach us compassion towards others

Hebrews 4:15
2 Corinthians 1:4

"left



Matthew chapter 24 is quite clear on the subject of Jesus' Second Coming, when He is going to return to gather all those who have received Him as their Savior and take them with Him back to Heaven—an event commonly referred to as "the Rapture." The rest of the Bible is also clear on when this happens. That's why for nearly 1,800 years practically every Christian believed Jesus would come back *after* the period He refers to as "Great Tribulation"—three and a half years of intense persecution.

It's only in the last couple of hundred years that people like C.I. Scofield (1843–1921) came along with the false doctrine that Jesus would come *before* the Tribulation. "Don't worry, Jesus is going to come and take you out of this world before the trouble comes, so you won't have to suffer." Naturally that became a very popular doctrine because it was just what everybody had been waiting to hear.

From my experience, many Christians who say they believe in the pre-Tribulation Rapture just don't want to have to go through the Tribulation and aren't the least bit prepared for it, so they come up with their own interpretation of the Scriptures or latch onto someone

else's false teaching. But the Bible specifically says not to do that. "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20). I don't care what other religious groups or other Christians say; what does the *Bible* say?

In Matthew 24, Jesus' disciples ask Him what will be the sign of His return, and Jesus answers with not one but a number of signs—wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecution of Christians, a proliferation of false prophets, lawlessness, a pervading lack of love, and the Gospel being preached in every nation. "Then," He says, "the end will come" (Matthew 24:4–14).

Beginning with the next verse, Jesus tells us what we can expect during the Great



Tribulation—the last three and a half years leading up to His return, which is also the last half of the Antichrist's reign. Jesus also tells us what specific sign to watch for, so we'll know exactly when

that period is beginning. "When you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place ... then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:15,21). We find out in the book of Revelation that this "abomination of desolation" is an image of the Antichrist, or Beast (Revelation 13:14–15). Both Daniel and Revelation tell us that this image will be set up in the holy place at exactly the middle of the Antichrist's seven-year reign (Daniel 9:27; 12:11; Matthew 24:15–21; Revelation 13:5).

When does Jesus come back for us?—That's also plain as day: "Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days" Jesus returns (Matthew 24:29). Jesus doesn't say that when we see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place He's about to rescue us out of this world, away from the Antichrist

and the trouble to come. He warns us to head for the hills (Matthew 24:16). In other words, we will still be here.

And why did the Lord and the prophets go to so much trouble to tell us exactly how long the Great Tribulation would last—the exact time in terms of days, months, and years—if we didn't need to *know* these things, if we won't be here, counting the days and the weeks? (Daniel 7:25; 12:11; Revelation 13:5). Jesus told us these specifics because He wants us to be able to take heart in knowing that the Tribulation isn't going to last forever, and that every passing day is bringing us closer to the glorious end.

During the Tribulation, things will get so bad that many people will think it's time for Jesus to come, especially Christians who were taught that He was supposed to come *before* the Tribulation. They're going to expect Him to come any day. But Jesus warns us *not* to expect Him sooner than has been foretold. He also warns us to not be deceived by either false christs who will try to deceive us into thinking that *they* are Christ, or by false prophets who will try to tell us that Christ's coming is imminent or that

He's already here somewhere (Matthew 24:23–26). He tells us to not believe any of them, because when He comes, we will know it!

Some people who teach a pre-Tribulation Rapture go so far as to say that it's going to be a *secret* Rapture—that nobody is going to see Him except the saved. Nobody else is even going to know He came. All of a sudden a bunch of us are just going to disappear, and those who are left behind won't know what's happened to us.

If the Rapture is supposed to be a secret, why will the Lord make so much noise and put on such a show when He comes? His Word tells us that He's going to "come in the clouds with great power and glory." The sky will light up from one end to the other, and there will be such signs in the heavens that we



couldn't possibly mistake the fact that Jesus is coming. In fact, it says that "every eye shall see Him." Everyone



will also see the dead in Christ—all the saved people who have already died—rising to meet Him in the air as He comes. They'll hear Jesus, too, because He'll "descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and a great sound of the trumpet of God." And why are all of the unsaved going to mourn?—Because they're going to see and know what's happening (Matthew 24:27,30; Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 1:7). It will be the greatest spectacle the world has ever seen.

That doesn't sound like a secret coming or secret Rapture to me! Does it to you?

And there it is again, plain as day: *After* the dead rise to meet the Lord, "then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). If we got raptured *before*, then what are we doing still here? ○

(To be continued.)

behind"?

The Truth About the Rapture, Part 1

ONE OF THE DEVIL'S CLEVEREST TRICKS has been to deceive Christians into thinking that Jesus is going to rescue them out of this world before the three-and-a-half-year Great Tribulation, because those who believe that are going to be totally unprepared for the Tribulation, and it's going to shake the faith of some. A lot of Christians who are expecting to get "raptured" (gathered into Heaven at Jesus' Second Coming) *before* the Tribulation are going to get the shock of their lives, because that's not going to happen. Jesus said so Himself: "Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days ... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:29–31).

After the Tribulation shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens. *After* the Tribulation, then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. *After* the Tribulation they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. *After* the Tribulation He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather His elect. That's when Jesus is going to come for you and me—*after* the Tribulation, and not a day before!

Why is Jesus going to return?—To gather His "elect," the *eklektos* in Greek, the

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE RAPTURE PART 2

Left

chosen ones, the saved. Christians will have been preaching the Gospel and winning multitudes to the Lord in this time of tribulation. Why would He pull His laborers out before those few years when people will be the most desperate for salvation and there will be one of the greatest harvests of souls ever, when we'll be "doing exploits and instructing many"? (Matthew 9:37–38; Daniel 11:32–33). And if we're going to be doing exploits and instructing many *during* the Tribulation, we must still be here. He is going to need lots of us here to tell the world what's happening.

But if God loves saved Christians so much, some people reason, why would He let them go through the Tribulation?—To put them to the test. He's going to test their faith to see if they really believe. Will they be witnesses for Him, or will they be ashamed of Him and try to save their lives by not witnessing? He's going to purge them and refine them as by fire, His Word says, to make them white (Daniel 11:35).

I'm sorry if you're disappointed to hear that! I'm sorry if you thought you had it made being a Christian because He'd come and rescue you before anything terrible happened. Well, He's not going to! The Tribulation is going to put us through the refining fire, but those who have real faith are going to come through like pure gold.

We know the Tribulation is going to be difficult, or it

wouldn't be called the Tribulation. But still, we shouldn't look ahead to it with trepidation, expecting horrible defeat with nothing but persecution and suffering. It's going to be primarily a time of great victory over the forces of Satan and tremendous triumph over the anti-Christ wicked. It's going to be a time of terrible and awesome events, but we are going to have terrible and awesome powers to protect us and defend us and deliver us and keep us going right to the end (Daniel 11:32; Revelation 12:7–11; 17:14). We don't need to worry or fear, because God is going to take care of His own (Revelation 3:10; 7:1–3; 12:6).

Another false teaching about the Rapture is that it's only for the "best" Christians. When I was a boy I heard different preachers say, "Some day you'll come home and find all your loved ones have disappeared." And sure enough, one day I came home from school and nobody was home. I thought, "Oh my! The Rapture has occurred! My dear sweet mother and father have gone to be with the Lord! They and all the other dear Christians I knew and who helped take care of me were all ready. They loved the Lord and weren't naughty like me! They've already gone to be with the Lord and here I am, left behind and all alone in this big house"—and I practically cried!

What a terrible thing to teach little children (or anyone, for that matter), that even if they love Jesus and are saved, if they're not good enough, if they didn't

Behind?

go to church enough or if they commit another sin, they're not going to be ready for Jesus when He comes, and they're going to miss the Rapture! The preachers said, "They may be saved, but they'll be left behind in that terrible Tribulation, because in the Rapture Jesus is only going to take the *good* people."

Well, let me tell you, *nobody* is ever good enough! Nobody can ever love Him enough. Nobody can ever be perfect enough, clean enough, pure enough, or holy enough except by the blood of Jesus Christ, and that's done the instant you receive Jesus as your Savior. So you don't have to worry about whether or not you're good enough. If you belong to Jesus, He is going to take you to be with Him when He comes, no matter what.

Nobody who has received Jesus is going to be left behind. Jesus promised to send His angels out to gather us from everywhere, from the four winds, from all around the world, and He won't leave one behind! He won't forget one—not one! (Matthew 24:31). Isn't that wonderful?

So if you have the Lord, you're ready! Now help *others* get ready. Pass on the Good News of God's love and salvation in Jesus to as many as you can. Tell your friends and family and everybody else so they may also be ready for the wonderful event that is soon to take place, when Jesus comes to rescue us out of this world and take us to heavenly places with Him for eternity. Don't let one be left behind because you failed to tell them!♥

Interpreting

BIBLE PROPHECY



PART ONE

*“Rightly dividing
the Word of truth”
(2 Timothy 2: 15).*

By David Brandt Berg

Nothing about God’s overall plan for the world, as revealed through Bible prophecy, is going to change. The major events of the Endtime, the major participants, and the final outcome—those are all settled. “Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven” (Psalm 119:89). “I am the Lord, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). God doesn’t change, His Word doesn’t change, and His prophetic plans for the world are not going to change.

There are certain specifics that we can be sure of: We know that (1) Jesus is coming back, (2) that following His return all those who have received Jesus as their Savior are going to (3) receive their eternal bodies, (4) be transported to Heaven (the Rapture) where they will (5) enjoy the Marriage Feast of the Lamb in that gorgeous Heavenly City, while (6) there’s hell on Earth and the Wrath of God is being poured out below on the defiant, rebellious, and wicked followers of the Antichrist. We know that is going to be followed by (7) the Battle of Armageddon (the total defeat of the Antichrist and his regime), which will be followed by (8) the Millennium (the thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth). We also know (9) the Millennium will end with the Battle of Gog and Magog (another war between the godly and the ungodly), and will be followed by (10) a total restoration of the earth’s surface (the New Heaven and New Earth). All this is very clear and very definite. They cannot be doubted or denied, because it’s all very clear right there in the Bible.

These are events we know, and the closer we get to these things, the more specific and exact our knowledge of these and related events will be. Many of the details regarding future events are not yet clear, but we *are* told what things to watch for, key points on the future timeline, from which we will then be able to accurately determine the sequence and timing of other major

We are told what things to watch for ... we will then be able to accurately determine the sequence and timing of other major events yet to come.

events yet to come.

So what we need to know first as we study the Word of God are the things that are unchangeable—the established facts that are clearly stated in the Scriptures. These make up the foundation for further interpretation of Bible prophecy. You have to know these fundamentals of Bible prophecy before you can attempt to understand what *might* happen, and how and when. (*Editor's note: Most of these foundation facts of Bible prophecy are explained in the booklet The Future Foretold, also from Aurora Production.*)

Blessed Are Those Who Understand

Bible scholars are in general agreement on the interpretation of prophecies concerning past events. There can be little question about these because the events have already happened. Empires have come and gone and other events have happened, just like God said they would, sometimes hundreds of years beforehand. It's not hard to understand or teach *fulfilled* Bible prophecy; it's already happened, so the interpretation is obvious. But prophecies become a lot less obvious when they deal with events in the *future*. This is where most differences in doctrines and interpretations come up.

But just because some points are unclear or controversial is no reason to not try to figure them out. God's Word says of those reading the book of Revelation, "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it" (Revelation 1:3 NIV)—and the same goes for any other prophetic messages found in the Bible. It takes effort to try to understand Bible prophecy, to compare Scripture with Scripture till you arrive at the most plausible interpretations, but God says you will be blessed if you do.

You don't *have* to know all the prophetic details of the future; they'll

happen whether you know them or not, don't worry! But it's good to try to know as much as you can so you'll know what's going on and will be able to warn and instruct others.

Basic Guidelines

There are a few basic rules to interpreting God's Word. The first is: Interpret it literally, if possible. If it can mean exactly what it says, then it probably doesn't even have to be interpreted. Don't try to read into it some unusual, undercover significance or meaning. If a Bible verse or passage makes sense literally, take it literally.

But if it doesn't sound reasonable or logical, or it just seems like it's virtually impossible to interpret it literally, it may be symbolic. Study its context thoroughly to see if and how the symbolism is explained. Take the image and the beasts in the book of Daniel, for example: They are all interpreted by the angel or the man that appeared to Daniel, or by Daniel himself. We're told what each of these things represent, so those passages are obviously symbolic and we're given the interpretations.

If you can't find the explanation of a passage in its context, then try looking elsewhere in the Bible for where the same terms are used. See how they're used and what they mean in other places.

Most important, when you come across mysteries in the Word, let the Author Himself explain them to you. "Call to Me," He tells us in Jeremiah 33:3, "and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." Ask God to lead you step by step to the right interpretation. Of course there will be some things that God *won't* reveal to you just yet, because they're not close enough that you need to know them. But keep asking and seeking and knocking, and when the time is right, He will help you understand. ○

Interpreting Bible prophecy

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

PART 2

By David Brandt Berg

God loves a mystery!

The prophets looked into the future and saw coming events like series of mountain ranges, one after the other. Only the mountaintops were clearly visible. The valleys in between were mostly hidden, and the prophets couldn't always distinguish between events, just like two or three mountain ranges lined up one after the other can look like one from a distance. At the time, the order and timing of future events usually weren't clear to the prophets, but they became clear to others as they came to pass—or they will yet.

God has many mysteries that He keeps from us until the appointed time. Many of the prophets who received the revelations now recorded in the Bible never even attempted to explain them, often because they didn't understand the prophecies or revelations themselves. For example, the prophet Daniel was so baffled one time about what the Lord had prophesied through him that he said thinking about it troubled him greatly (Daniel 7:28). He was really puzzled!

God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways

My ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9). How could we possibly comprehend with our finite minds all the mysteries of God about the future?

But, little by little, He *does* shed a little more light on Endtime events. The sun doesn't just pop up in the morning and—boom!—it's broad daylight. First there's a long period of dawn as it gets a little lighter and a little lighter, until finally the sun itself begins to show. Then it still takes a while longer before the entire sun is visible. That's the way God reveals interpretations of Bible prophecies to us: little by little.

Is it wise to theorize?

It doesn't pay to try to be too specific or to try to nail down all the whos, whens, wheres, and hows of things to come, but you should at least be familiar with the basic events of the Endtime. You should also put *some* thought and prayer into trying to figure out how and when they might come to pass, so you'll recognize them when they do.

Studying Bible prophecy is a bit

like doing scientific experiments in a laboratory: You begin by asking questions. (If you don't have the questions in mind, how are you going to find the answers?) Then you try various possibilities in order to come to the right conclusions—or *probable* right conclusions—by the process of elimination. You can form theories regarding what various Bible prophecies mean by the processes of deduction and elimination. You may not get all the answers right, but you'll almost certainly be better off than if you never ask any questions or try to figure anything out.

How specific should you try to be?

I'm very leery about getting too specific, because too many preachers and Bible teachers have been called false prophets when their revelations or interpretations regarding specific events didn't prove true.

The only details that you can be absolutely sure of are the things that God has expressly said in the Word, such as the Great Tribulation lasting roughly three and a half years—or 42 months or 1260 days (Daniel 7:25, 9:27, 12:7; Revelation 11:2–3; 12:6; 13:5).

At this moment we don't know the exact time or place that most Endtime events will happen. We know generally, and when they begin to happen we'll know more specifically.

Some Bible prophecy buffs try to figure out the minute details—the days and hours and minutes—when it's too early for that. If you get bogged down with too many details of Bible prophecy, you're likely to make mistakes and waste a lot

of time. You'll know soon enough, when the time comes. Time will tell! Be patient, but be on the lookout for indications, hints, and signs.

How to know your interpretation is right

There's one thing about prophecy: When it happens, you'll know what it meant! Jesus said, "I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe" (John 14:29).

The Lord put each of those prophecies in the Bible for our edification. Some give us understanding of His plan for the future, so we can prepare accordingly. Others—those that we don't completely understand now—are to encourage our faith and instruct us later, when we see and recognize their fulfillments. When they come to pass, we'll be encouraged that everything is under the Lord's control and is happening just the way He said it would, and we'll know where we are on the Endtime timeline.

When I used to travel a lot by train, I tried to carry a train schedule so I could tell where I was at any time en route. The train wasn't always on time, of course, but whenever it came to a station I could tell if we were running late. The signs on the station platforms confirmed where we were, and I could adjust the schedule accordingly.

So if you become familiar with the main "stops" on the Lord's Endtime timeline, when you get to each one you'll know where you are and how much further you have to go. You'll see the "signs of the times" (Matthew 16:3), remember the Scriptures, and be encouraged.

(To be continued.) •

How could we possibly comprehend with our finite minds all the mysteries of God about the future?

Interpreting Bible prophecy

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

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.

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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. •



Compiled from the writings of David Brandt Berg

THE COMING HEAVENLY LIFE OF LOVE!

WHAT
HEAVEN
WILL
REALLY BE
LIKE

THE PLACE WHERE ALL OF GOD'S CHILDREN ARE GOING TO dwell with Him forever is not some fanciful dreamland way off in outer space somewhere, but an even more amazing dream city that's going to come down from God, out of space, to a new earth. And God is going to come down and live with us, and we with Him (Revelation 21:1–3). It's going to be such a literal down-to-earth Heaven that the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation chapters 21 and 22, describe the heavenly city in detail—its exact measurements, design, colors, and materials.

But before God brings down His heavenly city, He is going to purify the surface of the earth with fire, destroy the atmospheric heavens, and re-create a beautiful new earth and new atmospheric heavens. It will be the same ball, the same planet, but with a beautiful renewed surface, like a beautiful Garden of Eden—the Paradise of God (Psalm 102:25–26; Isaiah 51:6; 2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12).

We don't know exactly how it is going to work or what everything is going to be like there, but we do know that it's going to be a better world than the present one. It will be a world without death, sorrow, pain, or any of the other problems of today (Revelation 21:4).

The inhabitants of Heaven are not going to be entirely different. They're even going to look much like they did in this life, just as Jesus still looked like Himself after His resurrection. In His supernatural body, after He was resurrected from the grave, Jesus could appear and disappear, walk through walls and locked doors, and move from place to place at the speed of thought. Yet He ate and drank, and His disciples could still see Him and touch Him (Luke 24:36–43; John 21:12–13). In Heaven, people are going to have new supernatural bodies like His, incorruptible, immortal. Their old, decaying, natural bodies will go back to the dust, and they will be given new resurrected bodies that will live forever

(Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

But if all there is to Heaven is sitting around on clouds and playing harps, it could get awfully boring! I'm convinced Heaven is not going to be like that at all. I believe it's going to include all the joys and beauties and pleasures of this life, but without the drawbacks—all the assets, and none of the liabilities. After all, why would God have created all this to abandon it? Heaven is going to be like the best of this world, only more so!

Due to the fall of man through sin when he was first placed on earth, we haven't really had a chance to enjoy life as God originally intended, but in Heaven we

In Heaven, people are
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will—and I think the Scriptures corroborate this. Heaven is going to be an amplification and eternal continuation of what we who know and love Jesus already have in our hearts. It's going to be perfect and wonderful, thrilling and exciting, marvelous and beautiful—everything we have now, only in perfection.

Everyone there is going to be good and honest and loving and kind—the perfect society, in perfect fellowship with the Lord and each other. There'll be no hate or jealousy or selfishness or cruelty. We'll never grow old and decrepit, or be bound

by time. It will be absolutely wonderful!

Within the great heavenly city, all of God's saved children will live with Him forever (Revelation 21:24, 27). But outside there will still be others in various situations, some better off than others, according to the lives they lived, how much they received God's truth and were loving to others. And because there will be "no more sea" (Revelation 21:1), unlike our present planet which is four-fifths covered with water, there will be plenty of room for those living outside the heavenly city.

The whole creation will be the way God intended for it to be originally, without sin, war, pollution, or destruction. In a sense, it will be heaven on earth for everybody, even the unregenerated people who don't have the right to enter the city or walk its golden streets.

Inside the city, the River of Life will flow out of the throne of God and of Jesus. The river will be lined on both sides with Trees of Life that bear twelve different kinds of fruit, and the "leaves are for the healing of the nations" outside (Revelation 22:1–2). Perhaps these healing leaves are symbolic of the words of God, His truth. Surely the inhabitants of Heaven will go out and be teachers amongst the nations. They will still have a job to do when they get to Heaven.

We who receive Jesus now are going to be the inner circle and live in the city, the charmed city, living charmed lives as eternal super-beings in supernatural bodies. Are you ready? And are you going to take as many others with you as you can?

God bless you with His love, salvation, and Heaven, now and forever!•



the heavenly city and new the earth

Compiled from

the writings of David Brandt Berg

by Joseph Candel

As the world scene continues to grow darker, it's more important than ever to keep our minds on the happy ending. Yes, things *are* going to get worse before they get better, but what matters most is that they are going to get better—much better! The darkest night this world has ever known will be followed by the most glorious sunrise. Then at last God's kingdom will reign supreme, eternally.

During the three-and-a-half-year period known as the Great Tribulation, the soon-coming world dictator, the Antichrist, will persecute believers of all faiths. But at the end of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return “on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” and rescue His people and gather them to be with Him (Matthew 24:29–31).

All of God's saved children who have died through the ages will be miraculously resurrected and ascend to meet Jesus in the air. Then the saved that are still alive on earth will

also be instantly transformed and join them. Jesus will rescue His people from their anti-Christ persecutors and whisk them away to the grandest victory celebration that has ever been held, the marriage supper of the Lamb in Heaven (Revelation 14:14–16; 19:6–9).

Meanwhile, the horrific wrath of God will be poured out upon the Antichrist and his followers (Revelation 14:8–11, 17–20; 15:1, 7–8; 16:1–11).

The superhuman hosts of Heaven, led by Jesus, will then return to completely defeat and destroy the Antichrist and his forces in the cataclysmic battle known as Armageddon. This will mark the end of man's cruel rule, as Jesus Christ and His forces take over the world and rule in righteousness.

For the next one thousand years—a period known as the Millennium—there will be peace, plenty, and paradise on earth (Revelation 19:11–21; 20:1–6).

Then, at the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released from prison in the heart of the earth, where he has been held for those thousand years. He will be given his freedom just long enough to deceive the nations again, and the unconverted will join Satan and rebel against God's kingdom on earth. God will once again defeat the Devil and his followers—this time at a battle even more cataclysmic than Armageddon, the Battle of Gog and Magog—and will completely purge and purify the surface of the earth with a flood of fire (2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20:7–9; 21:1).

After the Battle of Gog and Magog, God will rebuild a new world on the ashes of the old—“a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). It will be the same planet, but with a beautifully renewed surface. God is going to re-create the entire surface of the earth like a beautiful new Garden of Eden.

Then His great heavenly city will come down out of space to land on that beautiful new earth, and God is going to come down and live with us, and we with Him (Revelation 21:2–3).

It will be such a literal down-to-earth Heaven that Revelation chapters 21 and 22 describe it in detail—right down to the city's exact measurements, colors, materials, and more! It will be the grandest city ever built—far beyond the wildest dreams of man—covering an area of about 2.25 million square miles (about 5.83 million square kilometers), or large enough to cover most of Australia, over half of Europe or the United States, or one-fourth of Africa (Revelation 21:16).

“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb [Jesus] is its light” (Revelation 21:23). The sun and moon will continue to shine for the benefit of those outside the city, but those inside won't need them because the city will have its own light—the light of God, His Son, Jesus.

The entire city will be made of “pure gold, like clear glass” (Revelation 21:18). Imagine!

There will be a beautiful river of the water of life, flowing out of the throne of God and through the center of the city. Both sides of the river will be lined with trees of life that bear twelve kinds of fruit continuously, and the “leaves are for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2). The resurrected saints in their supernatural bodies aren't going to need healing, so it's obvious that this healing is for the people and nations outside the city.

Another major difference in the new earth is that “there will be no more sea” (Revelation 21:1). Today most of the earth is covered by water, so when God remakes the earth's surface and the seas are gone, there will be four or five times as much land for all the people outside the heavenly city to live on and enjoy.

It will be a whole new earth, a whole new creation, with peaceful, friendly animals and birds and all the beautiful creations of God that are with us now. But there will be none of the harmful insects and pests and thorns and thistles we have now (Isaiah 11:6–9; 55:13). The whole creation will be just like God had planned for it to be in the beginning, like it was in the Garden of Eden. What a wonderful world it will be, with no more sin, war, destruction, death, sickness, tears, or pain!

And that's not all! “In My Father's House,” Jesus said, “are many mansions. ... I go to prepare a place for you ... that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2–3). If you have received Jesus as your Savior, one of these days you're going to own a mansion that isn't going to cost you anything, because Jesus has already paid for it.

Are you ready for Heaven? Are you going to be able to walk the streets of that heavenly city? Only the saved shall walk therein (Revelation 21:24). You don't want to miss out on that, do you? All you have to do is receive Jesus as your Savior, if you haven't already! ■

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

BY JOSEPH CANDEL

Endtime Bible Prophecy



*The four
horsemen
of the
Apocalypse
set the stage
for what is
soon to come.*



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY WE HAVE WAR, or why there is such a disparity of wealth—why some people and whole nations are rich and overfed while others are starving and deprived of other basic necessities? Why do governments spend billions on wars that kill and maim while the poor continue to suffer?

I used to wonder why the world is the way it is, why there couldn't be more love and peace and cooperation among people and nations to make the world a better place. I found the answer to that in the Bible, beginning with Revelation chapter 6, about the four horsemen of the Apocalypse.

In Revelation chapter 6, Jesus opens the book of the future, the book of prophecy, which is sealed with seven seals, and shows the apostle John the future of the world from that time (about 90 AD) to the last days (the time in which we are now living) and beyond.

Another name for the book of Revelation is the Apocalypse, which means "a revelation concerning the future." The four horsemen of the Apocalypse reveal the truth about religion, war, and economics, and set the stage for what is soon to come.

The first seal

And I saw when the Lamb [Jesus] opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, "Come and see." And I saw, and behold, a white horse: and He that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto Him: and He went forth conquering, and to conquer. (Revelation 6:1–2 KJV.)

The first horseman, who wears a crown and goes forth to conquer, is obviously Jesus. What was happening at this time in world history, in about 90 AD?—From the spiritual realm, the resur-

rected Jesus was going forth to "conquer" the world with the Gospel through His apostles and the early Christians—and they would eventually conquer the mighty Roman Empire. Jesus' message of the love and forgiveness of God would prove more powerful than all the legions of Rome! Jesus is this mighty Conqueror on the white horse.

We find another picture of a white horse in Revelation chapter 19: "And behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True. ... His name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:11,13 KJV).

We know from John 1:14 that "The Word of God" is Jesus: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

And following Jesus are the armies of Heaven, the resurrected saints who are also riding white horses as they come down from Heaven to defeat the forces of the Antichrist and take over the world at the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:14).

The second seal

And when He had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, "Come and see." And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. (Revelation 6:3–4 KJV.)

What takes "peace from the earth"?—War! This red horse symbolizes war, the military and their war machines.

The horse's color, red, is appropriate because it represents all the blood shed in man's hellish wars—wars for which God is not responsible, but which come from the pride, prejudices, and avarice of

man's heart. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 4:1 KJV).

The "great sword" given to the rider of the red horse seems to suggest the great "improvements" in weapons of war and the vastly greater devastation bought on by war since this prophecy was given in John's day.

The third seal

And when He had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, "Come and see." And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, "A measure of wheat for a penny; and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." (Revelation 6:5–6 KJV.)

This black horse's rider with the pair of balances in his hand symbolizes the rich capitalists that have a major impact on world conditions through their manipulation of national economies. Only one other verse in the Bible pictures a man with balances, or scales: "The merchant uses dishonest scales; he loves to defraud" (Hosea 12:7 NIV).

Another prophet, Amos, also said that the merchants—the wealthy capitalists of his day who were robbing the poor instead of helping them—"set forth wheat, making the ephah [unit of measure] small, and the shekel [price] great, and falsifying the balances by deceit ... that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail" (Amos 8:4–6 KJV).

The black horse, then, represents famine and poverty perpetrated by the rich who refuse to share with those in need. This horse is largely responsible for today's economic situation. Oil and wine,

throughout the Scriptures, symbolize abundance or luxury. The fact that the oil and wine were "hurt not" indicates a situation where wealth and luxury exist alongside famine and poverty—and the gulf between rich and poor is only growing.

The fourth seal

And when He had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, "Come and see." And I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (Revelation 6:7–8 KJV.)

The fourth and final horseman of the Apocalypse is death itself—death not only from war, but also from beasts and plagues and famine and death in every other conceivable form.

Death has always been with us, of course, but death by famine, natural disasters, new plagues such as AIDS, and new pestilences such as the Ebola virus have reached unprecedented levels, just like Jesus said they would immediately prior to His return: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:7).

The fifth seal

And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was

said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. (Revelation 6:9–11 KJV.)

First comes the white horse, the proclamation of its rider's message, and the "conquest" of many souls. Then comes the open rejection of that message by the unbelievers, those in league with the other three horsemen on the red, black, and pale horses, which crystallizes into persecution and the martyrdom of "them that were slain for the Word of God." This is the way it's been all throughout history. These martyrs, though, are actually the exception. Most of Jesus' followers have usually escaped martyrdom and lived on to help carry on His work.

War, greed, and death—the characters that were revealed when the second, third, and fourth seals were opened—are almost as old as the world itself, but the Biblical picture both here and elsewhere is that each of these forces has taken on greater power since the time of this revelation.

Again, Jesus predicted this in His famous Endtime discourse, Matthew chapter 24, and said that it would culminate in "great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:7, 21–22).

In other words, Jesus was saying, one day man would reach such an impasse that if God were to let him continue unchecked, he would annihilate himself. However, when man finally reaches that suicidal point, Jesus said that God would step in and stop man. And the way God will stop him is by Jesus' Second Coming,

when He returns to punish the evildoers, take over the world, and set up His righteous rule (Matthew 24:29–30; Isaiah 9:7; Jeremiah 23:5; Revelation 19:11–21).

Only within the last 50 or 60 years has the human race developed the potential to destroy itself. The military (red horse) now have their nuclear bombs, intercontinental missiles, chemical and biological weapons, and other lethal technologies.

The rich, on their black horse, were complicit in the last century's great wars, and their hoarding and misuse of their riches is threatening another one. The rich also, in their relentless pursuit of greater wealth, are finally succeeding in polluting the entire earth—a byproduct of modern technology.

And following the others comes the fourth horseman, on the pale horse—death in every form.

So there you have the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. They will continue to ride until the End, when Jesus returns to take us to heavenly places with Him, before pouring out His judgments on the perpetrators of the hell on earth below. Then He will come back once more—He and all the saints of God—to wipe out the Antichrist and all of his forces at the Battle of Armageddon. God will then cleanse and purify the earth and set up His eternal kingdom, ruled by Jesus Christ.

*

Which horse are you putting your money on? Bet on the sure winner—receive Jesus now! Then you will be sure to follow Him on a white horse of your own one day when He returns to right all wrongs. Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Follow Him, and "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). □

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The MARRIAGE SUPPER of the LAMB

This is one party you don't want to miss!

BY JOSEPH CANDEL

How would you like to attend the grandest, most glorious and thrilling wedding party that's ever been held? Believe it or not, you're already invited—*everybody* is invited—but you have to accept the invitation. Before explaining how to do that, here's when and where this great party will be held and what you can expect:

Jesus said that immediately after the second half of the Antichrist's seven-year reign—the terrible three-and-a-half-year period known as the Great Tribulation—He, Jesus, will return “on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory” to rescue and resurrect all of those who have received Him as their Savior (Matthew 24:29–31).

When He does, all those who accepted Jesus as their Savior before they died will receive

new bodies and rise up out of their graves. All those who have accepted Him and are still alive will likewise be suddenly changed. Then, in the same instant, all of them will fly up to meet the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:51–52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

Then Jesus is going to take them all to a great big party—the biggest, happiest, most exciting party they've ever been to or even imagined! They'll see Jesus face to face and get to meet all of the great saints and apostles of the Bible, as well as all of the other wonderful folks who loved and received the Lord during their lifetime.

This wonderful party, the marriage supper of the Lamb, will be held in God's heavenly city—the greatest, most beautiful and wonderful place ever created—and is described in

Revelation 19:6–9:

And I [the apostle John, describing his vision] heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he [the angel that showed John this vision] said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

There will be plenty of laughter and singing and music and dancing and love for everyone! And if that's not enough, the saved will really appreciate how blessed they are to be with the Lord in this great marriage supper when they consider what's happening on earth at this time!

Right after the Lord rescues His own out of the Great Tribulation, the horrific vials of the great "wrath of God" are going to be poured out upon the Antichrist and his people in the form of horrible plagues, such as the world has never known (Revelation chapter 16). While the saved are having a wild party and lots of fun upstairs—a heaven of a time in Heaven—it's going to be hell on earth downstairs!

Like an invitation from above, Jesus calls, "Come, My people, enter your chambers,

*... the biggest, happiest,
most exciting party you've
ever been to or even
imagined!*

and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (Isaiah 26:20–21). The Bridegroom comes for His Bride, takes her safely away into the bridal chamber, shuts the door, and we have the marriage

celebration with Him, while the wicked, Christ-rejecting forces and followers of the Antichrist partake of the wrath of God.

At this time the saved will not only meet the Lord and enjoy the wonderful marriage supper of the Lamb, but they will also face the "judgment seat of Christ," in which they will be judged and rewarded or chastised individually according to their deeds and faithfulness, and will enter into the particular places that Jesus has seen fit for them to occupy in His kingdom on earth (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10,12).



Their first order of business will be to help Jesus to destroy the Antichrist and his forces at the great battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11–21; 17:14; 16:12–21). Then they will assist Him in His rule over the human survivors of Armageddon, who will remain here for the 1,000-

year period known as the Millennium (Revelation 20:6; 2:26; Daniel 7:18).

Jesus said, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:12). Every saved Christian will be rewarded at the throne of Christ according to his works. Don't get this judgment and rewarding of the *saved* mixed up with the final judgment of the *unsaved*, which is an entirely different event and will take place 1,000 years later, after the Millennium, when the unsaved are all raised from the dead to meet God at the "great white throne judgment," as described in Revelation chapter 20.

Do you want to accept that invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb?—Then simply ask Jesus into your heart, if you haven't already.

Do you want to also receive commendations and rewards?—Then "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind ... [and] love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37–39). It says in the Bible that God will not forget anything you do out of love (Hebrews 6:10). He has a big book and is writing it all down (Malachi 3:16–17). Even when nobody else seems to see or appreciate the good you do, God sees and will remember.

See you at the grandest, most glorious and thrilling wedding party that's ever been or ever will be!

The Bible not only tells us about yesterday, it also tells us about tomorrow. It is full of thousands of detailed prophecies that describe specific people, places, times, situations, and events. Many of these prophecies are about the final period of man's kingdoms on earth, a period known as the Endtime—the time in which we are now living.

14 major points of the endtime

1. Signs of the times

The Bible gives us numerous “signs of the times,” signs and signals that we are to watch for so we can know exactly *how* close we are to Jesus’ return. These signs include drastic upsurges in the number and severity of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes (Matthew 24:7); the Gospel being preached in all the world (Matthew 24:14); dramatic increases in international travel and scientific knowledge (Daniel 12:4); a great “falling away” from the true God as “evil men and seducers grow worse and worse” and deceive many (2 Thessalonians 2:3; 2 Timothy 3:13 KJV); unprecedented selfishness and lack of natural affection (Matthew 24:12; 2 Timothy 3:1–4). All this results in “distress of nations,” with “men’s hearts failing them from fear” (Luke 21:25–26)—signs that are all obviously being fulfilled today more than ever before.

2. Rise of the Antichrist

One of the most important signs of the Endtime is the rise of a totally godless anti-Christ world government led by a demonic dictator who will actually be fully possessed by Satan himself, the world leader known as the Antichrist. In desperation, the world will turn to this political superman, hoping that he will be able to solve pressing problems, cure economic ills, unite international politics, end religious squabbles, and defuse the nuclear time bomb (Daniel 8:23–25; 11:21,24; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4).

3. Signing of the covenant

The Antichrist will sign a seven-year covenant, or agreement, by which he will bring a measure of world peace by reconciling the world’s major religions (Daniel 9:27a). Through this cov-

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enant he will also somehow settle the current crisis in the Middle East by working out a compromise between the Arabs and the Jews, enabling the Jews to rebuild their Temple and resume their religious animal sacrifices (Daniel 8:11; 9: 27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

During the first half of the Antichrist's seven-year reign, people are going to think that he is wonderful because he will have brought some peace, restored the world's economy, redistributed the wealth, helped the poor, solved the Middle East crisis, and promised religious liberty (Daniel 11:21–24,39).

4. Breaking of the covenant

But suddenly, halfway through his seven-year reign, the Antichrist will break the covenant (Daniel 9:27b), invade Israel from the north (Daniel 11:28–31), abolish all traditional religious worship (Revelation 13: 7–8), declare that he himself is God (2 Thessalonians 2:4), and demand that all the world worship him and his “image,” which could be some kind of computerized robot.

The Tribulation will be like the last days of the children of Israel in Egypt, before Moses led them out.

The false prophet—the Antichrist's chief aide, who deceives the world—will make this image to the Antichrist (Revelation 13:11–14) and place it at the site of the rebuilt Jewish Temple (Daniel 11:31). This

image, which the prophet Daniel referred to as the “abomination of desolation,” will “speak” and somehow have power to cause those who refuse to worship it to be killed (Revelation 13:14–15). Jesus said that when we see this abomination of desolation standing at the Temple, we will know that the last three and a half years of man's rule on earth has begun—a time of “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:15,21).

5. Great tribulation

During this final three-and a-half-year period, the Antichrist will enact a mandatory one-world credit system, creating a cashless society. The Antichrist government will use this new credit system to try to force everybody to submit to and worship the Antichrist, because no one will be able to buy or sell without a personal credit number, the “mark of the Beast,” in their hands or foreheads (Revelation 13:16–18). But God's children and many others will refuse to worship the Antichrist or receive his mark, and the Lord will take care of them (Revelation 12:6,14).

While the Antichrist and his followers are persecuting and trying to kill their enemies, God is going to let loose pestilences and plagues that will attack the followers of the Antichrist (Revelation chapter 8; 9:1–11; 11:3–6). The Tribulation will be like the last days of the children of Israel in Egypt, before Moses led them out. God's prophets will do mighty signs, wonders, and miracles to defend the Gospel and God's children, while God sends plague after plague on their enemies (Revelation 11:3,5–6).

A number of wars and the Antichrist's worldwide persecution of all who refuse to worship him

will make the Tribulation a time of trouble “such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). But the Bible also tells us in several places and in several corroborating ways exactly how long the Tribulation will last—three and a half years, or 42 months, or 1,260 days¹ from when the Antichrist sets up his image at the Temple. God revealed this to encourage us to

***Just when the Antichrist thinks
he has the world in
his grasp, Jesus will
return to rescue all
of His children out of this world.***

hang on and keep going for Jesus during what will be a very difficult period for Christians (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 13:5; 12:6,14; 11:3).

During this time, “the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many” (Daniel 11:32–33). The people of the world are going to be more desperate for the truth than ever, and those who know God’s Word and are faithful witnesses for the Lord are going to teach and encourage millions. In spite of all that the Devil’s forces will do to try to stop them, millions of God’s children will keep going for God till the very end.

6. Nuclear war

At some point, possibly toward the end of the Great Tribulation or even after the Rapture (point 7), 10 “kings” will join forces with the Antichrist and together they will destroy

with fire “Babylon, the great whore” in a final judgment. From a number of Scriptures, this sounds like 10 of the leading nations of Europe (or perhaps “10 kings” refers to the European Community as a whole) will unite with Russia and turn on the United States in a nuclear first strike that will destroy her in “one hour” (Revelation 17:12–13,16–17; 18:2,7–8). How and when all of this will play out is still unclear, but as the time draws nearer, we will see exactly how these verses will be fulfilled.

7. The Rapture

At the end of the final three and a half years—“immediately after the tribulation of those days”—just when the Antichrist thinks he has the world in his grasp, Jesus will return to rescue all of His children out of this world. The Antichrist’s forces will be shocked as they, too, see the Lord coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:29–31; Revelation 1:7).

When Jesus returns, all of God’s saved children will be gloriously resurrected in what is known as the Rapture. The apostle Paul writes: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52). The graves of all the Christians who have already died will burst open and they will receive new supernatural bodies, like Jesus’ body after He was resurrected. “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). □

(To be continued.)

¹In those times, months were precisely 30 days, and years were exactly 360 days.

14

MAJOR points of the ENDTIME

AN OVERVIEW OF BIBLE PROPHECY – PART 2



Part 1 of this article covered the first seven major stages or events of the Endtime: 1) various signs of the times, as described in Matthew 24 and other passages; 2) the rise of the world dictator known as the “Antichrist”; 3) the signing of a “covenant” that will usher in a brief period of stability and signal the beginning of the Antichrist’s seven-year reign; 4) the breaking of that covenant three and a half years later; 5) a time of unprecedented trouble and suffering known as the “Great Tribulation”; 6) a nuclear war that will destroy “Babylon, the great whore” in one hour; 7) the “Rapture,” when Jesus returns at the end of the Great Tribulation to rescue His children out of this world.

8. Marriage supper

In the Rapture, Jesus has come back to catch His bride, His Church, out of the evil clutches of the Antichrist and to whisk her away to unite with Him and each other in the grandest, most glorious and thrilling wedding party that’s ever been held, the great marriage supper of the Lamb in Heaven, where the Lord will reward all His faithful children with beautiful, eternal “crowns of life” (Revelation 19:7–9; 2:10).

9. Wrath of God

After the Lord rescues and raptures His children to be with Him, the horrific vials of the great “wrath of God” will be poured upon the Antichrist and his evil forces still remaining on earth—the most horrible plagues the

world has ever known! God’s angels of judgment are going to give the Antichrist and his forces what they deserve (Revelation 11:18; 14:9–10; 16:1–11).

10. The Battle of Armageddon

On a plain in what is now northern Israel, the Antichrist will lead his armies in this major campaign against those who still oppose him. But Jesus and His army of saints—all of His born-again and now resurrected children from throughout the ages—will return to earth on majestic white horses to utterly defeat and destroy the Antichrist and his evil forces in the apocalyptic Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:12–16; 19:11–21).

11. The Millennium

The earth will be restored to a perfect, Garden-of-Eden state (Isaiah 11:6–9; 14:7; 65:25; Hosea 2:18), and Jesus and His saints will set up the kingdom of Heaven on earth (Daniel 2:44; 7:18,22,27; Revelation 5:10). The Devil will be bound and cast as a prisoner into the bottomless pit for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1–3), and the world’s unsaved inhabitants—those who survived the Battle of Armageddon—will be *forced* to do what’s right. Then and only then, under the righteous rule of Jesus and the saints, will all wars cease. The world will at last be governed fairly and well with true justice, liberty, peace, plenty, and happiness for all

(Isaiah 2:4; Revelation 2:26; 20:4–6). This thousand-year period is known as the “Millennium.”

During the Millennium, the resurrected saints will have new supernatural bodies with amazing powers like Jesus had after His resurrection (Philippians 3:20–21; Luke 20:36)—invincibility; complete freedom from pain, sickness, and death; abilities such as being able to fly, appear and disappear, change their appearance, read minds, communicate with each other telepathically, and stop wrongdoers with as little as a thought or a glance (1 John 3:2; John 20:19,26; Luke 24:31; Acts 10:40–41).

Those on earth will still be in natural bodies, like the ones we have now, and will have none of the saints’ supernatural powers, so they will be fairly easy to rule over with the love, wisdom, and power of Jesus and His personal leadership. Because everyone will *see* God’s glorious power and kingdom, there won’t be any unbelievers in the Millennium (Hebrews 8:11; Habakkuk 2:14). But sad to say, there will still be some *unreceivers*—those who won’t yield or obey, but rather choose to stubbornly and defiantly rebel when they get the chance, at the end of the Millennium (Isaiah 26:10).

12. The Battle of Gog and Magog

At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released for a “little season” from the bottomless pit where he has been imprisoned—just

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During the Millennium, the resurrected saints will have new supernatural bodies with amazing powers like Jesus had after His resurrection.

long enough for him to deceive those unconverted rebels who will again follow Satan to the full, in open rebellion against the Lord and His government.

This rebellion will result in the catastrophic Battle of Gog and Magog, in which God will send down fire to devour them completely. In fact, it is such a horrible fire that it will completely burn up the surface of the planet, and the atmospheric heavens will roll back like a scroll and depart with a great noise (Revelation 6:14; 2 Peter 3:10). The entire surface of the planet will then be recreated into a beautiful new Earth with no more seas (though there will likely still be bodies of water), no more pollution, and no more Devil, for he will have been cast into “the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:7–10; 21:1).

13. The Great White Throne judgment

After the climactic Battle of Gog and Magog, the unsaved of all ages will be resurrected for the final Great White Throne judgment, where “the books are opened” and they will be given their final sentences according to their works and assigned to their places in the hereafter (Revelation 20:11–13). The worst and most cruel and wicked will be sent to Hell or Purgatory for punishment and purging, while those who tried to be good but were unsaved because they had not heard the Gospel, whose names will be found in the Book of Life, will be given a chance to receive Jesus and enjoy the marvelous new Earth (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4; 1 Peter 3:18–19).

14. The new Heaven and new Earth

God’s great heavenly city will then descend from above to the beautiful, re-created planet Earth, and God Himself will dwell *with us*, right here on earth (Revelation 21:1–3). The heavenly city will measure nearly 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers) long, 1,500 miles wide, and 1,500 miles high (Revelation 21:16).

The entire city is made of pure gold, like clear glass (Revelation 21:18), and through those transparent walls we will be able to see out onto a beautiful, fully restored and re-created earth, which will be populated by new nations who will truly have learned the righteousness, goodness, and love of God. And eventually, because of God’s mercy and justice, all punishment on earth and under the earth will end. Almost everyone who has ever lived will finally be reconciled to God and live either with the elect within the heavenly city or else outside the city. “For God is not willing that *any* should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). “Who desires *all* men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). “That at the name of Jesus *every* knee should bow ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10–11).

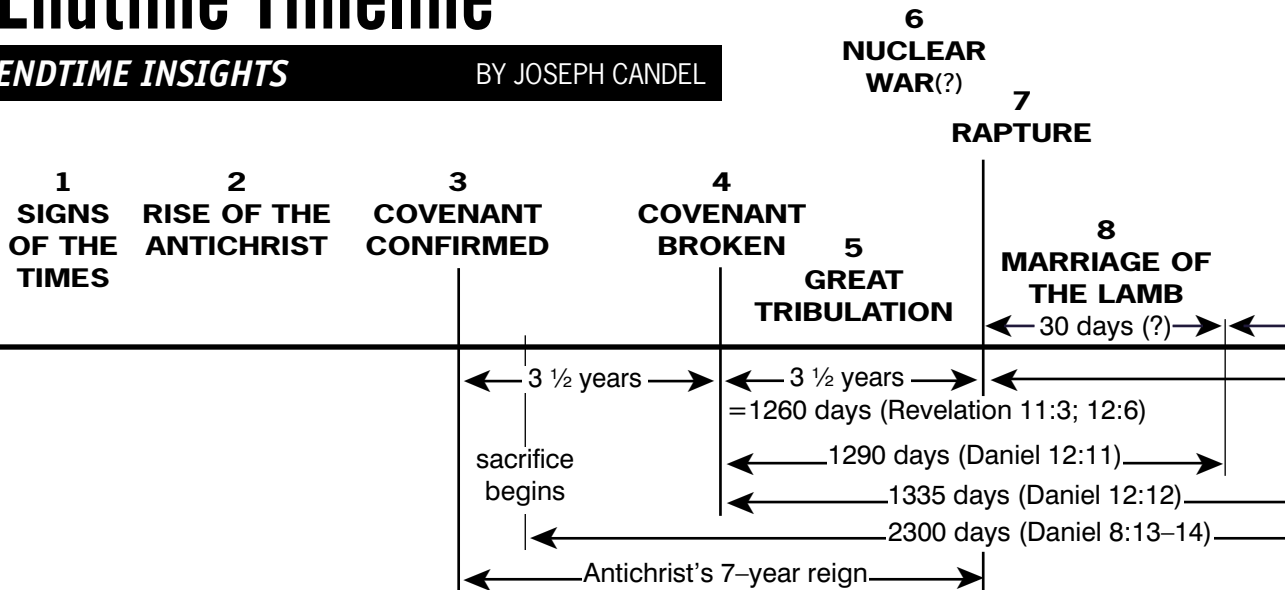
Almost everyone who has ever lived will finally be reconciled to God and live either with the elect within the heavenly city or else outside the city.

Will you enjoy the Rapture, the wedding party, the millennial heaven-on-earth, and God’s eternal, heavenly city? Are you one of the *saved* who will be allowed to live in that great city? Receive Jesus as your Savior, if you haven’t already, and you’ll be granted instant, permanent citizenship to that great golden city and be given a foretaste of what Heaven and eternal life will be like, right here and now! ◇

Endtime Timeline

ENDTIME INSIGHTS

BY JOSEPH CANDEL



1. SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Happenings that Jesus said would signal His return and the end of the world as we know it are taking place today (Matthew chapter 24).

2. RISE OF THE ANTICHRIST

A Devil-possessed man known as the Antichrist conspires to lead an anti-God world government (Daniel 8:23–25; 11:21,24; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4).

3. CONFIRMING OF THE COVENANT

The Antichrist is welcomed as a savior when he initiates a seven-year agreement, or covenant, that temporarily brings a measure of peace and security to the world (Daniel 9:27a). This signals the start of the last seven years of man's rule on earth.

4. BREAKING OF THE COVENANT

Halfway through his seven-year

reign, the Antichrist breaks the covenant (Daniel 9:27b), abolishes all religious worship (Revelation 13:7–8), and declares himself God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

5. GREAT TRIBULATION

The final three and a half years of his reign is the time of greatest trouble the world has ever experienced (Matthew 24:21). The Antichrist government demands that the entire world worship the Antichrist and his "image"—which could be a computerized robot—and persecutes those who refuse (Revelation 13:11–15). A mandatory economic system is put in place, by which everyone is compelled to receive the "mark of the Beast" (Revelation 13:16–18). Meanwhile, God lets loose pestilences and plagues on the Antichrist and his followers (Revelation chapter 8; 9:1–11; 11:3–6), and God's two special Endtime prophets lead the believers in performing miracles and defying

6. NUCLEAR WAR(?)

the Antichrist, even as martyrs (Revelation 11:3,5–6; 12:11).

6. NUCLEAR WAR

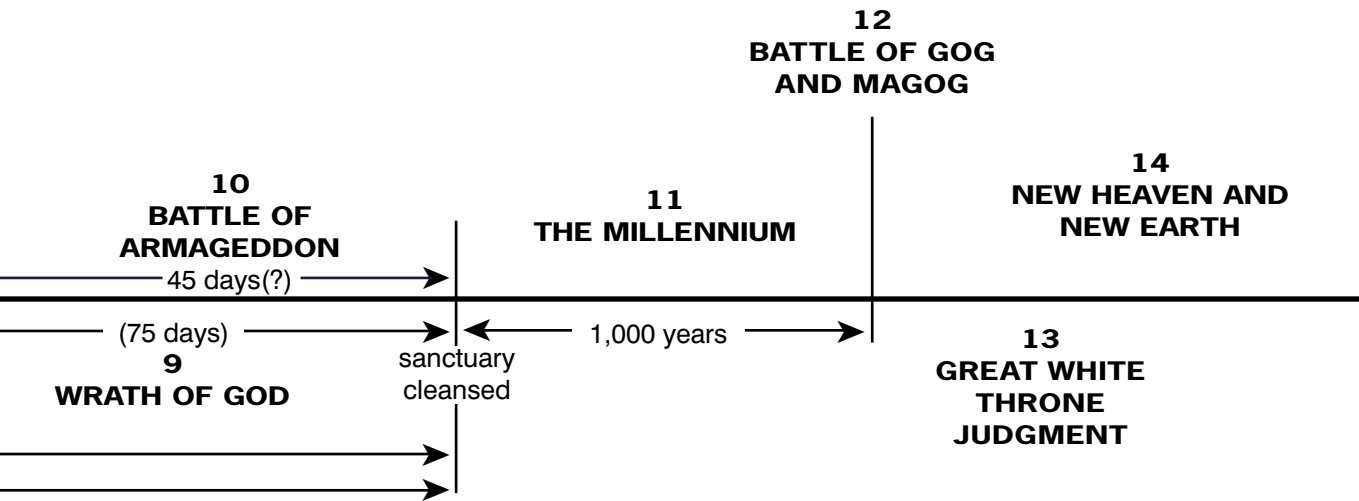
At some point, possibly toward the end of the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist and 10 "kings" who have joined forces with him will destroy "Babylon, the great whore" in a final judgment (Revelation 17:12–13,16–17; 18:2,7–8).

7. THE RAPTURE

At the end of the final three and a half years, Jesus returns to rescue His children out of this world and they receive new immortal bodies (Matthew 24:29–31; Revelation 1:7).

8. MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

In Heaven, Jesus unites with those He rescued in the Rapture, and at the Judgment Seat of Christ rewards His faithful children with eternal "crowns of life" (Revelation 19:7–9; 2:10).



9. WRATH OF GOD

The horrific plagues of the great “wrath of God” are poured upon the Antichrist and his forces (Revelation 11:18; 14:9–10; 16:1–11).

10. THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

On a plain in northern Israel, the Antichrist musters his armies for his greatest campaign against the nations that still oppose him, but Jesus and His heavenly army, including the resurrected believers from throughout the ages, return to earth to utterly destroy the Antichrist and his forces (Revelation 16:12–16; 19:11–21).

11. THE MILLENNIUM

The earth is restored (Isaiah 11:6–9; 14:7; 65:25; Hosea 2: 18), and Jesus and His saints set up the kingdom of Heaven on earth, where they rule for 1,000 years (Daniel 2:44; 7:18, 22,27; Revelation 5:10).

During this time the Devil, who plagued humankind throughout history and possessed the Antichrist, is bound and cast into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1–3), while those who survive the cataclysms surrounding Armageddon live on in a simpler but righteous world ruled by love (Isaiah 2:4; Revelation 2: 26; 20:4–6).

12. THE BATTLE OF GOG AND MAGOG

At the end of the Millennium, Satan is released from the bottomless pit for a “little season” and recruits followers who form an open rebellion against Jesus and His government—a rebellion that is obliterated in the Battle of Gog and Magog . The entire surface of the earth is re-created, and the Devil, along with death and Hell, is cast into “the lake of fire” (Revelation 6:14; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20:7–10; 21:1).

13. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

The unsaved of all ages are resurrected, stand in judgment before God’s throne, are rewarded or punished according to their works, and assigned to their places in the hereafter (Revelation 20:11–13; 2 Peter 3: 9; 1 Timothy 2:4;).

14. THE HEAVENLY CITY AND THE NEW EARTH

God’s great heavenly city descends to the re-created earth, and God and Jesus dwell in the city with the saved (Revelation chapters 21–22).

For more detailed explanations of soon coming Endtime events, order The Future Foretold from the Activated desk nearest you (addresses on page 2), or visit the Activated Web site: www.activated.org.

AT FIRST READING, the book of Revelation is not only mysterious but also confusing. Understanding how the book is structured helps it become clearer. Revelation can be divided into three sections of seven chapters each, with chapter 22 (which is basically a continuation of chapter 21) added to the last section.


The first section begins with an introduction, followed by letters of correction and commendation from the apostle John to seven “churches” of his day—communities of believers (Acts 2:44–47). Then, beginning with chapter 4, John relates his experience of being taken to God’s throne room in Heaven, where he witnesses Jesus opening a mysterious scroll that is sealed with seven seals. As each one is opened, a spiritual entity or an Endtime event is revealed.

In the following seven chapters, the Lord zooms in to give a more detailed look at the coming three-and-a-half years of worldwide trouble known as the “Great Tribulation” (Matthew 24:15–21). Here we learn of the spiritual struggle between good and evil, and of the rise of the Antichrist, who is depicted as “the Beast.” These events culminate in the Second Coming of Jesus and the gathering to Him of all believers.

The last section begins with events on earth immediately after Jesus’ return. The chronological order of events is interrupted by a two-chapter description of “Babylon the Great,” symbolizing the brazen materialism of this day and age, and more information on the Beast. It then returns to the chronological account of future events, beginning with a great celebration in Heaven with Jesus and those He has gathered to Him from earth at the Second Coming of Christ. This is followed by the Battle of Armageddon, where Jesus and His followers defeat the Antichrist, and continues through the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth to the happy ending when the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, comes down to its eternal resting place on the newly recreated planet Earth and God Himself dwells with the saved (Revelation 21:2–3).

One question nearly everyone has is whether John’s descriptions are literal or symbolic. Undoubtedly there are some of each. Another thing to bear in mind is that he was seeing in a vision things he had never seen before—things of *our* day—so he had to describe them in the terms of his own experience and in language that the people of his day could understand. For example, John had never seen tanks or planes or guns or bombs or heard their roar. So if he was watching modern warfare, he might describe tanks as chariots or warplanes flying at then incomprehensible altitudes as locusts.

Many things in the book of Revelation remain mysteries or topics of speculation. As future events unfold, Jesus will help us understand more. □



an Overview

ENDTIME INSIGHTS

of the



“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John” (Revelation 1:1).

What » The Revelation of Jesus Christ—“things which must shortly take place.”

Who » The divine author was God Himself, who gave the vision to Jesus Christ “to show His servants.”

How » Jesus relayed the vision through a heavenly messenger to the apostle John—also known as John the Beloved, one of Jesus’ original 12 disciples and the author of the Gospel of John—who wrote it down and sent it to the Christians (referred to collectively in the book of Revelation as churches) in seven cities in the region that roughly corresponds with modern-day Turkey.

Where » John received the vision on the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, where he had been banished during the persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor Domitian “for [spreading] the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9). It is believed that about a year after receiving the vision, John was released and permitted to return to Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey).

When » It is believed that John received this vision in 95 AD and wrote it down the following year, in 96 AD.

Why » Ultimately so that we who are living today would understand the events of the Endtime as they unfold. “You, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day [Jesus’ return] should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:4).

THE BOTTOM LINE The forces of evil will never be able to completely overcome God’s people. In spite of all the wrath and atrocities that bestial man will bring against God’s children during the Great Tribulation—the coming three-and-a-half-year worldwide reign of terror against people of all faiths by the devilish dictatorship of the Antichrist and his regime—multitudes of us Christians will still be here to joyously welcome Christ’s triumphant re-entry into the earth’s atmosphere (Matthew 24:21, 29–31). Jesus is the only One who can stop us, and He will stop us then for a little while to take us home for a party, the marriage supper of the Lamb in Heaven! Then we’ll come back here and put a stop to the reign of the wicked! (Revelation chapter 19).
D.B.B.

Book of Revelation



WHY You're in God's hands! WORRY?

GOD LOVES YOU! He is your kind and loving heavenly Father who personally loves you, His own dear child, and you are in His hands. He has made this beautiful world as a home for you to live in and enjoy, and He has lovingly given you a wonderful body, mind, and heart with which to enjoy it.

Sad to say, some people have gotten the idea that God is some kind of monster who follows them around with a big stick, always ready to clobber them! But the Bible says that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). He is loving and forgiving, and the only reason He follows anyone around is in hopes that they will turn around to meet Him, so He can receive them in His open arms!

Others say they don't believe in God because they can't understand Him. Well, no one can ever really understand God. It's impossible! He says, “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9). But even though we don't really understand Him, we can look at the beautiful world He has made—the trees, the flowers, the mountains, the sea, the sky—and feel His love in His wonderful creation.

You don't have to understand God in order to love Him, any more than a little baby needs to understand everything about his mother and father in order to know their love. This is why Jesus said that you have to be like a little child to enter the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:3). There are certain things that you just have to accept by faith.

Jesus also said that “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24). He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere-present. Even the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him (1 Kings 8:27). He is not confined to Earth or our solar system or the Milky Way galaxy or even the entire universe. He is all and in all—far beyond the limited mind of man and our human understanding!

But because He loves us and wanted to show us His love, He sent His own Son in the form of a man, Jesus Christ. Jesus was like a picture of God, “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), to show us what God is like—and all He did was love. He talked about love and showed love and lived love, and finally, in love, laid down His life for us, to bring life, forgiveness, and eternal joy to all who would receive Him.

So if you feel that God is far from you, maybe it's because you haven't received His love. There is an empty place, which God created in each of our hearts, that only He can fill. Nothing else can truly satisfy. If

THE RISE, REIGN, AND WARS OF THE ANTICHRIST

Daniel 11, Part 1

■ The prophecies of Daniel chapter 11 cover events that span more than 2,000 years—all the way from Alexander the Great to the coming would-be world dictator known as the Antichrist. Much of this chapter is very clear, such as its descriptions of certain characteristics of the Antichrist and his government, but other parts, such as the descriptions of the wars the Antichrist will wage to try to seize and hold power, are still mysteries. As with some other passages of Bible prophecy concerning the Endtime, we may not fully understand these until the events happen or are about to happen. We can speculate now, but we need to be careful to not get dogmatic. We need to leave ourselves open to other interpretations, as the Lord reveals them.

Daniel chapter 10 sets the stage for chapter 11. In about 538 BC, during the reign of Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, Daniel had been fasting for three weeks when an angelic messenger appeared to him (Daniel 10:1–6). “I have come”—the messenger is speaking—“to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days”—the Endtime—“for the vision refers to many days yet to come” (Daniel 10:14).

The part of the vision that has to do with the Endtime begins at Daniel 11:21: “[There] shall

arise a vile person, to whom they [the predecessors of the coming world government] will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue.”

The Antichrist is described here as a “vile person” because that is how God sees him. At this point, however, he will have the people of the world duped into believing that he is wonderful—their savior. What “they will not give [him] the honor of royalty” means is unclear, but it could be that he will exercise absolute rule in the style of ancient kings, but without the title. He rises to power peaceably, by means of intrigue—clever plotting and politics. The King James Version of the Bible uses the term “flatteries” in the place of “intrigue.” This would seem to indicate that he will use diplomacy and charm to weasel his way to power.

DANIEL 11:22—THE FIRST ANTICHRIST WAR?

Verse 22: “With the force of a flood they [the Antichrist’s adversaries] shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant.”

The Antichrist rises to power peaceably, but then uses force to crush his opposition and strengthen his position. This could be war, the threat of war, or the preponderance of arms,

but “the force of a flood” sounds a lot like war.

The phrase “and also the prince of the covenant” means that the Antichrist is also the prince of the covenant, *not* that the prince of the covenant is also broken. We know from Daniel 9:26–27 that the Antichrist makes a peace covenant (see below), and therefore the prince of the covenant is clearly the Antichrist.

Verse 23: “After the league [covenant, pact, or treaty] is made with him [the Antichrist, the prince of the covenant] he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people.”

The Antichrist is also referred to as the prince of the covenant earlier, in Daniel 9:26–27: “The prince who is to come ... shall confirm a covenant with many for one week [one seven-year period].” The signing of this covenant signals the start of the last seven years before Jesus’ Second Coming and the Rapture.

This league or covenant appears to be a peace accord, as well as some sort of religious pact—possibly one that tackles the thorny issue of coexistence between Jews, Muslims, and Christians in the Mideast, and by which Jerusalem could be declared an international city with free and equal access

guaranteed to people of all faiths. This covenant could also clear the way for the Jews to finally be able to rebuild their Temple on Jerusalem's Mount Moriah and resume animal sacrifices on its altar—something that hasn't happened since the last Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. (In Daniel 11:31, the Antichrist puts a stop to the daily sacrifices, so obviously they must be resumed between now and then, and the signing of the covenant seems a likely time for that.)

Although the first war of the Antichrist appears to take place before the seven-year covenant is signed (verses 22–23), it does not specify who the Antichrist is warring against. If this war is centered in the Mideast, as some speculate, it is likely to involve Israel and the large U.S. military presence in the region.

“He [the Antichrist] shall act deceitfully.” He will be very clever and deceptive, “for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people”—or “a small people,” as the Hebrew *ma'at* is translated in the King James Version. This could mean that the Antichrist rises to power through his popularity with the “small” or poor people of the world, the masses, due to his political and economic policies, or that he does it with the help of a “small” elite group of insiders.

Verse 24: “He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers: he

shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but only for a time.”

“He shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches” sounds like he will distribute the wealth to win the support of the poor in the countries he conquers. So does the phrase found in verse 39, where it says he will “divide the land for gain”—possibly meaning political gain. “He shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers.” Throughout history, very few conquerors have distributed the wealth or divided the land among the poor. The notable exception is communism. Perhaps he will ride the wave of a resurrected move toward world communism.

DANIEL 11:25–26—THE SECOND ANTICHRIST WAR?

The Antichrist's military adversary comes into the picture in verse 25: “He [the Antichrist] shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the South with a great army. And the king of the South shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army, but he shall not stand, for they [the Antichrist and his forces] shall devise plans against him.”

It sounds like the king of the South has an even greater force than the Antichrist at this point. Again, if this war is centered in the Mideast, it is likely to involve Israel and the U.S. forces in the region.

Verse 26: “Yes, those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain.”

The tide of battle turns when the king of the South is betrayed by some of his own people, perhaps as a result of the Antichrist's plans mentioned in the previous verse.

This war probably takes place after the signing of the covenant (verses 22–23), but before it is broken and the Great Tribulation begins (three and a half years after the covenant is signed), since those events don't happen in this account until verse 31.

Verse 27: “Both these kings' hearts shall be bent on evil, and they shall speak lies at the same table; but it shall not prosper, for the end will still be at the appointed time.”

Apparently the Antichrist fights one war to get into power and makes the covenant (verses 22–23), fights another war with the king of the South (verses 25–26), and then the two sides go through the motions of making peace—possibly reaffirming allegiance to the covenant.

Verse 28: “While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage [“exploits” in KJV] and return to his own land.”

The Antichrist doesn't break the seven-year covenant at this point, but he is about to, ostensibly because others aren't keeping it.

(To be continued)

THE RISE, REIGN, AND WARS OF THE ANTICHRIST

Daniel 11, Part 2

■ *In Part 1 of this article, the prophet Daniel (circa 538 BC) began to recount a vision concerning the “latter days”—the Endtime, in which we are now living. The first part of the vision describes in some detail the coming world dictator known as the Antichrist, as well as the first two wars he will wage to seize and try to hold on to power. But there is more to come. ...*

DANIEL 11:29–31—THE THIRD ANTICHRIST WAR?

Verse 29: “At the appointed time he [the Antichrist] shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter.”

It’s somehow going to be different this time, but again it sounds like war because it says in the next verse...

Verse 30: “Ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.”

“From Cyprus” could mean “from the *direction* of

Cyprus”—from the west, in other words.

Verse 31: “Forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.”

This is a key verse because, together with Daniel 9:27, it tells us that three and a half years after confirming the seven-year covenant, the Antichrist will break it when he forcibly enters the Jewish Temple (soon to be rebuilt on Mount Moriah, Jerusalem), “takes away the daily sacrifice,” and places there something called the “abomination of desolation” (also referred to in Revelation chapter 13 as the “image of the Beast”).

Five hundred years after Daniel gave this prophecy, when Jesus’ disciples asked Him what would be the signs of His return and of the end of the world, He cited this development. “When you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place ... then there will be great tribulation, such



as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:3,15,21).

It seems that three wars precede the breaking of the seven-year covenant—one before it is made, one at some point during the first three and a half years, and one that ends with the breaking of the covenant.

TRIBULATION TYRANNY AND TRIUMPHS

Verses 32 through 35 deal with the next three and a half years—*after* the covenant is broken: “Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for

many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.”

Although much of the world will continue to follow the Antichrist, some people are going to be desperate for the truth, and those who know God’s Word and are faithful witnesses for the Lord are going to teach and encourage millions.

“The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.” In spite of all that the Devil’s forces will do to try to stop them, mil-



“THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW THEIR GOD SHALL BE STRONG, AND CARRY OUT GREAT EXPLOITS.”

lions of God’s children will keep going for Him till the very end.

Verses 36 and 37: “Then the king [Antichrist] shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all.”

The Antichrist is going to be so full of pride that he will try to exalt himself above everyone and every “god”—even the one true God Himself. 2 Thessalonians 2:4 says the Antichrist will oppose and exalt himself “above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

The Antichrist “shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall

be done.” Revelation 13:5 parallels this statement, and also tells us how long this will go on: “And he [the Beast, or Antichrist] was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months [three and a half years].”

Verse 38: “But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses [or “god of forces,” as the Hebrew *ma`owz* is translated in the King James Version]; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things.”

This “god of forces” could be armaments, and the fact that the Antichrist will honor this god with “gold and silver” could refer to his military spending. That’s nothing new, because even the empires of Daniel’s day made a “god” of power and spent much of their empires’ revenue on armaments and maintaining their armies. What *is* new in the last couple of generations is nuclear arms—“a god which his fathers did not know.” □
(To be continued)

THE RISE, REIGN, AND WARS OF THE ANTICHRIST

Daniel 11, Part 3

■ *In Parts 1 and 2 of this article, the prophet Daniel (circa 538 BC) recounted a vision concerning the “latter days,” also known as the End-time—the time in which we are living. In verses 21 through 38, Daniel described in some detail the coming world dictator known as the Antichrist, as well as the first three wars he will wage to seize and try to hold on to power. But there is still more. ...*

VERSE 39: “Thus he [the Antichrist] shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.”

This “foreign god” could turn out to be the image of the Beast, which is described in Revelation 13:14–15: “He [the Antichrist’s false prophet] deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the Beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the Beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was

granted power to give breath to the image of the Beast, that the image of the Beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the Beast to be killed.”

This image is likely to be an incredibly high-tech supercomputer accessing massive unified databases containing detailed personal information on most of the world’s population and linked to the Antichrist’s telecommunications network. Through the image of the Beast, a universal economic and financial system will be instituted. The number 666 will somehow be central to this system.

Revelation 13:16–18: “He [again, the Antichrist’s false prophet] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the Beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the Beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.”

DANIEL 11:40–42—THE FOURTH ANTICHRIST WAR?

Verse 40: “At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through.”

This war takes place during the three-and-a-half-year Great Tribulation—probably near the end because the Antichrist meets *his* end just a few verses later—and is once again fought between the king of the North (the Antichrist) and the enigmatic king of the South (possibly U.S.-backed Israel). Daniel could only use terms he was familiar with to describe the modern warfare he saw in this vision—tanks and personnel carriers as chariots, massive air strikes as a whirlwind, and so on.

Verse 41: “He [the Antichrist] shall also enter the Glorious Land [Israel], and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon.”

Edom, Moab, and Ammon are contained in modern-day Jordan.

Verse 42: “He shall stretch out his hand against the countries [that sided with the king of the South], and the land of Egypt shall not escape.”

Verse 43: “He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels.

“He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver” indicates that the Antichrist will hold economic control, which we also know to be the case from Revelation 13:16–18 and other passages. “The Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels” means that these countries will be subservient to the Antichrist.

DANIEL 11:44—THE FIFTH ANTICHRIST WAR?

Verse 44: “But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.”

That sounds like either another war, or a continuation of the war described in verses 40 through 42, and probably happens near the end of the Tribulation. If this is another war—the fifth war of the Antichrist—it seems it

is against eastern nations.

“News from the north” could mean a threatened coup or other problems of dissent in his own country, or possibly troubling developments in North America.

“He shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.” This could be the war—possibly nuclear—in which the Antichrist and his allies obliterate “Babylon,” as described in Revelation 14:8; 17:16; and chapter 18. This war probably takes place not long before Jesus’ return and the Rapture.

Verse 45: “And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.”

The “glorious holy mountain” is Jerusalem’s Mount Moriah. That doesn’t necessarily mean that the Antichrist waits until this point to set up his headquarters on Mount Moriah; it’s just an acknowledgment of what he most likely did three and a half years earlier when he broke the covenant, placed the image of the Beast in the Temple area (Daniel 11:30–31), sat in the Temple claiming to be God, and abolished all religions other than worship of himself (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4)—these events triggering the Great Tribulation.



“Yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.” At Megiddo, overlooking the plains of Armageddon in northern Israel, the Antichrist musters his armies for his greatest campaign against the nations that still oppose him, but Jesus and His heavenly army, including the resurrected believers from throughout the ages, intercede by returning to earth and utterly destroying the Antichrist and his forces at the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty (Revelation 16:12–16; 19:11–21). He then ushers in 1,000 years of peace on earth—a period known as the Millennium. The happy beginning! ■

you would like for Him to fill that empty spot in you, all you have to do is open your heart to Him. He will give you His love that will change your whole outlook on life.

This is one of the wonderful things about God's love: When we know that God loves us, we know that everything in our lives is going to work out in the end because He will take care of us. This is faith, and it's faith in His love that keeps out worry and fear. "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Receiving God's love into your heart is like turning on a light in a dark room—the darkness has to flee!

Then you won't need to worry anymore. You'll know your heavenly Father loves you and that you and yours—your future, your health, your family—are in His hands. "Do not worry about your life. Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:25–26). He will care for His own!

Do you have God's love in your heart? If not, all you have to do is pray and ask Jesus to come into your life! He says, "Behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20). He loves you and will come in right now if you will sincerely pray this prayer:

Jesus, please forgive me for all my sins. I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died for me. I now open the door of my heart and I ask You to come in and give me Your gift of eternal life. Then help me to love You and to love others with Your love. Amen. □

Receiving God's love into your heart is like turning on a light in a dark room

FEEDING READING CARNAL REASONING

When the terms "carnal mind," "carnal-mindedness," "carnal thinking," or "carnal reasoning" are used in the Bible, the intended meaning of "carnal" is not the most common modern meaning of "sensual or sexual," but "of the flesh" as opposed to "of the spirit."

Secret of success: Jeremiah 8:9
Trust the Lord for His leading and guidance. Romans 1:21–22
Romans 8:6–8
1 Corinthians 3:18–20
1 Corinthians 8:1b–3
2 Chronicles 26:5
Psalm 37:23
Psalm 118:8
Proverbs 3:5–7
Isaiah 48:17

We cannot find our way through life without the Lord's direct guidance.
Jeremiah 10:23
Proverbs 16:9
John 15:5

If we depend on carnal reasoning, we're doomed to disappointment and final failure.
Psalm 127:1a
Proverbs 14:12
Jeremiah 17:5
Galatians 6:3

Carnal reasoning is foolish and displeasing to God.
Proverbs 26:12
Proverbs 28:26a
Isaiah 47:10

Only by seeking the Lord's solutions can we understand situations as He does.
Proverbs 16:2
Ecclesiastes 2:26a
Isaiah 42:16
Isaiah 55:8–9

God's Word shows us the way by shedding light on the subject.
Psalm 37:31
Psalm 119:105
Psalm 119:130
Proverbs 6:22–23
2 Peter 1:19

God has all the answers and delights to give them to us, so pray.
Proverbs 16:3
Isaiah 30:21
Jeremiah 33:3
James 1:5

THE COMPUTER CHIP DREAM

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

The following was written in November 1983, many years before the first computer chip implants in humans.

I HAD A DREAM IN WHICH I THINK THE LORD WAS TRYING TO GIVE ME AN IDEA OF WHAT THE MARK OF THE BEAST IS GOING TO BE LIKE, because it was very clear and I still remember it vividly.

I saw this little computer chip—though it wasn't really all that little, I guess, because some chips are much smaller. It was about an inch and a half (about three centimeters) long, about a half an inch wide, and real thin, like a tiny plastic strip, and it had a needle-like pin attached to the back of it. The head of the pin was attached to the center of the back of the chip.

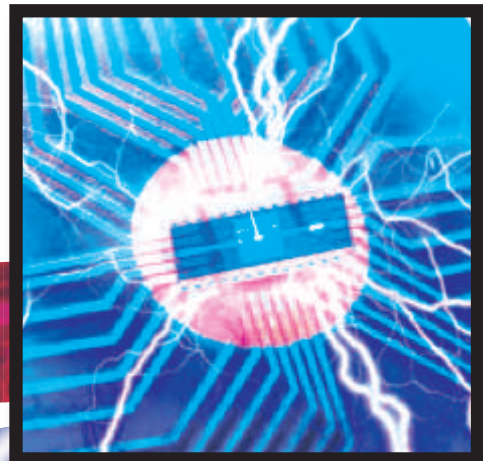
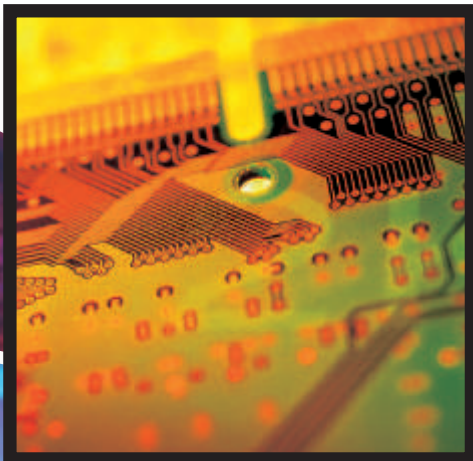
Those performing the procedure first put the chip on a big board of some kind that was wired to a giant computer,

evidently to program the chip. Then I watched as they took the chip—and this sounds hard to believe, I know—and sank the pin into a man's forehead, into the frontal lobe of his brain. They made an incision, inserted the chip, and taped the incision closed.

The chip had been programmed in such a way that it not only carried the man's personal identification number and all of his records—name, address, phone number, and tax records, etc.—but it could also tell the authorities what he was thinking and program his thoughts and behavior.

Once that chip had been implanted in the man's forehead, he was the authorities' slave. The thing that really shocked me was how their computers could even tell what he was thinking. The chip may have been able to transmit the information, or perhaps the bearer had to be within range of a scanner. I don't know; I didn't see that part. The last thing I saw was that chip being inserted, and I was horrified!

The concept of computer chip implants sounds very scientific, of course, and it looked very scientific in my dream.



But if the mark of the Beast turns out to be an implant of some sort, and if that implant has the power to read and control thoughts, then you realize what a heinous, fiendish, demonic system the Antichrist regime is going to be.

It's the brain's frontal lobe that has to do with decision-making and self-control and discernment between right and wrong. Other parts of the brain control hearing, eyesight, reflexes and motor actions, etc., so apparently the people who had gotten the implant could carry on normally in every other way. But this thing sealed their fates as far as being slaves of the Antichrist system, because they were no longer their own. They were tagged by the Devil and no longer under their own control.

It was a small, seemingly insignificant operation. The person receiving the implant was sitting in a chair, like a dentist chair, and I presume they were under some kind of sedation because it didn't seem to hurt much.

Wouldn't that be clever of the Antichrist, to hide that implant so that most people wouldn't know who was who, friend or enemy? I've always supposed that the mark of the Beast was going

to be a big bold number—"666"—emblazoned on people's foreheads or hands that could be seen outright, but in this dream it was hidden under the skin.

Lots of people will submit to the mark of the Beast just to be able to live what will appear to be a better life, because without it no one will be able to buy or sell, so it will be much more difficult to get food and other necessities (Revelation 13:16–17).

There will be others, however, who will refuse to take the mark of the Beast or worship the Antichrist (John 10:4–5; Revelation 7:2–3; 9:4). They would rather die, if it comes to that, and for some it will. But others will survive and continue to proclaim the truth. "The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits" (Daniel 11:32–33). God is also going to give them places to flee to in the wilderness, where they can hide and be provided for (Revelation chapter 12).

Even a lot of people who haven't received Jesus as their Savior will refuse the mark. If they have strong enough convictions in their own religion to refuse to worship the Antichrist, God will be with them too.

I believe there are going to be millions who are going to resist the Antichrist and proclaim the truth, until everybody has had their chance and the Antichrist is exposed for the Devil he is. Those who choose to worship God rather than the Devil-incarnate Antichrist will be preserved by the power of God until Jesus comes to their rescue when He returns! □



BE PREPARED

The best preparation you can make for the troublous times ahead is to receive Jesus into your heart and life. He will not only give you eternal life in Heaven, but as you draw closer to Him through prayer and reading His Word, He'll equip you to resist the Antichrist and his forces. You can receive Jesus right now by praying the following prayer.

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for the wrong things I've done, come into my heart, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Teach me more about Your love, and fill me with Your joy. Amen.

“WE SHALL BE CHANGED!”

What Your Resurrection Will Be Like

By David Brandt Berg



BEHOLD, I TELL YOU A MYSTERY,”

the apostle Paul wrote to a group of Christians in the Greek city of Corinth. “We shall not all sleep [be dead], but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet [Jesus’ Second Coming]. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we [who are alive] shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ... Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’” (1 Corinthians 15:51–55).

Paul also said that our spirits are immediately present with the Lord when we die (2 Corinthians 5:8), so in this passage he is explaining the bodily resurrection of the dead.

It’s pretty hard to explain how a spirit can rejoin a body that’s been in the grave for years—possibly even hundreds or thousands of years—and come to life and be perfectly whole, even better than it was before. Paul says it’s going to be like the difference between a seed and what the seed becomes once it has germinated and grown to maturity (1 Corinthians 15:36–44). How are you going to explain that transformation?

Our resurrection bodies are going to be new and different, and yet they’ll be close enough to the ones we have now that we’ll recognize each other: “Then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12). The disciples recognized Jesus after He was resurrected, but not always. He was different enough that sometimes they didn’t recognize Him (Luke 24:13–16, 31; John 20:14–16). That was either because He didn’t want to be recognized at the time, or because

He was more beautiful and more perfect, because He had a new spiritual body that would never die—and that’s the kind of body you’re going to have! You’re going to be like Jesus was and is now, since His resurrection. He “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious [resurrection] body” (Philippians 3:21).

Were Jesus’ followers able to see Him after He was resurrected? Yes! Were they able to usually recognize Him? Yes! Did He walk and talk with them? Yes! He even cooked for them and ate and drank with them (Luke 24:43; John 21:9–14). Jesus was able to do all these normal, natural things, and in your new resurrection body, so will you. Think of that!

But that’s not all. You’ll also be able to do some things you can’t do in your natural body. When His followers were in a locked room for fear of those who had crucified Him, Jesus



walked right *through* the locked door (John 20:26). Another time, when He had finished talking with two of His followers on the road to Emmaus, He “vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:31). You’ll be able to walk through walls and doors and appear and disappear, just like Jesus did. You’ll also be able to travel from

or what you’re doing, you’re suddenly going to notice a wonderful change and look to see that you’re wearing a beautiful new robe of righteousness!

Actually, you may be so preoccupied with what’s happening in the sky—lightning and thunder and Jesus appearing in the clouds—that you may not even

ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:13–14). That includes *you*, if you’ve received Him! It also includes all of your departed family members and friends who are saved. So don’t worry that you’ll never see them again; you’ll meet in the air. What a family reunion—the biggest ever!

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). □

YOU’LL BE ABLE TO WALK THROUGH WALLS AND DOORS AND APPEAR AND DISAPPEAR

one place to another, not merely at the speed of sound or light, but at the speed of *thought*.

“We shall all be changed!” The main thing that’s going to be changed is your body, but if He’s going to change your body, He’s certainly going to change your clothes. You’ll be clothed in a robe of light, a robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). Just think, no matter where you are

notice what you’re wearing. But you’ll sure *feel* different because you’ll “be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Corinthians 15:52). At the sound of that trumpet you’re going to be raised from the dead, if you are dead, or raised from the earth if you’re still living.

In another epistle, Paul writes: “I do not want you to be



THE SAFEST PLACE

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

WHEN THE WORLD goes to pieces, the best place to be is in the charmed circle of God's protection. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.' Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror

by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you."¹

Even if there's turmoil and confusion all around, you can have inner peace through the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.² He never fails those who trust Him. So that's the secret: Live close to the Lord, in touch and in tune with Him and in step with His Word. It is His Word that makes you strong spiritually.³

One encouraging passage of Scripture regarding God's ability to protect and keep those who believe in and trust Him is the story of the harlot Rahab and the ancient city of Jericho. Because Rahab had faith and assisted two spies who were acting as God's agents, even at great peril to herself, when Jericho was later besieged by an invading army and destroyed, the only part of Jericho's city walls that didn't fall was the small section on which Rahab's house was built. She and her relatives survived and were spared by the conquerors.⁴

¹Psalm 91:1-7

²John 16:33; Isaiah 9:6; 26:3

³See Acts 20:32; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

⁴Read the full story in Joshua chapters 2 and 6.

All things work together for good to those who love God.

When disaster strikes, whether it's natural or manmade, those who have been doing their best to live as they know God would have them live may find they receive His supernatural protection. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations."⁵ That doesn't mean that He won't ever allow them to be harmed. He promises deliverance, but sometimes He knows that the best and most loving form of deliverance is to end their suffering by taking them home to heaven. So if you've received Jesus as your Savior, the "worst" thing that can happen to you is that you die and go to heaven that much sooner. You really don't have anything to worry about, because either way, whether here or there, you're in His loving care.

And remember, whenever anything bad happens to those who love God, He can and wants to bring about some good through it. "All things work together for good to those who love God."⁶ Don't worry when times of trouble and testing come, thinking that God doesn't love you or that He's finished with you. What you feel is God's

tender hand upon you, using the situation to make you into the person He knows you can be, or working other things in your favor. As hard as it may be to see the good that will come out of it, that's His goal and His promise to you.

You're in His hands, so "be confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."⁷ These tests are only for a time, and meanwhile you are safe with Him! ✠



AFTER THE DARKEST NIGHT in world history, we are going to have the brightest dawn. The fast approaching night is going to be the nightmare of the great tribulation (a 3 ½-year period during which the world will be ruled by an iron-fisted dictator known as the Antichrist), and the dawn, the coming of Christ. Things have got to get worse before they can get better, but in spite of the horrors of the growing darkness of this world, we know that it's all going to work out right in the end. The darkest hour is just before dawn, and the faster it gets worse, the sooner it's going to get better!

We have to go through a dark place of trials and tribulations, but then we're going to come out into the sunshine on the other side and all of these things will be blotted out like an evil dream! One of these days Jesus is going to stop the world and we're going to get off, away from all this suffering and confusion and into the peace and quiet and beauty and love and wonder of that wonderland beyond in heavenly places with Him! Just a little longer, then dawns His glorious morn! ✠

⁵2 Peter 2:9

⁶Romans 8:28

⁷Philippians 1:6

Tribulation Triumphs

The Great Tribulation, the last three and a half years of the Antichrist's rule that immediately precedes the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, is sadly misunderstood by many people. They envision the Tribulation as a time of complete defeat and a terrifying time of hell on earth for all believers in the true God. But I can prove from the Bible that this is *not* the case, thank God!

FIRST, HERE IS THE APOSTLE MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT of what Jesus told His disciples about the Tribulation and the events leading up to it.

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation' [the image of the Beast—an idol of the Antichrist], spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand). ... then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."

—Matthew 24:3–15, 21

Yes, it's going to be a time of awesome and terrible events, but God's people are going to have even more awesome powers to protect and defend and deliver and keep them going right to the End! Yes, it's going to be a time of great persecution and great battles, but we don't need to fear the Tribulation, because if we're God's, He's going to take care of us somehow.

He's also going to use mighty men and women, His prophets and prophetesses, to lead His people and, with supernatural help from Heaven, protect them from the Antichrist and his forces as they continue to proclaim the truth until the day that Jesus returns, when "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up ... to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

"The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits" (Daniel 11:32). The people who truly know Jesus are going to be strong, in spite of the Antichrist and in spite of persecution! The worse things get, the more God's Spirit is going to be poured out from on high to help us withstand the evil forces that will be warring against us. "As your days, so shall your strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25).

All through the Bible there are stories about how the Lord miraculously empowered and protected His prophets and people, so I'm sure our power is going to be tremendously increased and magnified and multiplied during the End-time. God is going to give supernatural powers to those who believe in, know, and follow Him, so that they will be able

By David Brandt Berg

**ALTHOUGH THEY WILL BE DIFFICULT DAYS, GOD'S
PEOPLE ARE GOING TO SHINE BRIGHTER WITH THE
TRUTH THAN THEY HAVE EVER SHONE BEFORE.**

not only to defend themselves, but even to attack the forces of the Antichrist.

Revelation chapter 11 describes two of God's Endtime witnesses who will have power to bring curses and plagues upon the wicked and to actually call down fire from God to devour their enemies. What a picture of mighty men and women of God fighting victorious battles over the minions of Hell! The Antichrist won't be able to stop these two until just three and a half days before Jesus returns. The Antichrist will finally be allowed to kill them, but as the wicked are rejoicing over the two witnesses' deaths, suddenly Jesus will return in His glory to resurrect and rapture them and the rest of the "dead in Christ," the saved from all ages (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:51–54). It will be a mighty triumph for God's people, showing that He holds power over death itself.

I think these two witnesses of Revelation chapter 11 are also symbolic of all those who know and side with God. I believe they'll all have "power for the hour" in that day to help them survive as long as possible. The apostle Paul wrote, "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20). And where satanic power is going to abound, God's power is going to abound much more to protect His own. God's purpose is not going to be defeated. He's going to have millions of witnesses right up to the End.

God's Word makes it very clear that He will defend His own during those last three and a half years, not only by

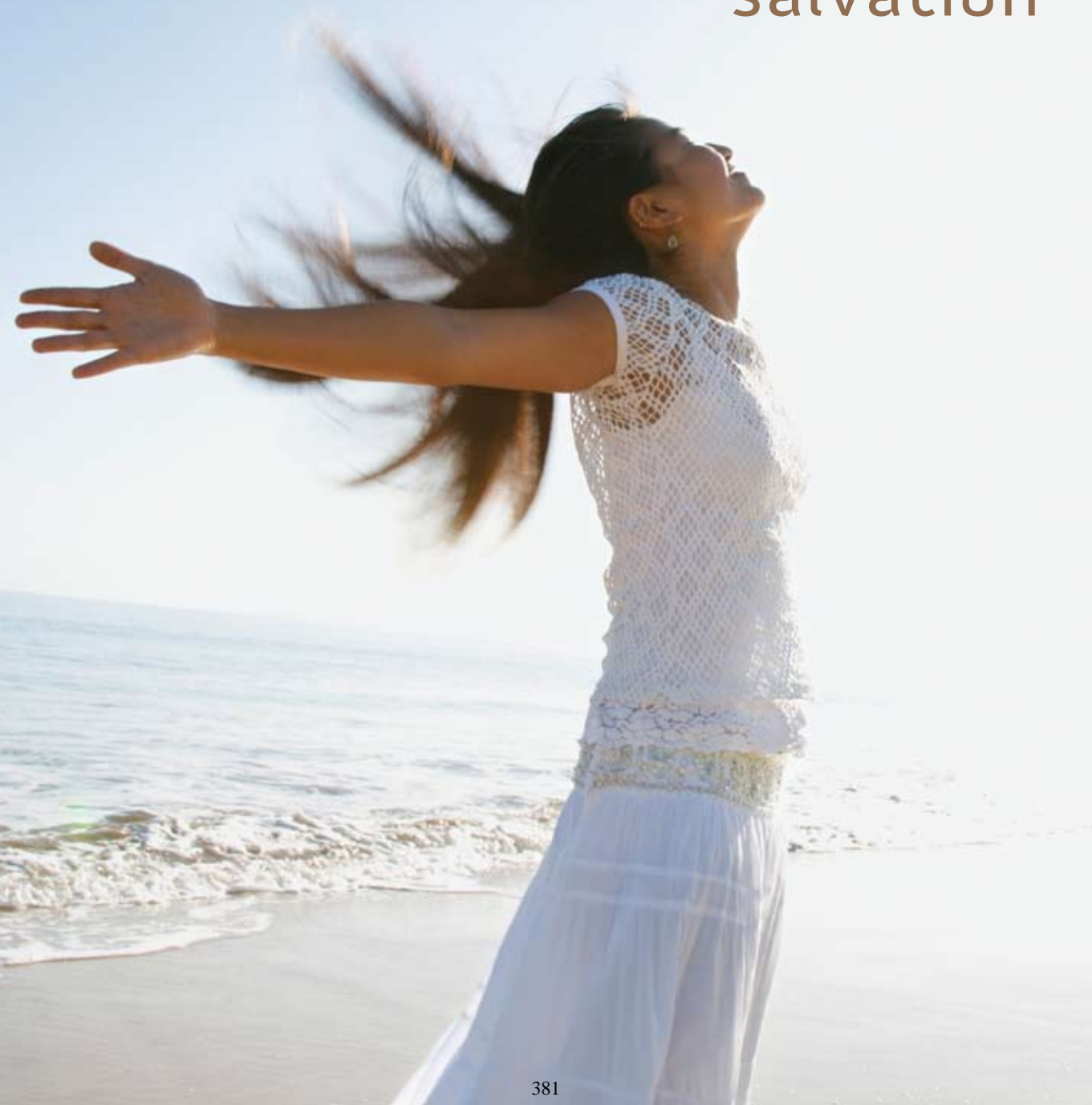
means of the mighty powers He will give them, but also by means of monsters and plagues that He will send to afflict their enemies. In Revelation chapters 8 and 9, we read about the "trumpets of Tribulation" and the mighty judgments that they unleash—horrible monsters released from the "bottomless pit," sent by God to torment the wicked—but He commands them not to hurt those who have the seal of God in their forehead (Revelation 9:4). When God lets loose those pestilences and plagues and monsters on the people of the Devil, the wicked, the wicked will be so busy in their futile attempts to defend themselves that they won't have much time to persecute the righteous. They may catch up with and kill some of God's people, as they are sworn to do so to those who refuse to take the mark of the Beast and worship the Antichrist—some will suffer martyrdom, even as some do today—but a host of God's people are going to march triumphant, protected by God, straight through the Tribulation!

So don't look ahead to the Tribulation as a horrible defeat with nothing but persecution and suffering. There will be some of that, but I'm convinced from both Scripture and the nature of God and His dealings with man that it's going to be primarily a time of great victory over the forces of Satan—a tremendous triumph over the anti-Christ wicked. Although they will be difficult days, God's people are going to shine brighter with the truth than they have ever shone before.

If you belong to Jesus and are following Him closely, you'll have what it takes when the time comes. You'll have power for the hour and every hour—the supernatural, miraculous power of God. The forces of God cannot be defeated, and the plan of God cannot be frustrated. If you're on God's side, you're bound to win. You *can't* lose. God's going to take care of you and use you like you've never been used before! ■

SECURITY AND PROTECTION

answers to some
of the most frequently
asked questions about
salvation



WHO NEEDS IT?

Most people seem to think God grades on a curve. If you try to be a good person and don't make too many serious mistakes, you'll probably be given an average or above average grade when you die, pass the course of life, and go to Heaven; if you're below average, you fail, and, well ...

That might sound like a fair enough arrangement, especially if you consider yourself a better-than-average person, but according to the Bible, it doesn't work that way.

None of us deserve to go to Heaven. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."¹ "There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin."² "There is none righteous, no, not one."³ Anyone who thinks they're good enough to make it to Heaven on their own is only kidding themselves—and they will miss out on God's greatest gift. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."⁴

You can't be good enough. You can't earn salvation or work your way to Heaven. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."⁵ "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."⁶

So who needs it? Everyone!

WHAT'S IT GOING TO COST ME?

"Surely there's a catch," you're probably thinking. "Surely I have to give up something, work hard, or do *something* to deserve salvation." No, you don't—and that's the beautiful thing about salvation! "It is the gift of God."⁷ When have you ever had to earn or pay for a gift someone gave you? A gift is a gift. If you had to earn or pay for it, it wouldn't be a gift.

Salvation is not a reward for good works. Your good works can't get you into Heaven any more than your bad deeds can damn you to Hell once

you've asked for and received God's forgiveness through Jesus' sacrifice. You're saved purely by faith in Jesus. You just have to accept the fact that you couldn't possibly pay enough to buy your way into Heaven, and then humbly accept God's gift. It's as simple as that.

ARE THERE ANY SINS TOO BAD FOR GOD TO FORGIVE?

God wants to freely forgive everyone for every wrong they have ever committed. He says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon,"⁸ and, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."⁹

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."¹⁰ He wants to forgive everyone, and the way to experience His forgiveness is to believe in Jesus.¹¹ "He who believes in [Jesus] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."¹²

When people hear the truth—God's plan of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus' sacrifice, explained in terms that they can understand—the Holy Spirit speaks directly to their hearts and brings them to the point of decision. If they believe and accept Jesus as their Savior, their sins are forgiven; but if they willfully refuse His forgiveness, God's hands are tied. "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."¹³ This deliberate rejection is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which God cannot forgive.¹⁴ God has given every person the

¹Romans 3:23

²Ecclesiastes 7:20

³Romans 3:10

⁴1 John 1:8

⁵Ephesians 2:8–9

⁶Titus 3:5

⁷Ephesians 2:8

⁸Isaiah 55:7

⁹Isaiah 1:18

¹⁰John 3:17

¹¹Acts 16:31

¹²John 3:18

¹³John 3:19

¹⁴Mark 3:28–29

majesty of free choice, and He will not override their decision to reject His offer.

Of course, just because someone rejects the truth the first time they hear it doesn't mean they'll never be given another opportunity to make the right choice. Many people get more than one chance. Still, the Bible tells us, "Now is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."¹⁵ "For you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."¹⁶

HOW MUCH FAITH DOES IT TAKE?

You'd be surprised how little faith it takes to receive God's gift of salvation! God doesn't expect you to have great faith in something you know so little about and understand even less, and it's impossible to understand or appreciate salvation, really, until you've experienced it. All it takes is enough faith to concede that Jesus could possibly be the way to salvation, and a sincere desire to let Him prove Himself to you. If you only have enough faith to pray, "Jesus, if You really *are* real, and if You really are the way to salvation, *show* me," He will! If you're convinced enough by what you've heard about salvation to give it a try, He's given you all the faith you need to be saved.

WHY JESUS?

"Why must I ask Jesus into my heart?" you may ask. "Why do I have to use that name? Why can't I just pray to God and find salvation that way, through His name?"

Because Jesus is the only One who came to earth and gave His life for you. Jesus said, "I am the door"—into His Father's house, the kingdom of God. "If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved."¹⁷ So if you want to get to Heaven, you have to walk through Jesus, the open Door.

Jesus is also the only door. "There is no other name"—no name but Jesus—"under Heaven by

which we must be saved."¹⁸ "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."¹⁹ And Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."²⁰ That's just the way it is!

Then what about the adherents of all the other religions in the world? Can't they be saved? Yes, they can all get saved, regardless of their religion. Even if they don't have any religion, they can still be saved—but only through Jesus.

CAN I LOSE MY SALVATION?

No! One of the most marvelous things about the gift of salvation is that once you have received Jesus into your heart, He is there to stay. He has come into your life, and He will be with you forever. Jesus has said that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and that He will be with you always, even to the end of the world.²¹ There is nothing you could ever say or do that would nullify these wonderful promises.

Jesus knows you're not perfect and never will be—and He loves you just the same! When He forgave you for your sins, He not only forgave your past sins but your present sins and those you will yet commit as well.

True, you can keep yourself in line for more of God's blessings by trying your best to please Him and do what's right, but you can't keep yourself *saved!* Jesus did that once and forever. Eternal life is not a sometimes thing—saved and lost and saved again, every time you make a mistake and say you're sorry. There's no such thing! Once you're saved, you're saved forever!

Of course, if you willfully do wrong once you're saved and don't repent and make things right, you'll suffer for those sins in some way. The Lord will have to let you reap the bad results so you'll learn a lesson. "For whom the Lord loves He chastens."²² But even then, you won't lose your salvation! ❧

¹⁵2 Corinthians 6:2

¹⁶James 4:14

¹⁷John 10:9

¹⁸Acts 4:12

¹⁹1 Timothy 2:5

²⁰John 14:6

²¹Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20

²²Hebrews 12:6

the outlook

may not always be easy, but the uplook is great!

And so I rested,
because God
said to.

leave you nor forsake you; just cast your burden on Me.”

And so I rested, because God said to. And I cast my burden on Him, because He said to do that, too. I forgot my anger, rolled over, went to sleep, and I endured the next few days of doing battle with the measles. I also managed a faint smile most of the time, because there really wasn't any point in taking out my frustrations on those around me.

Now I see God's perfect timing in everything. The day after I had completely recovered, I was thrown into a hectic schedule and thanked the Lord for that week of spiritual and physical rest. I had also found that it doesn't work to blame disaster on God; where I have a question, He has a very good reason why.

And I found out one more thing: He keeps His promises. The agent called again to set up another appointment. The Lord promised that in the message my friend got for me when I was sick, didn't He? It proves that when you spend time with the Lord and put your trust in Him, He plans a perfect schedule. •

You can't just be God's fair-weather friend. If you are only going to be willing to believe and trust the Lord as long as everything goes all right, you won't be believing or trusting very much, because "many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psalm 34:19).

The *good* news is that when you hit bottom, that's when you can start on your way up—if you look to the Lord and let Him help you! When things look darkest, don't look down, look up! Start praising the Lord, and you will often praise your way right out of the pit into which the Devil is trying to cast you! When the Devil tempts you to get down and discouraged, fight! Don't even listen to him, much less surrender!

It all depends on which way you point your antenna. If you're downhearted and cast down, it's because you've got your antenna pointed down toward Hell instead of up toward Heaven. Doubt, fear, discouragement, and complaining kill, but faith, trust, courage, and praising the Lord make alive. Look to Jesus and live!

Just open up your heart and let the sunshine in! When you look up, the sky is the limit. Up there the sun is always shining!

—David Brandt Berg

Coming next ...

Need help with your uplook? Want to learn how to live above the problems and disappointments that can cloud your days? Don't miss the next issue of *Activated*.



god never stops loving you!

What is God like? Some people picture Him as an angry God, some kind of monster with an all-seeing eye, carrying around a big stick, ready to clobber them—a cruel tyrant who is trying to frighten them into Hell. But actually, God is *love* (1 John 4:8). He is a loving God who is trying to love everyone into Heaven. He's so close, so intimate, so personal, so loving, so kind, so tender, so gentle, so concerned—and He's waiting with open arms. The only reason He follows us around is that He's hoping we'll turn around and meet Him with open arms.

God never rejects us or withdraws His love. He always has hope for us no matter how far we've strayed. So if you feel far from God, maybe it's because you haven't opened your heart to receive His love and forgiveness. You need not continue to feel condemned for your mistakes and sins; only be sorry, ask for God's forgiveness, and be forgiven (Isaiah 1:18; 1 John 1:9).

If you will even start going God's way—if you'll just turn toward Him and start trying to find your way Home—the Father will come running toward you and receive you with open arms of love (Luke 15:18–24).

—David Brandt Berg (DBB)

If you haven't yet experienced God's love and forgiveness, you can right now by sincerely praying a simple prayer like the following:

Thank You, Jesus, for paying the price for my mistakes and wrongs, so I can be forgiven and put my past behind me. Thank You that You cleanse me from all sin—past sin, sin now, and sin hereafter—by faith. I ask You now, dear Jesus, to come into my heart, forgive me, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen. ■

What a pity if we carry the burden of the past when the Lord paid such a price to lift that burden and set us free!

I wonder if there is anything more wonderful than the miracle of forgiveness—the assurance of having your sins forgiven. It's for all of us! He died for all of us! All you

have to do is reach out and take it—receive Him as your Savior and accept His forgiveness.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). He has promised this and He cannot break His Word. ■

ATTACK YOUR FEARS!



what to do when fear strikes

>> BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

FEAR!—WE DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH OF IT IS SUBCONSCIOUS until we analyze it and try to put it into words, yet we're often afraid to talk about our fears or even confess to ourselves that we're afraid because that would expose our innermost selves.

The fear of failure is probably one of the greatest fears people have—the fear of failure in life, love, labor, and—for Christians—failing the Lord. For the Christian, the fear of failing God is perhaps second only to the fear of failing others, because we know that God will forgive us, but others sometimes find it hard to forgive. The fear of hurting others because of our failure, the fear of letting them down, disappointing them, disillusioning them, discouraging them—the fear that because of our failure, others will also fail—this is hardest to bear.

But whatever your fears are, it pays to face them and to draw a line of distinction between the truth and the lie, between reality and the imaginary, between fact and fear.

An incident from my childhood illustrates this principle: As a boy, I delivered papers and handbills door to door, and I frequently encountered big dogs that would chase me and nip at my heels. Occasionally they actually bit me, but most of the time their bark was worse than their bite. I soon discovered that if I turned my back on them and tried to run from them, they were more apt to bite me than if I faced them.

Once when I was about 12 years old, I had gone into a certain yard to deliver a handbill, when out from the back yard came a huge Great Dane, barking and growling furiously. He was coming at me full speed, leaping and bounding, and I thought, *This is it!* I knew I didn't dare turn my back on him or he would bite me for sure! Thank God I remembered to pray for the Lord's help. I suddenly jutted out my hand toward him and yelled, "I rebuke you in Jesus' name!"—And did he put on the brakes! He skidded to a stop and looked absolutely startled, turned tail, and ran!

He was coming at me full speed, leaping and bounding, and I thought, This is it!

***You have to
differentiate
between
reality
and the
imaginary,
the truth
and the lie.***

It not only pays to face your fears, acknowledge and confess them, but to take a positive stand against them, especially in the power and Spirit of the Lord, claiming the promises from His Word. It wouldn't have done me a bit of good to try to take the "positive thinking" approach and say, "Big old dog, you just don't exist, so I'm going to ignore you!" He would have promptly finished me off to prove that he *did* exist!

You have to differentiate between reality and the imaginary, the truth and the lie. It doesn't do any good to just shut your eyes and hope the problem will go away, or hope that when you open your eyes again you'll find out it didn't exist, that it was just your imagination.

That big dog *existed*, and he was coming right for me, and it wouldn't have done a bit of good to shut my eyes and hope he would go away, or to tell myself that he was just a figment of my imagination. He was *there*, as real as you or *me*, and he was headed for me! In that situation, the best thing I could have done was to face him and take action to eliminate the danger, and I did so by launching a counterattack by the power of the Spirit. At first he was on the offensive and I was on the defensive, but the Lord helped me turn the tables. Suddenly he was put on the defensive, and that's when he turned and ran.

As any military strategist knows, it's impossible to win a war as long as you stay on the defensive. Defensive warfare is doomed to defeat. To win a war you have to launch an attack; you have to take the initiative!

So it pays to face your fears, recognize they're there, decide between

the real and the unreal, the truth and the lie, and then to go to the *attack* to dispel the vaporous fiction of the fairytale and to drive away the genuine reality of real threat!

Fear is the exact *opposite* of faith. Just as "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10), fear of Satan is really the beginning of death. The Hebrew word translated as "fear" in this verse is *yirah*, which means "reverence." So to fear God is to give Him the respect He deserves. It's a form of worshipping God. Therefore, to fear Satan and his devices is to give him just the kind of worship that he wants. God's Word says about other kinds of fear that "fear involves torment" (1 John 4:18). Fear of the Devil will wear you down and wear you out. It is damaging and disastrous to your spirit if you harbor it.

So you must rebuke that kind of fear just as Jesus did when the Devil tried to get Him to worship him on the mount of temptation. Jesus put the Devil in his place: "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him *only* shall you serve'" (Luke 4:8).

The Lord promises "perfect peace" to those whose minds are fixed on Him, to those who trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3). So if you are troubled by a spirit of fear, put your trust in the Lord. Just tell Satan, "Be gone Devil! Get out of here! I'm putting my trust in God, in Jesus!" The Bible says that if you submit yourself to God and resist the Devil, he will *flee* from you (James 4:7). □

(The above was excerpted from David Brandt Berg's article by the same title. For the full version and six other articles by David Brandt Berg, order *Greater Victories* from one of the addresses on page 2 of this magazine.)

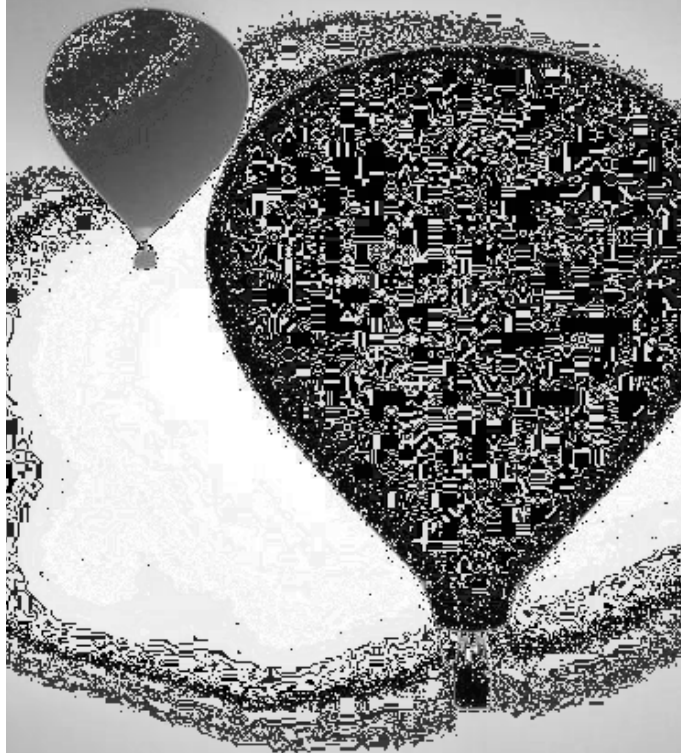
go slow

YOU'LL GET THERE QUICKER

“IN QUIETNESS AND CONFIDENCE shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15). There is nothing in the Bible promoting hurry. The only verse I know that seems to advocate rushing is, “The king’s business required haste” (1 Samuel 21:8). But for that one Scripture, I think there must be a hundred that tell us to go slow, or words to that effect—even to take it easy!

Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30). When you get under too much pressure and too much tension, too heavy a burden and too hard a yoke, it’s not God’s fault. It’s somebody else’s fault, or your own.

Maybe that’s why God created donkeys—as an object lesson. They are plodders. They are very slow, but they have more endurance and can carry heavier loads than horses. They are the workhorses of the backwoods. They can negotiate trails that horses would kill themselves on, carrying loads for miles that a horse couldn’t—especially not a racehorse.





FEEDING READING

RESTING IN THE LORD

The Lord promises His people spiritual rest.

Exodus 33:14
1 Kings 8:56a
Hebrews 4:9

Resting in the Lord brings complete rest—rest of body, peace of mind, contentment of heart, and spiritual well-being.

Psalm 23:2–3a
Psalm 55:18a
Psalm 116:7
Isaiah 28:12a

There is one condition for receiving the rest the Lord promises: “Come to Me!”

Matthew 11:28–30
Hebrews 4:11a

We cannot do the Master’s work without the Master’s power.

2 Chronicles 20:12b
Psalm 20:7
Psalm 84:5a
Psalm 127:1a
2 Corinthians 3:4–5
Isaiah 40:29,31

To get the Master’s power, we must spend time with the Master.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Psalm 105:4
Psalm 138:3
Isaiah 30:15a
Isaiah 41:1a

Resting in the Lord means giving our cares and concerns to Him and letting Him carry them.

Psalm 55:22
1 Peter 5:7
Hebrews 4:10

Resting in the Lord means taking time to meditate on the Lord and His wonders.

Genesis 24:63a
Job 37:14b
Psalm 104:34
Psalm 143:5

Resting in the Lord means humbling ourselves before Him.

Psalm 46:10
Isaiah 57:15
Micah 6:8

Take time to be holy—wholly His.

Luke 10:38–42
Psalm 27:4
Psalm 84:10a
Proverbs 8:17
John 14:21b
John 16:27a
James 4:8a

Racehorses can sprint for a few rounds around the track, and that’s it! They’re extremely high-strung, nervous, and are just not workhorses. They’re not plodders, and they’re not load carriers. But pack mules and donkeys are—and they’re as stubborn as they come! You cannot rush them. You have to do it slowly, in their time. They just plod along, but they do it and they get there. It’s like the old story of the tortoise and the hare: The tortoise was slow, but he got there.

You may choose intensity and speed; I’ll take the low road and the slow road. You can take the high road and get there first if you want to—if you get there at all—but I’m going to take the low road and the slow road, and I’m determined to get there in one piece, no matter how long it takes.

I can’t count the times I’ve told taxi drivers, “Go slow and you’ll live longer. Live fast and you’ll die quicker.” That certainly is true. Doctors and health experts have said that pressure and tension are killing people, and that many of today’s illnesses are from pressure and tension. Pressure and speed are killing people through heart trouble, nervous trouble, and high blood pressure.

Lord help us to go slow! We shouldn’t waste time, but we need to trust the Lord instead of being rushed and impatient. Patience indicates slowness, plodding along, doing our work persistently and not wasting time, but also not getting fretful and worried and all worked up about it. Impatience is marked by speed, hurry, rush, haste, push, pressure, tension! Patience shows faith. Impatience shows lack of faith. Impatience shows that we don’t think the job is going to get done unless we hurry and push it and rush it.

But if we’ve got faith that Jesus is going to help us take care of it somehow, we can afford to be patient and go slow and do it right. •

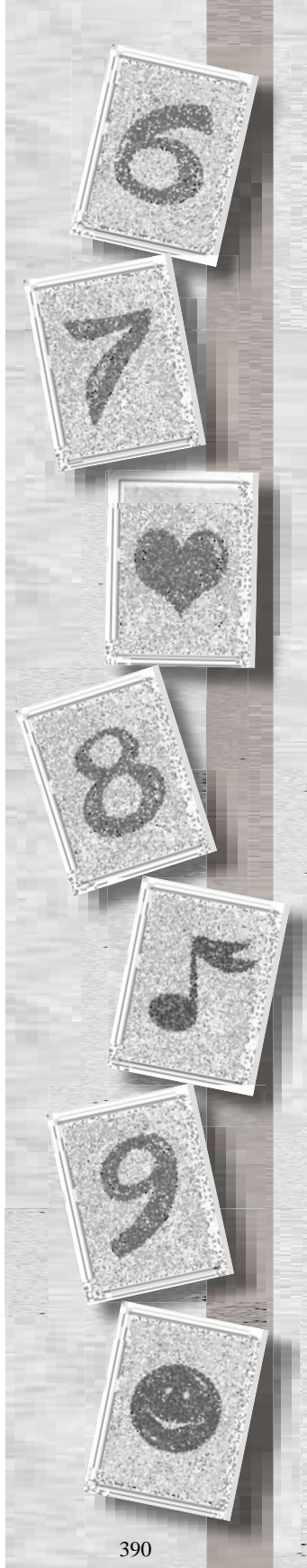
about anything at all, if we would start this little “Count Your Blessings” game immediately, our “plight” would compare so favorably with that of others or worse situations that we’ve been in ourselves that we would come out shouting for joy for how good the Lord has been to us.

When we play this game, we should always compare ourselves favorably, never unfavorably. If you look at those who seem to be *better* off than you, you’ll go into the depths of despair. This is usually what we are doing when we complain—looking at others who are better off or thinking of ourselves at another time when we were better off. But if we would think of all those who are *worse* off than we are, then it would be very difficult for us to complain about our lot, since there are nearly always many, many more who are worse off!

No matter how “bad off” we are, if we have and love the Lord and know that He loves us, we are among the most blessed people on earth! Even our problems we can be sure are for a good purpose, and we can find cause for rejoicing in the knowledge that they will ultimately accomplish some good in our lives. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). “Most gladly I will ... boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Take the *positive* approach. Count your blessings!

(MARIA FONTAINE IS THE CO-LEADER OF THE FAMILY, ALONG WITH HER HUSBAND PETER AMSTERDAM.)



THINK ON THE GOOD

It’s the Devil who tries to get us to unfavorably compare ourselves to others. The Lord tells us that we shouldn’t think about those negative things at all: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Whether abounding or abasing, we should be thankful for whatever we’ve got (Philippians 4:11–12). “Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord” (Psalm 150:6). “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:2). We could all praise the Lord more and be more positive. Thank God for the health you do have. Thank God that you’re not completely incapacitated. All kinds of things could be wrong with you, so thank the Lord for the blessings you do have. Stay positive, thankful, and full of praise to Jesus!

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

The camel's nose

ACCORDING TO A BEDOUIN FABLE, an Arab and his camel were crossing the desert. Night came and the temperature dropped. The Arab put up his tent, tied his camel to it, and went to sleep.

The temperature dropped further, and the camel asked the Arab for refuge from the cold.

The Arab was adamant. "There is only room in the tent for one!"

The camel was quiet for a few minutes, but soon asked again. "Please, Master! Just my nose. If I could just put my nose in your tent, it would keep me from freezing out here."

The Arab reluctantly agreed.

The camel's nose became warm, but after a while the temperature went down even more. The camel woke the Arab and asked, "Please, can I just put my forelegs in the tent? They are very cold!"

Again the Arab reluctantly agreed.

"Only your forelegs, nothing more!" So the camel nudged his forelegs into the tent and they became warm.

After some time, the camel woke the Arab again. "Master, I must put my hind legs in the tent. Otherwise I fear that they will freeze and I won't be able to finish our journey tomorrow. What good is a camel with frozen hind legs?"

So the Arab agreed once more, and the camel moved his hind legs in. But since there was only room in the tent for one, the Arab was forced to move out into the cold, where he barely survived the night.

Depression is like that camel. It just needs a small opening to get started—usually a thought that seems to have some basis in truth or reason—but if you entertain that thought, pretty soon it and a whole lot more like it move in and take over. Don't let the camel get its nose inside your tent. •

WHO ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

THE LORD IS NOT THE ONLY ONE TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION or direct your thoughts, so you must learn to watch your thoughts and make sure you're on the Lord's channel. "Test the spirits" to make sure that what you're hearing in your mind or spirit is from the Lord (1 John 4:1). If your thoughts cause you to be discontent, bitter, dissatisfied, unhappy, or critical of others, they are not from the Lord but from the enemy of your soul, the Devil.

One of your best protections is to fill your mind and heart with positive, encouraging, strengthening, and faith-building thoughts from God's Word. Memorize Scriptures and quote them to yourself and even to the Devil when he tempts you with negative thoughts. Give no place to the Devil (Ephesians 4:27).

—DAVID BRANDT BERG (D.B.B.)

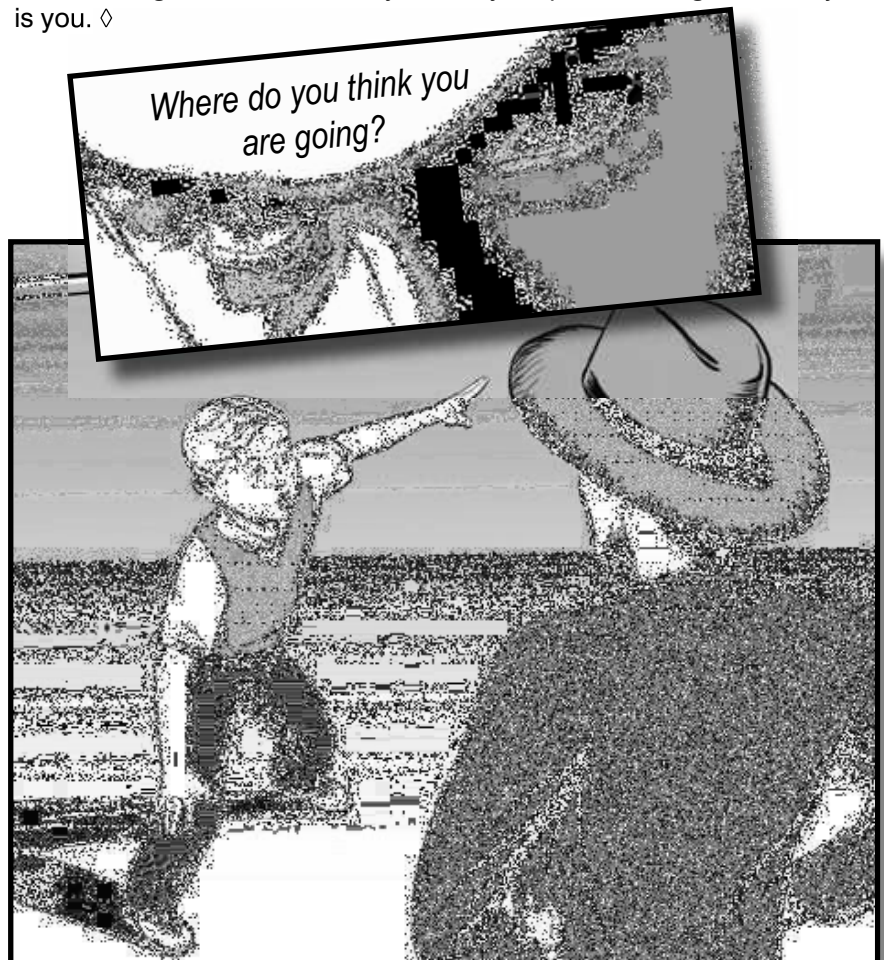
GUARDIAN ANGEL

just because the Devil also dwells and operates there. That would be like refusing to listen to any music just because the Devil uses music. If we stopped using everything the Devil uses, there wouldn't be much left for God and us to use for His good purposes!

We don't have to wait till we die to get a glimpse of the world to come. "As it is written, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). God wants to awaken us to the realities of the spirit world so we can enjoy the good, avail ourselves of the help He has put there for us, and more effectively combat the evil.

If you have received Jesus into your heart and have thereby been "born again of the Spirit" (John 3:5), you can safely explore the wonders of God's good spirit world. You don't need to fear or worry about demons or even Satan himself! God, His loving Holy Spirit, and His hosts of mighty angels are with you, surrounding, protecting, and delivering you from all evil (Psalm 34:7; 91:10-13). ◇

I WAS A TEENAGER THE FIRST TIME I SAW MY GUARDIAN ANGEL. I was heading across the street for some dive in San Francisco when suddenly he was right there on the curb in front of me, challenging me. He was tall, handsome, and blonde, with a real fine face, but dressed in an old bum's clothes and a slouch hat. He looked fiercely into my eyes, with eyes that glowed like fire, and I knew he wasn't going to budge an inch out of my way. He spoke to my mind, not with words but with his eyes or thoughts, and I heard him loud and clear, inside my head, as he looked at me with great disgust. "Where do you think you are going?" He knew where I was headed, and he was there to stop me—and stop me he did! I wasn't three feet from him, face to face, and he nearly scared me out of my wits! I nearly did a backward flip and ran the other way across that busy street, dodging cars. It's a wonder I didn't get killed. And I grabbed the first train home. I couldn't get out of there fast enough. I was terrified of him because somehow I knew exactly who he was—an angel of God in disguise, sent by the Lord to stop me from making a big mistake. It sure did the trick, and I never forgot it! So thank God for His angels, who are watching over us continually—even your personal angel, whose job is you. ◇



GOD'S

FINANCIAL

HEALTH

PLAN



STAYING HEALTHY FINANCIALLY IS A BIT LIKE STAYING HEALTHY PHYSICALLY:

There aren't any shortcuts or "magic pills," but rather it's dependent on numerous factors that have to be done with regularity.

To get healthy or stay healthy physically, you must do a number of things in proper balance—eat well, sleep well, exercise regularly, drink plenty of water, dress appropriately for the weather, avoid stress, stay clean and avoid germs, etc. You can't only eat well and expect to be healthy; you also need to do those other things. Each is a part of God's health plan, and they all work together to bring about the desired result.

It's the same with getting healthy and staying healthy financially. You have to follow God's financial health plan as best you can. That means first and foremost making time for your spiritual life and relationship with Him—"Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4)—but there's more to it than that. You also need to work hard, be honest and fair in business, pray for His guidance before making financial decisions, be thankful for all He gives you, avoid waste, and give back to Him by supporting His work and workers, as well as giving to others in need, etc. You have to enact each part of God's financial health plan and keep the right balance, or you can't expect His full blessing.

At the same time, you need to remember that having a good income and financial stability isn't the be-all or end-all of the Lord's blessing, any more than it's the be-all or end-all of life—or as Jesus put it, "One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). Sometimes His blessings come in other forms that benefit us even more, such as good health, protection from accidents, a loving family, a happy and harmonious home life, true friends, peace of mind, and purpose and fulfillment in life.

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

BE THANKFUL

The Lord is a wise investor. He gives the most to those who are thankful for the blessings He's already given them. We can show Him our appreciation by thanking and praising Him regularly—by not taking His generosity for granted. No benefactor would continue giving to someone who isn't grateful for what he or she has already been given.

The more you learn to recognize God's goodness and the more you make it a habit to thank and praise Him at every turn, the more He will bless. So tell Him how much you love Him and how thankful you are for all He does for you. As you praise and love Him, He loves you in return and pours His blessings on you. Praise down the blessings of God.

—*Maria Fontaine*



THE SAFEST PLACE

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

WHEN THE WORLD goes to pieces, the best place to be is in the charmed circle of God's protection. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.' Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror

by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you."¹

Even if there's turmoil and confusion all around, you can have inner peace through the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.² He never fails those who trust Him. So that's the secret: Live close to the Lord, in touch and in tune with Him and in step with His Word. It is His Word that makes you strong spiritually.³

One encouraging passage of Scripture regarding God's ability to protect and keep those who believe in and trust Him is the story of the harlot Rahab and the ancient city of Jericho. Because Rahab had faith and assisted two spies who were acting as God's agents, even at great peril to herself, when Jericho was later besieged by an invading army and destroyed, the only part of Jericho's city walls that didn't fall was the small section on which Rahab's house was built. She and her relatives survived and were spared by the conquerors.⁴

¹Psalm 91:1-7

²John 16:33; Isaiah 9:6; 26:3

³See Acts 20:32; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

⁴Read the full story in Joshua chapters 2 and 6.

All things work together for good to those who love God.

When disaster strikes, whether it's natural or manmade, those who have been doing their best to live as they know God would have them live may find they receive His supernatural protection. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations."⁵ That doesn't mean that He won't ever allow them to be harmed. He promises deliverance, but sometimes He knows that the best and most loving form of deliverance is to end their suffering by taking them home to heaven. So if you've received Jesus as your Savior, the "worst" thing that can happen to you is that you die and go to heaven that much sooner. You really don't have anything to worry about, because either way, whether here or there, you're in His loving care.

And remember, whenever anything bad happens to those who love God, He can and wants to bring about some good through it. "All things work together for good to those who love God."⁶ Don't worry when times of trouble and testing come, thinking that God doesn't love you or that He's finished with you. What you feel is God's

tender hand upon you, using the situation to make you into the person He knows you can be, or working other things in your favor. As hard as it may be to see the good that will come out of it, that's His goal and His promise to you.

You're in His hands, so "be confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."⁷ These tests are only for a time, and meanwhile you are safe with Him! ✠



AFTER THE DARKEST NIGHT in world history, we are going to have the brightest dawn. The fast approaching night is going to be the nightmare of the great tribulation (a 3 ½-year period during which the world will be ruled by an iron-fisted dictator known as the Antichrist), and the dawn, the coming of Christ. Things have got to get worse before they can get better, but in spite of the horrors of the growing darkness of this world, we know that it's all going to work out right in the end. The darkest hour is just before dawn, and the faster it gets worse, the sooner it's going to get better!

We have to go through a dark place of trials and tribulations, but then we're going to come out into the sunshine on the other side and all of these things will be blotted out like an evil dream! One of these days Jesus is going to stop the world and we're going to get off, away from all this suffering and confusion and into the peace and quiet and beauty and love and wonder of that wonderland beyond in heavenly places with Him! Just a little longer, then dawns His glorious morn! ✠

⁵2 Peter 2:9

⁶Romans 8:28

⁷Philippians 1:6



PROTECTION AND POWER

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

THE SAFEST PLACE IN THE WORLD for you is close to God and where He wants you to be. No matter where that is or what's against you, He will keep you. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe."⁷

God has promised to protect His own, but has anything bad ever happened to you since you've accepted Him into your heart and life? Has the Lord ever let you suffer in some way through an accident, affliction, or other trouble?

Look at what happened to Job!⁸ Were all the calamities that befell him and his family his fault? Was God punishing him for his sins? No. All of these things happened because the devil asked God if he could test and tempt Job to see if he could break Job and make him lose his faith. The Lord let the devil take away all Job's wealth, then his family, and finally his health. It was all a test, perpetrated by the devil but allowed by the Lord in order to show that Job would continue to love and honor Him in spite of it all. And when Job passed the test, God blessed him with twice as much as he had lost.⁹

Don't worry; God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear.¹⁰ He doesn't let the devil give us more than we can take, but He does sometimes let the devil test us to see if we'll depend on Him and His promises in the Word even in difficult circumstances. And once we've passed the test, God will deliver us, just like He did Job.

All through the Bible the Lord miraculously empowered and protected those who turned to Him for help. And the same miracles of power and protection that occurred back in Bible times can happen today. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever!"¹¹ If Jesus could do those miracles in His day, then He can still do them today. God is still the God of miracles, and what He's done before He can do again.

Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth!"¹² That's a lot of power! And if you've accepted Jesus into your life and heart, you have access to that power as well. God has not only promised all this power and protection, but He's promised it for right now and for you, if you believe! ✠

or a break-in or a mugging or some other frightening or life-threatening situation, it's hard to imagine it happening to us, and that can lead to a false sense of security, which is dangerous.

People do desperate things when they're at the end of their rope, and there are also people whose hearts are very evil. We live in dangerous times, but as long as we do our part, we can count on His unfailing counsel, forewarning, protection, and care. We are blessed! ✠

¹Psalm 46:1

²1 John 4:4

³1 John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1:7

⁴Psalm 34:7; 91:11

⁵Matthew 10:29–31

⁶Romans 8:28

⁷Proverbs 18:10

⁸See Job 1:6–19

⁹See Job 42:10–16

¹⁰1 Corinthians 10:13

¹¹Hebrews 13:8

¹²Matthew 28:18

The Secret Place

A Meditation on Psalm 91

ADAPTED FROM DAVID BRANDT BERG, BY RONAN KEANE

PSALM 91:1: HE WHO DWELLS IN THE SECRET PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH SHALL ABIDE UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY.

Where is the “secret place of the Most High”? It is found in intimate fellowship with God. The phrase “shadow of the Almighty” symbolizes God’s protection. When you’re in close personal fellowship with God, you’re under His shadow, under His protection.

That’s a promise, but it comes with one condition: you must stay close to Him. You do that by reading His Word and doing your best to follow it, by keeping Him and His guiding spiritual principles in your thoughts.

VERSE 2: I WILL SAY OF THE LORD, “HE IS MY REFUGE AND MY FORTRESS; MY GOD, IN HIM I WILL TRUST.”

In Bible times, stone fortresses provided the best protection in times of trouble or war, but God is an even surer defense.

VERSE 3: SURELY HE SHALL DELIVER YOU FROM THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER AND FROM THE PERILOUS PESTILENCE.

A snare is a trap, set for a bird in this case, and the devil is the fowler.

VERSE 4A: HE SHALL COVER YOU WITH HIS FEATHERS, AND UNDER HIS WINGS YOU SHALL TAKE REFUGE.

The picture is of God keeping us safe, like a hen spreads her wings over her chicks to protect them.

VERSE 4B: HIS TRUTH SHALL BE YOUR SHIELD AND BUCKLER.

A buckler was a small shield, about the size and shape of a dinner plate and fastened to the wrist, which soldiers used to protect their sword-wielding hand. A buckler was a lot more maneuverable than the full-size shields that most ancient soldiers also carried.

What is the truth of God? Jesus once said in a prayer to His Father, “Your word is truth.”¹ Another passage tells us to carry “the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”² Faith in God’s promises is our best protection.

VERSES 5–6: YOU SHALL NOT BE AFRAID OF THE TERROR BY NIGHT, NOR OF THE ARROW THAT FLIES BY DAY, NOR OF THE PESTILENCE THAT WALKS IN DARKNESS, NOR OF THE DESTRUCTION THAT LAYS WASTE AT NOONDAY.

You have nothing to fear, whether physical or spiritual, because you have the following promise:

¹John 17:17

²Ephesians 6:16

VERSES 7–8: A THOUSAND MAY FALL AT YOUR SIDE, AND TEN THOUSAND AT YOUR RIGHT HAND; BUT IT SHALL NOT COME NEAR YOU. ONLY WITH YOUR EYES SHALL YOU LOOK, AND SEE THE REWARD OF THE WICKED.

Even if danger is on every side, God can bring you through it unscathed.

VERSE 9: BECAUSE YOU HAVE MADE THE LORD, WHO IS MY REFUGE, EVEN THE MOST HIGH, YOUR DWELLING PLACE...

If the Lord is your refuge and dwelling place, where does that put you? In a sense you're already dwelling in heaven, because that's where God lives and you've made your home with Him.

VERSE 10: NO EVIL SHALL BEFALL YOU, NOR SHALL ANY PLAGUE COME NEAR YOUR DWELLING.

But, you may argue, bad things *do* happen, even to people who pray for God's protection. They get hurt, seriously ill, and have plenty of other problems. How could the statement "no evil shall befall you" be true?

Well, consider what is "evil." When the Lord lets seemingly bad things happen to His children, they're often to teach us something or to strengthen and build our character. When our wise and loving heavenly Father allows this, He does so for our own good, and it "yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."³ If the purpose and outcome are positive, how can these things be evil? In fact, He also promises that *all* things work together for good to those who love Him.⁴

VERSES 11–13: FOR HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE OVER YOU, TO KEEP YOU IN ALL YOUR WAYS. IN THEIR HANDS THEY SHALL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU DASH YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE. YOU SHALL TREAD UPON THE LION AND THE COBRA, THE YOUNG LION AND THE SERPENT YOU SHALL TRAMPLE UNDERFOOT.

Thank God for His angels, who watch over you continually, including your personal guardian angel, whose job is *you*.

VERSE 14, GOD SPEAKING: "BECAUSE HE HAS SET HIS LOVE UPON ME, THEREFORE I WILL DELIVER HIM; I WILL SET HIM ON HIGH, BECAUSE HE HAS KNOWN MY NAME.

Again, there are conditions attached to His promises: God protects those who know and love Him. Your love, trust, and faith in God and His ability to deliver you are what activate His power on your behalf.

VERSES 15–16: "HE SHALL CALL UPON ME, AND I WILL ANSWER HIM; I WILL BE WITH HIM IN TROUBLE; I WILL DELIVER HIM AND HONOR HIM. WITH LONG LIFE I WILL SATISFY HIM, AND SHOW HIM MY SALVATION."

As we fulfill these conditions, what are the five things the Lord will do for us when we call on Him for help? 1) He will answer us, 2) He will be with us in trouble, 3) He will deliver us, 4) He will honor us, and 5) He will show us His salvation. ✠

³Hebrews 12:11

⁴Romans 8:28

When I receive my heavenly crown someday, I will know that I didn't earn it by myself; I was aided in my fight of faith by a "great cloud of witnesses,"⁵ the invisible armies of heaven. On that glorious day I will want to meet my angel of comfort and the other dear ones who walked with me and lifted me up when I was weary. On that day, I will thank them face to face.

MISTY KAY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN TAIWAN. ☞



PERFECT PEACE

By David Brandt Berg

When you truly trust God, you can have peace in the midst of storm and calm in the eye of the hurricane. It reminds me of an art contest that was held in which the artists were asked to illustrate peace. Most of the contestants handed in paintings of quiet, calm scenes of the countryside—absolute tranquility. Well, that's a form of peace. But the hardest kind of peace to have was illustrated in the picture that won the award. It depicted the roaring, raging, foaming rapids of a storm-swollen waterfall, and on a little tree branch overhanging the torrent was a nest where a tiny bird sat peacefully singing in spite of the raging river. That's when your faith gets tested, in the midst of turmoil. Quietness is a sign of faith.



"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."⁶

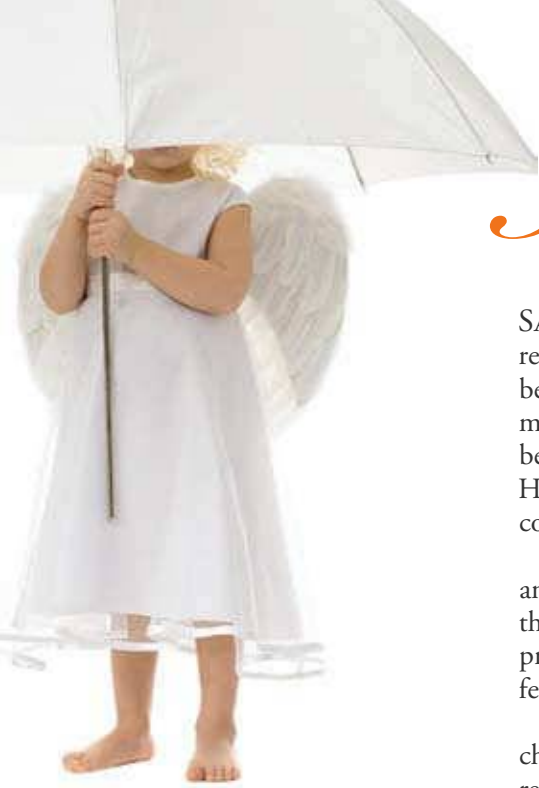
1. Psalm 91:11
2. John 20:29
3. Hebrews 11:6
4. 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7-8
5. Hebrews 12:1
6. Philippians 4:6-7



STRENGTH

IN

GOD



It's free

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

SALVATION IS BY FAITH—pure and simple! Salvation is the result of believing: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”² If you get an emotional high or some other physical manifestation—a “feeling” of any kind—that is a bonus and beside the point. You are saved by faith in God’s Word, because He promised you salvation if you would meet His simple, single condition: believe. You’re not saved by your feelings.

It doesn’t matter how you feel, because God’s Word is unchanging and is not affected by that. It’s your faith that counts. If you believe the Word, regardless of how you feel, you’re saved! Eventually you probably will have some feeling, but it is not the “experience” or the feeling that saves you; that is a result of your being saved.

God’s plan from the beginning is based on free choice—your choice. God gave us free will to either choose to receive Jesus or to reject Him. Salvation is there for you. It’s yours, ready for the taking, but you must make the decision.

Salvation is a gift. All you have to do is reach out your hand of faith and receive it. Salvation is a miracle of God, but it’s yours for the asking. All you have to do is receive Jesus into your heart. He’s there, waiting to come in.

Believe and you’re saved. Period! Plus nothing! The Word plus faith plus nothing! That’s it! If you believe the Word and receive Him, it’s done! Of course, if you are thankful for Jesus’ love and the gift of salvation, your life will show it.³ But the instant you believe, it’s done, before you even have a chance to thank Him or show Him how much you love Him in return.

Salvation is not a reward. It’s not payment for anything good you may have done or anything bad you may have not done. It is a gift that you don’t earn and *can’t* earn by any kind of works of your own. “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”⁴

All *you* have to do is receive it. That’s what He means by “not of yourselves.” The one thing you have to do, *anybody* can do, even a little child: Receive it. You don’t have to work up some emotional experience. You don’t have to pray it down or work it up. You just have to receive Him, that’s all. Plus nothing! ✨

DONE DEAL

You don’t need to worry about whether or not you are going to lose your salvation or how you are going to manage to *stay* saved, because eternal salvation by grace means once saved, always saved. Once you’ve received Jesus Christ as your Savior, there are no ifs, ands, or buts about it—you are a saved child of God! “He who believes in the Son *has* everlasting life.”¹ That one verse should be enough to end all your worries. You *have* eternal life right now, and you can’t lose it.

Besides, you can’t keep yourself saved any more than you could save yourself in the first place. Even though you’re not perfect and you’re bound to make mistakes, God is going to save you anyway. Salvation is forever. He’s already given it to you, and He’s not going to take it back. It’s yours!

¹John 3:36

²Acts 16:31 NIV

³James 2:17–18

⁴Ephesians 2:8–9

You can work miracles!

By David Brandt Berg

JESUS LEFT HIS FOLLOWERS WITH AN AMAZING PROMISE of power—supernatural, superhuman, miraculous power. “Anyone believing in Me shall do the same miracles I have done, and even greater ones, because I am going to be with the Father” (John 14:12 *TLB*).

That promise has stood for two thousand years, and multitudes of other Christians have *done* those “greater things.” God empowered otherwise ordinary people like you and me to work His miracles. Now that same power can work miracles through us, if we will simply believe and act on God’s Word.

The trouble is, most people put God’s promises of power in either the past or the future. The past was wonderful, glorious, and supernatural, with all those heroes of the faith working miracles and angels intervening on behalf of God’s people. And the future is going to be marvelous and “miraculous” in Heaven. But they don’t believe that any of those things could happen in the *present*. “They say, “Of course you couldn’t expect anything like that now.” But that’s *not* what the Bible says!

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). God is still the God of miracles. What He’s done before, He can do again—and not only later, but right now if you need it and have faith for it. If all the little people in the past have already done miracles by the scores and scores, in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as throughout the past two thousand years, then Christians today can do them too! And they don’t have to wait for the Great Tribulation or the Millennium or the New Earth. They can do them *now*.

Too many Christians try to excuse their little faith or get out of the job the Lord has for them by saying, “That’s not us. That’s not me! That was just for the miraculous days of yore. He doesn’t expect that of *me*. Not now!” They try to squirm out of the responsibility to do the things that God has told them to do, including telling others about their faith and doing miracles to help people.

That was the only reason that Jesus did miracles. He didn’t do them to show off His power or dem-

What God has done for others, He can do for you!

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today can do
them too!

onstrate that He was a great miracle worker, or even to prove He was the Son of God; He did them because He had compassion upon the multitudes (Matthew 14:14).

He did those miracles for *their* sakes because He loved them and hated to see them suffer. That was His motivation. And that has to be our motivation too—not to show off and say, “Look how wonderful *I* am! Look how powerful *I* am! Look at the mighty signs and wonders *I* can do! Believe in me!” We are to go about the Lord’s work quietly, sweetly, and humbly, with lots of love and compassion. We’re to simply try to help people, like Jesus did, then He will do the miracles through us when He knows they’re needed, when the time is right to accomplish His purpose, and when He knows the power and attention won’t go to our heads.

Sometimes the Lord doesn’t give that power to people because He knows they’d become very proud and they wouldn’t be able to handle it. For example, for years I wanted the gift of tongues, the ability to speak in a celestial language, which is one of the more visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit (1 Corin-

thians 12:7–11; Acts 2:1–11). But the Lord didn’t give it to me because I wanted it in order to be able to show people that I had the Holy Spirit, and to prove it through the supernatural, miraculous gift of speaking in tongues. He didn’t give me the gift of tongues then because I wanted it for the wrong reason, because of my pride. But when my heart was right and the time was right, I did get the gift of tongues.


People’s pride is not the only reason a miracle doesn’t happen every time someone prays for one. Sometimes it’s simply not the Lord’s will or His time—when He knows it will accomplish His purpose in the lives of those involved. So don’t be discouraged if you don’t get this supernatural power immediately in every situation.

The important thing to remember is that He has promised *you* that power. God is still alive, well, and working just as powerfully as ever amongst those that trust in Him, so when you or someone you know needs a miracle, let God use you and your prayers to help make it happen. He will if it’s His will and you believe and claim it in Jesus’ name! ○



There is no Limit

*Compiled from the writings
of David Brandt Berg*



The more we yield to the Lord and what He knows is best for us and those whose lives we affect by our decisions, the happier we and those others will be. That's why yieldedness to God's will is one of the most important things any of us can ever learn.

It reminds me of what an evangelist once told a former shoe salesman turned preacher: "Dwight L. Moody, there is no limit to what God can do with a man who is yielded and willing to do His will!"

Moody looked him in the eye and replied, "By the grace of God, I am determined to be that man!"— And he was!

A short while later, Moody moved to Chicago where he began telling others about Jesus and what He had done for him. Moody was soon so thrilled to find that he could lead other folks to the Lord, that he quit the shoe business and began serving Him full time. He went on to become one of the world's greatest evangelists. By the time he died in 1899, Moody had led tens of thousands of people to Jesus, and started a number of the ministries that are still going strong today.

But what if Moody had not determined to yield to the Lord? What a sad loss it would have been, not only for him, but also for millions who have since heard the Gospel as a result of that single, resolute decision!

The same holds true for each of us: If we are not yielded and open to God's will in our lives, if we are not willing to do whatever He may

ask of us, we'll never be all that God wants us to be or accomplish all that He wants us to do. That would be very sad, not only for us personally, but also for all those that the Lord wants us to reach and help with His love.

"But," you may argue, "I could never do anything great for the Lord, like Moody did! I'm no flaming evangelist or outstanding soul winner." Well, neither was Moody to begin with. He was just a poor farm boy and a below-average student that never made it past the fifth or sixth grade, who became bored with life on the farm and moved to the big city of Boston. After several weeks in the city, he set a new goal for himself: to become a big businessman and to make \$100,000 [the equivalent of today's millionaire]. Giving his life to God's service was the *last* thing on his mind!

In fact, when Moody was first saved, he was so completely ignorant of God's Word and truth that one church committee refused him membership. Some of his friends later said that of all the people they had known, they could hardly think of anyone who seemed less likely to ever become a strong Christian, much less to go on to do what he did for the Lord.

But when Dwight Moody found Jesus and realized how much the Lord had given for *him*, then he determined to give his life to the Lord and to do whatever God would ask of him. The Bible tells us, "Draw near to God, and *He* will draw near to *you*" (James 4:8). This is the secret of success of not just Moody,

but of *every* man or woman whom God has ever used to the full: They drew close to the Lord and relied solely upon Him and His power and His Word for guidance, strength, and inspiration.

Despite all of our faults, weaknesses, and inabilities, there really is no limit to what God can do with us if we will simply turn our lives over to Him and be willing to let Him make us what He wants us to be. Of course, that is a very big “if,” because we each have our own free will, and we can choose to either yield to Him and “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33), or we can seek first our *own* desires and plans and ways. The choice is ours, and whether or not we have His full blessing and His help will depend on whether or not we are willing to give Him first place in our lives.

Many Christians today seem to be more concerned about having God accept what they want to do than they are about accepting what God wants them to do. They’re trying to put their programs across to God, to get Him to sign His name and give His approval to *their* plans. The question they should be asking themselves is not, “Can I present my program to God for His signature?” or even, “Am I willing to be presented with God’s program for my signature?” but rather, “Am I willing to sign a blank sheet of paper and let God fill it in without my even knowing what His program is going to be?” That’s the real test of yieldedness!

If you’re willing to be what *God* wants you to be—not what you are, but what God wants you to be—*then* He can mightily use you.

God knows you can’t do it yourself. You have to turn your life, your mind, your heart, your everything over to the Lord and let *Him* make it for you! When you finally get to the point where you surrender to Him, where you let go of your own way and let God have His, then God has a chance to step in and do it—and He will! Just give Him a chance.

When you’re giving your all to the Lord, then you don’t need to worry about anything. Your entire life is in His hands, under His loving care, and the Devil has nothing that He can get a hold of or lay claim to. In fact, to really overcome the Devil, submission to God’s will is exactly what the Lord requires. “Submit to God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

But as long as there are any areas of your life that you’re *not* willing to yield to the Lord, if there’s even one little part that you refuse to surrender, the enemy of your soul can use that against you. This is why God’s Word tells us to give *no* place to the Devil (Ephesians 4:27).

It’s like the story of Huddersfield: A rich landowner decided to buy the entire village of Huddersfield, and over time he bought every piece of land in the area—every piece, that is, except one little plot. One stubborn old farmer refused to sell his tiny piece of land, and nothing would change his mind. The landowner even offered the farmer much more money than his property was actually worth, but the farmer was so fond of his land that he absolutely refused to sell. When the landowner finally gave up, he tried to encourage himself by saying, “What difference does just one little plot of land make? I’ve

Before we can pray, “Lord, Thy kingdom come,” we must be willing to pray, “My kingdom go.”

To win, we must surrender.

bought everything else, so Huddersfield is *mine*. It belongs to me!”

But the stubborn old farmer overheard him and said, “Oh, no it doesn’t! *We* own Huddersfield. It belongs to you and me!”

Don’t let the Devil be able to say that of you to God! “Aha! Look, God! He’s yielded everything except this one little thing! Even though he belongs mostly to You, a little bit still belongs to me!”

To have *real* peace of heart and mind, you must commit your *all* to the Lord. Then, when your will is in perfect harmony with God’s will, He will bless you with His perfect peace. A dear old hymn says:

You have longed for sweet peace,
And for faith to increase,
And have earnestly, fervently prayed;
But you *cannot* have rest or be perfectly blest
Until *all* on the altar is laid.

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?
Your heart does the Spirit control?
You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest,
As you yield Him your body and soul.

—Elisha A. Hoffman

So give your all to Jesus. Ask Him to take and use you for His glory, and He will—as much as you will let Him. “There is no limit!” You are His child, and He loves you and will always do His best to make you happy and useful to Him, so that you may bring others the same life and happiness that you have found in Jesus. Do your best for Jesus by yielding to Him today! ○

Feeding Reading

YIELDEDNESS

To please the Lord, we need to learn to yield to Him and what He knows is best.

Psalm 25:4–5

Psalm 143:10

Matthew 11:29–30

James 4:13–15

Yieldedness is putting the Lord’s will above our own.

Psalm 40:8

Matthew 6:10

John 4:34

John 6:38

Ephesians 6:6

Yieldedness means obeying God even when it’s hard or it hurts.

Jeremiah 42:6

Luke 22:42

Romans 12:1–2

1 Corinthians 15:31b

Galatians 2:20

Only when we yield to the Lord is He able to work through us as He would like.

John 15:4–5

The more yielded we are to the Lord and His will, the happier we will be.

Deuteronomy 4:40

Isaiah 1:19

John 13:17

John 15:10–11

temple time

(Describing a vision:)

I see a picture of a group of people under a dome in a big central room. They're all looking up, like they expect something. There are other people rushing around busily out in the wings [in service to God], but the people under the central dome are just standing there quietly, looking up. They're bathed in a beautiful golden glow from above, and they take deep breaths of the heavenly air that descends on them. It's the Lord's temple.

(Prayer:) Oh Lord, for a breath of Your heavenly air to refresh us and clear our minds and inspire our hearts and give us visions that thrill us, that set our heads awheel for You, Jesus!

The people who are so busy rushing around get tired and have to come under the dome to get refreshed and refilled.

(Prayer:) Help us to be like that, Jesus. Help us to remember we can't go on without the heavenly vision You give, without a breath of heavenly fresh air, without the sound of that sweet music. We just can't go on without hearing Your voice and getting inspired by the upward look!

We wouldn't worry and fret so if we spent more time with the

Lord, looking up through that starry dome, breathing that heavenly air, and hearing that beautiful music. We'd find peace and rest for our soul. It would totally renew us and refresh us and give us new vision and fresh inspiration, new strength, rest and peace and joy.

Have you been there?

Have you taken time to get quiet before God as you slip into the temple of the Spirit? Have you been there to get a fresh breath of air from Heaven? If you haven't, you've really missed something! You'll get awfully tired and weary and upset and fearful and doubtful and discouraged and worried and flurried and hurried. You'll get out of touch with the Lord and run out of strength and wisdom and love and patience—all because you haven't come into the



He can clarify all your thoughts with just one sweet strain of heavenly music.

temple to be refreshed and renewed by His Spirit.

Are you too busy? Are you in too big a hurry? Is your work too important to stop for a few minutes of inspiration and refreshing from on high, spiritual renewal, physical rest—a little love feast with the Lord? You'll never make it if you don't stop for a while under the dome. If you don't get in there and catch a little of His light, you're not going to reflect much of it to others.

Make a temple of your heart!

All you have to do is get alone with the Lord and look up at all His beauties and breathe His heavenly air and hear His heavenly music and see His heavenly visions.

It doesn't have to be at any set time. You can look up through the dome any time of day, anywhere, wherever you are, whatever you're doing. Just take a few quiet moments with the Lord. Anytime, anywhere, you can come swiftly out of the wings and enter the temple in spirit (John 4:24). Look and live! Look up! Make a temple of your heart. See what God can do in that beautiful realm of the spirit.

You just can't do that very well in the midst of the other voices and

the clamor of business. Those other things may be necessary, but you have to keep coming back into the rotunda in spirit to get your batteries recharged. You can't do it without Him. You'll never make it without His power. You may run for a while, but unless you come back and get hooked up to the current again, you'll run slower and slower till you have nothing left and are just plumb flat!


It can be downright hard work out in the wings, and you'll never have the strength or the vision or the inspiration that you need to do that work unless you keep coming back in under the dome.

He can solve all your problems in one little glimpse. He can refresh your whole spirit with one deep breath. He can clarify all your thoughts with just one sweet strain of heavenly music. He can wipe away all your fears and tears with just one little restful moment in that perfect peace He gives when your mind is stayed on Him and Him alone, because you trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3).

It just takes one little glimpse of Jesus to make it worth it all—and to help you be able to *do* it all. Take time in the temple today!▪

Prayer for the Day

Thank You so much, dear Jesus, for helping me bring my cares to You in prayer and to give them to You so You can carry the weight. When I do, it shows You that I love You and need You and trust You, and then You're able to help me accomplish much more than if I tried to do it all in my own strength. Thank You for taking my burdens and dealing with them one by one before they become bigger problems. Thank You so much for Your simple solutions, Jesus!



We need to learn to save the first place in our hearts and lives and time for Jesus. We belong to Him first of all, and the first place must belong to Him—for rest and prayer and fellowship with Jesus, and for feeding from His Word. We cannot do the Master’s work without the Master’s power—and to get it, we must spend time with the Master. Then we must let *Him* do the work through us. Many people give their needs and problems to the Lord in prayer, but then turn around and try to meet those needs and solve those problems on their own, without depending on the Lord to work on their behalf.

We ought to take a lesson from the oil lamp: It must be the oil that burns and not the wick, for if the wick burns without oil, it will destroy itself. We must immerse ourselves in Jesus and let *Him* burn to light the way, because if we try to do that ourselves, we’ll soon burn out.

The flame of the lamp burns so beautifully and brightly and clearly when the *oil* burns, but it gets smoky and stinky when just the wick burns. The lamp’s wick must be deeply immersed in the oil. Most of the wick is in the oil, and only a tiny tip of it is exposed to the air and the flame. That way, it’s mostly oil that burns and very little of the wick—almost none. The oil flows freely through a wick that is deeply soaked in the oil. Then it is the oil that burns and not the wick, and it gives bright, pure, clear light.

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). It is not I that burn, but Christ must burn within me. You can be a beautiful wick, but you’ll burn black with too little oil. You must soak yourself in the oil, so *you* burn not, but He burns through you. Then you’ll give pure light, smokeless light,

THE Oil Lamp

clear light, beautiful light to all that are in the house (Matthew 5:15–16).

When I was a boy, they had beautiful kerosene lamps in every home, on every table. They had lovely glass bowls for the oil, so you could see their wicks and the level of the oil and knew when to replenish them. The lamp burned best when full of oil. When the level got low, too much of the wick would be out of the oil for the wick to be thoroughly soaked. Then the wick itself would begin to burn faster, and the lamp would give off smoke. We sometimes try too hard, work too hard, and try to do everything ourselves. To paraphrase the chorus of an old Gospel song:

Let go and let God have His wonderful way,
Let go and let God have His way.
He'll fill with His Spirit and burn day by day.
Let go and let God have His way!

Most people don't know much about oil lamps anymore, but some-

thing that everyone can relate to is a water faucet. When you turn on a faucet, is the faucet “working”? No, it's not! The faucet is doing nothing. It's pressure *behind* the water that causes it to flow through the faucet. All you do is turn the handle on the faucet, and the water flows out with effortless ease. The faucet is just the channel, just a hole, to let the water out. You say the faucet's working? The faucet is *not* working. It's the water pressure that is doing the work. The faucet is just letting it flow. The power isn't in the faucet; the power comes from the gravity feed or pump. The pump or the weight of the water in a tank creates pressure in the water pipe, so all you have to do is turn the tap to release it, and out it flows. You're like the faucet; the Lord is the water pressure. Just open the faucet and let it flow!

So stop trying to do the work yourself, and let God do it. Let go and let God! Just let the Lord through. Let the oil burn. Let the water flow. Let the *Lord* do it! ○

WHY STRUGGLE?

Robert G. LeTourneau (1888–1969) invented and manufactured the world's first large earthmoving equipment. He was also a dedicated Christian. One evening he needed to design a piece of machinery that was supposed to be built the next day, but some of the young people from his church were also counting on him to join them in one of their outreach projects. LeTourneau later wrote: “The Lord and I had quite a struggle while I was trying to decide what to do. Although I could not understand how I was going to get the plan drawn for the next morning, I went with the young people and we had a profitable time. I returned home about ten o'clock. Up to that time I had been unable to make a single plan. I sat down at the drafting board, and in about five minutes the outline and plan was as plain as it could be. What is more, the little piece of machinery designed that night has been the key machine in all that I have been building since. It pays to put God first!”

DON'T EVER THINK BECAUSE THERE'S SO MUCH DARKNESS THAT IT'S NO USE TO HAVE JUST A LITTLE LIGHT, BECAUSE EVEN ONE CANDLE CAN BE SEEN A MILE AWAY WHEN IT'S DARK.



GOD PUT ON A “LIGHT SHOW” THE OTHER DAY, and we were there to see it. He said a lot of things, too, and we tried to listen. I’m sure He must have shown it before, but we were all too busy to watch.

The Lord let three tiny rays of sunlight beam their way into our dark room—not through the shutter, which was obstructing the light, but through pinholes, letting it in. It’s like your life for the Lord: The smaller you are, the clearer others can see Jesus. The less there is of you, the more His light shines through!

The rays were many different colors, all showing a different color of God’s light, but the same light. It is similar to what the Bible says about each Christian being given different gifts, but all from the same Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4). Each of us reflects in our own way the light of God—each one letting our light shine, showing our particular kind of works to cause men to glorify the beauty of God (Matthew 5:16).

We’re like little rays of light in this spiritually dark world. Even a few rays of light can make a difference. Don’t ever think that because there’s so much darkness it’s no use to have just a little light,

because even one candle can be seen a mile away when it’s dark.

Even a speck of dust, as small as it is, can sparkle like a diamond if it will get in the sunshine—and the greater the darkness, the brighter the light! A little diamond of dust or a little ray of sunshine shows up best when the room is very dark. “Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Romans 5:20).

You don’t dare look right at the sun; it’s so bright it could blind you. But you see its reflection in the things that it shines on. Just so, people can only see God as His children reflect Him, like little diamonds of dust. They can’t look at God, because He’s too bright. They have to look at us believers to see God in our reflection of Him.

God’s light can only be seen if you reflect it! People can only see God in you as you reflect Him. So “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven” (Matthew 5:16). If the dust weren’t there, you couldn’t see the light, and if the light weren’t there, you couldn’t see the dust. It takes both.

You may never see one of those

little diamonds of dust again, for some of them just float into the light, sparkle for a moment, and then vanish back into the darkness. Some only have their moment of truth, but if only once in its life that grain of dust scintillates with the light of the Lord, it's worth it! Even if only once in its life, it is life and joy to someone, it's worth it! But if it could

is only in one direction. Likewise there is only one way to the Source, God, and you've got to follow that way or you won't make it! Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). He's the only way. Only in Him is there light—the straight and narrow beam that points to the love of God—and unless you get in that beam of love, you'll never shine. Jesus

DIAMONDS OF DUST

By David Brandt Berg

stay in the Lord's light, it could sparkle its life out to the end, like one candle gives light to the whole house until it is finished. The longer that little grain of dust stays right in the light, the longer it shines and the longer it stays a diamond.

Those diamonds of dust can sparkle so short a while, and then they're gone—like a man's life that is like the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is gone! For what is your life? It's but a vapor that reflects His rays of light for a little while and then it's gone (Psalm 103:15–16). You have no guarantee of tomorrow, so you'd better sparkle now while you have the light, or you may fade into oblivion (James 4:14). Hardly anyone will know you even existed, because so few ever saw God's light reflected in you, shining through you, because you didn't stay in the light. "He who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:21).

The path of the light, the ray we see, is very straight and very narrow. It only shines in one direction, and its source

said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Think how much God can show you from even a little beam of light if you're just simple and childlike enough to appreciate it. Unless you become as a little child, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:3).

To learn from the Lord, you have to stop, look, and listen. If you don't, you'll get run over by all the cares of this life, instead of running over with His truth, His love and His joy. You'll be overcome by the world, instead of overcoming the world through Him. If you're too busy or in too big of a hurry or too full of your own doings, your own things, you'll never learn anything.

Watch the diamonds of dust: They don't try to sparkle and shine. They just let the light shine on them. They don't work at shining or moving. They're not trying to get anywhere. They're not in a hurry. They just float so quietly on God's air.

So stop—look—listen—and let your dust become a diamond that shows the beauty of God! •

god's CHESSPIECE

—You Can't, but He Can!



God doesn't want you to try or pretend to be something you're not and couldn't possibly be. However, He teaches in His Word that almost anybody can be almost anything if they have faith and it's according to His will. Anybody can be somebody or somebody can be anybody, because with God nothing is impossible and all things are possible to those who believe (Luke 1:37; Mark 9:23).

A lot of Christians make idols of the great men and women of God of the past. They idolize the heroes of the Bible, the patriarchs and the prophets, the Christian saints and martyrs, and they exalt them to such heights that they make it almost impossible for others to believe they could ever do the same things. And sad to say, it seems that all too often people do that to excuse themselves.

They say, "It's impossible to be like that today. That sort of thing is reserved for Bible times, or saints or patriarchs or prophets. Ordinary Christians aren't supposed to try to be like that. It's impossible. Don't even try! People today can't expect to do miracles or have other gifts of the Spirit like the apostles and great Christians of the past had. The day of miracles is past!"



And one of the biggest lies the Devil tells people is, “You can’t be that way because you’re sinful and make mistakes, and you cannot be both good and bad.” Well, God’s Word says, “There is none righteous, no, not one. . . . For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10,23). And that includes whom?—Not only you and me, but the saints and the prophets and the apostles and the patriarchs, and everyone else except the Lord Himself.

Now that changes the picture! That brings the apostles, prophets, and heroes of the Bible down to our level, and that means it’s possible for us to become more like them. Regardless of our sins and mistakes and faults or whatever, we too can be used of the Lord. So if the Devil tells you that you’ll never amount to anything for the Lord because you’re so bad, don’t listen to him. That isn’t so!

God created man and put him on earth in part to demonstrate His power in giving him salvation—to show that in spite of all our faults and shortcomings He can save us and make us useful. He can even use you. The fact that God can use *you*, bad as you are, gives the glory to Jesus when you do anything good or right. As the old hymn says,

I’ll give all the glory to Jesus,
And tell of His love, His wonderful love.
I’ll give all the glory to Jesus,
And tell of His wonderful love!

Even the great apostle Paul lamented, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He as good as said, “I stink! I’m a horrible mess!” But then the Lord encouraged him with the answer to his dilemma: “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 7:24–25; 1 Corinthians 15:57).

Now, doesn’t that give you some hope? When the Devil reminds you of your mistakes and faults and shortcomings, it helps to remind yourself that, yes, you’re no good; yes, you’re a sinner; yes, except for the love and mercy and grace and goodness of God, you’d never make it!

It takes a miracle of the grace of God! It all has to be a miracle! Your thoughts, your love for the Lord and others, your work for the Lord—all of it is a miracle of God’s grace, “faith working through love” (Galatians 5:6). It’s *God’s* work. You just have to have the faith that God is going to do it through you.

For many years I was convinced that I was nothing and nobody and could never do anything! I was

too sinful, too carnal, I didn't read the Bible enough and didn't pray enough. How could I ever hope to do anything for God?

Be honest. Isn't that the way you feel sometimes? I'm sure the Devil lies to you like that too. When he does, slap him in the face with Scriptures, like Jesus did when the Devil tempted Him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Where sin and human faults and failings abound, God's grace does more abound (Romans 5:20). That's what it's all about!

Why do you think the Lord lets you make mistakes? Why do you think God let Adam and Eve fall prey to temptation in the Garden of Eden?—To prove that they needed God, and to prove that *you* need God! You can't do it on your own! And what does that do?—It glorifies the Lord!

Of course you can't do it! Of course you can't save yourself! Of course you can't live a perfect Christian life! Of course you can't be good or do anything good of yourself! Jesus Himself said, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). A lot of people have been taught the false doctrine that they're supposed to do most of it with just a little help from God, but I want to tell you right now, God does it all! Isn't that a comforting thought?

You don't have to have faith to do things that the Lord isn't asking or expecting of you. You just have to

have faith to be what He's made you to be and to do the job He has for you, whatever that may be. Don't try to be somebody you're not, but don't let the Devil lie to you that you can't be who God can make you, or do what God wants to do through you. God won't ask you to do anything more than He knows you can do, with His help.

Too many Christians have been taught two conflicting doctrines: first, that they can't be saintly and perfect, and second that they can't be saved unless they are. Both are the Devil's own doctrines! It's no wonder that a lot of Christians give up trying to be or do anything for the Lord!

But the wonderful truth of the matter is that you can do anything with Jesus' help. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). With His help you can do anything, go anywhere, and be anybody God wants you to be.

God has given us a free will, but to be successful for the Lord or even as happy as He would like to make us, we have to continually yield that will to Him. We have to find out from Him what His will for us is—what He knows is best for others and us—and then choose that.

Everybody has their place and job for the Lord, like the pieces on a chessboard. Chesspieces have no will of their own. When a player picks up a chesspiece and moves it to another square, the chesspiece doesn't protest; it yields and goes where it's sent, right? Well, you're in God's hands! Think of that whenever the Devil tempts you to worry about this or that. You're in the hands of

It's wonderful
to let God
decide,
because He
always has our
best interests
at heart and
He knows
what's best.

the Master Player and He's going to put you wherever He wants you, so just trust the Lord.

You don't have to make all the decisions; you only have to be yielded. But you're a free moral agent and you can choose *not* to be yielded. When it comes right down to it, the only decision you have to make is to choose to do God's will, whatever it might be. Simply yield to His moves and let Him do the thinking and the choosing. He can see the whole game, the whole chessboard, and all the pieces. You've got very limited vision and very limited power, but He sees and has it *all*.

Simply be what God wants you to be. Don't worry about what you can be or can't be or will be or won't be, like I did for nearly 50 years! I spent over half my life worrying about what I would be, when all the time I was being exactly what God wanted me to be and learning all the things God wanted me to learn.

There have also been times when *I've* chosen to do this and do that, and God's had to change my mind or do something else in spite of me—and I always found out in the end that He knew best.

It's wonderful to let God decide, because He always has our best interests at heart and He knows what's best. He never fails. Even if He should let us get His instructions wrong or do something wrong, He's able to use even that to teach us some lesson and bring about some good if our hearts are right with Him (Romans 8:28).

So quit worrying about what God's going to do. You're in God's hands. "Rest in the Lord, and do

good" (Psalm 37:3 KJV). "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5–6). "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:21).

When a guide leads you down a path that's new to you, he doesn't tell you what you're going to need to do before you get to the turn or the fork in the way. He waits till you get to the point where you need to know before he tells you what to do or where to go next—and that's the way it is with the Lord. In most cases, you don't need to know all the details of what you're going to do tomorrow. Jesus said not to *worry* about tomorrow. You often have to plan ahead, but you're not to worry about tomorrow. Just do what God knows you can do and what God asks you to do today, and be prepared to do the same tomorrow.

God made you a particular kind of chesspiece, and He's given you powers accordingly. God is the player; you're just the chesspiece. You're His piece, and all you have to do is what God tells you to do. He doesn't even expect you to do it yourself. He'll reach down and take ahold of you and move you where He wants you to go. *You* can't do it, anyway—but you can with His help! You can't, but He can! ■

(Excerpted from *More Than Conquerors*, a collection of 10 articles by David Brandt Berg, available from any of the addresses on page 2 of this magazine.)

breaking

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

BAD HABITS

Everyone has weaknesses. That's part of being human and imperfect. When you entertain a habit long enough, it becomes part of your nature—and that's the scary thing about *bad* habits.

BUT THE GOOD NEWS is that the Lord can turn those weaknesses into strengths, so what was once a bad habit can be replaced by a good habit.

Besides bad physical habits, there are all kinds of wrong attitudes and behavior that can become habitual and do even more damage to you and others, such as thinking negatively about yourself or your circumstances, being critical of others, being rude or inconsiderate, being unwise or unloving in your speech, getting in a rushed or pressured spirit, or being angry or impatient. There are also bad habits that affect your spiritual life and relationship with the Lord, such as neglecting Him and His Word.

Habits can either take root for good or bad, and if it's for bad, they can become very difficult to change for the better—difficult but definitely not impossible, with the Lord's help.

Jesus is always willing and able to do the impossible. It takes an impossible situation for Him to do a miracle, but He loves to work that way because it causes you to recognize His miracle-working hand.

That's the wonderful thing about Jesus and His power: He can overcome anything—any sin, any problem, any bad habit, or any negative personality trait. There's nothing too hard for Him; He will deliver you from whatever bad habit you've formed if you put your will on His side and determine to work on it until together you win the victory.

It will take work on your part, but most of all you have to pray for His help. Ask Him not only to do what you *can't* do, but also to show you specifically what you *can* and need to do to get over whatever bad habit is hindering you. You have to believe what He

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tells you, and then you need to go to work and do what He shows you, because if you don't try, He can't do the miracle.

It's impossible to change through your own human strength, especially if you've allowed the bad habit to go on for years. Longstanding habits can become second nature. They become part of your personality, part of your nature, so you hardly even notice or recognize that they're there.

Or if you do recognize them, they can be a source of terrible discouragement. You begin to think that things can never change, because that's just the way you are. But really you *weren't* that way before you allowed that bad habit to form, so of course you can change it if you're willing to get serious with the Lord and work on it.

For example, people who have had a problem with thinking negatively most of their lives usually find it very difficult to break that habit. Nevertheless, many *have* overcome it through the Lord's power and Word and are now *positive* thinkers with a whole new outlook on life. They've been transformed and no longer have that old negative mindset (Romans 12:2).

So if you've formed some bad habit by repeatedly acting or reacting a certain way, the sooner you ask the Lord to help you, the better. You might think you're beyond hope and there's no use trying, but that's not so. Every time you catch yourself, ask the Lord for help, and make a conscious effort to not give in to your bad habit, you're forming a *good* habit that will eventually take root and grow until it crowds out the bad habit.

If a bad habit has gotten to the

point that you're not sure what to do about it, the first thing you need to do is ask the Lord for His thoughts on it. Ask others too—people you're close to and respect, or someone who has the good quality or habit you hope to replace your bad habit with.

It's also important to look to the Lord for encouragement along the way, because sooner or later you will most likely get discouraged and feel like giving up. Ask Him for some promises to claim—specific ones about how He will help you break that particular bad habit. Keep a record of the specific instructions the Lord gives you, as well as the encouraging promises He gives, so you'll have something to refer to if you don't seem to be making progress or are tempted to quit.

It's much easier to overcome bad habits if you go to work on them as soon as you notice them forming. That's why it's so important to take stock of your life regularly. Get in the good habit of asking the Lord every day or two how you are doing and what things you need to change before they become habits that will be much harder to break.

You have to make a commitment to continue to work on breaking that bad habit until it's gone. And remember, if you want it badly enough and do your part, the Lord will always do His because He loves you and wants you to be happy and free from the problem. Do your part, and He'll do His! •

It's much easier to overcome bad habits if you go to work on them as soon as you notice them forming.



POWER FOR A PURPOSE

Shortly before His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus promised His disciples that He would send them a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to strengthen, empower, lead, and guide them in their spiritual lives and personal relationships with Him.

When Jesus was with them in body, His disciples loved Him and knew that He loved them. They enjoyed being in His presence and hearing the comforting sound of His voice, but they didn't yet know Him the way they were to know Him later in spirit.

But after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, when the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples found that even though His body was gone from them, His Spirit was with them in greater power than ever before—and not just *with* them, but *in* them!

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Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He told His followers to not depart from Jerusalem, but to “wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me. . . . And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me’” (Acts 1:4,8). So they waited in Jerusalem, fasting and praying (Acts 1:14).

“Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with



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one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1). About 120 people, both

men and women, were numbered with the disciples at that time (Acts 1:15), and they were all together and united in mind, heart, and spirit.

Jesus had them wait in Jerusalem so that when the infilling of the Holy Spirit came, they would be in a position to win many others to Him. That was the main purpose of the Day of Pentecost—not just the supernatural manifestations that took place. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples was a means to an end.

“And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages they had never learned or spoken before], as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:3–4).

Because this took place on an annual holy day, the Feast of the Harvest, Jerusalem was filled with Jews “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). “And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:5–6).

“So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine’ (Acts 2:12–13).

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit .

drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day [9 AM]. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh. ... And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved’” (Acts 2:14–17,21).

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about 3,000 souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41). Thousands of people accepted Jesus and were saved! That’s the most important thing that happened on the Day of Pentecost. Power for witnessing is the main purpose of the Holy Spirit.

“Continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46–47).

Then came another one of God’s great setups. God picked somebody that everybody in town knew—a lame man who daily sat begging on the Temple steps. Along came Peter and John, and God performed another great miracle. The man was instantly healed, and the people were filled with wonder (Acts 3:10).

“So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers,



glorified His Servant Jesus. ... And His [Jesus'] name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts 3: 12–13,16).

“Many of them which heard the Word believed,” and another 5,000 people received Jesus as their Savior (Acts 4:4).

What was it about those first Spirit-filled disciples that convinced so many that Jesus was who He had said He was, the Messiah? “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they

*It shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh.*

had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Peter, John, and the others didn't let their backgrounds or anything else hold them back. They just went ahead and witnessed boldly, and they had tremendous power that got tremendous results. It was obvious that they had been with Jesus. They had the Master's power to carry on the Master's work!

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Have you been filled with the Spirit of God's love?

Before the time of Christ, God only anointed certain leaders, kings, and prophets with His Spirit, but now the Holy Spirit is available to *all* who receive Jesus. “It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on *all* flesh” (Joel 2:28).

Ever since the Day of Pentecost, when the first disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Lord has made the same Holy Spirit power available to every Christian. Now everybody can have the Holy Spirit and be led directly by the Lord. Now we can *all* enjoy Him anywhere, everywhere, any time, all the time, in all His power and fullness, and we can all be reached equally, fairly, and simultaneously through the communication of the Holy Spirit.

Everyone who receives Jesus as their Savior is given a certain amount of the Spirit, but receiving a complete infilling—or “baptism”—of the Holy Spirit is usually a subsequent experience to that of salvation. This is why the apostle Paul inquired

of certain disciples he met, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since

you believed?” (Acts 19:2). If you are saved, this power from God is yours for the asking. Like salvation, it is a gift of God. “Your heavenly Father [will] give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13).

Be filled with the Holy Spirit, and you will be closer to Jesus and understand His Word better. The Holy Spirit will also give you the boldness you need to share your faith with others. If you haven't already, you can receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit right now by praying this prayer:

Dear Jesus, please fill me to overflowing with the Holy Spirit so that I can love You more, follow You more closely, and have greater power to tell others about Your love and salvation. Amen. •

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

{ PUBLICAN

Heaven
is full of

SINNERS

JESUS OFTEN TAUGHT IN PARABLES. One of the shortest yet most profound was the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Bible tells us that Jesus “spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luke 18:9).

The Pharisees were the most influential of all the Jewish religious sects of Jesus’ day. The word “Pharisee” means “the separated ones,” which sums up the basic nature of their beliefs. They were strict legalists who pledged to observe and obey every one of the countless restrictive rules, traditions, and ceremonial laws of Orthodox Judaism. They considered themselves to be the only true followers of God’s Law, and therefore felt that they were much better and holier than anyone else. Thus they separated themselves not only from the non-Jews—whom they absolutely despised and considered “dogs”—but even other Jews.

The publicans were tax collectors for the foreign occupier and ruler of Palestine, Imperial Rome. The Romans would instruct the publicans how much to collect from the people, and then the publicans could charge *extra* for their own income. So publicans were usually extortioners and were therefore considered traitors and absolutely despised by other Jews.

So when Jesus told this parable, comparing a Pharisee and a publican, He had chosen the two most opposite figures in the Jewish community. The one was considered the best, most righteous, most religious, most godly of men, whereas the other was considered the worst scoundrel imaginable.



The parable:

Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector [publican].

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.”

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 18:10–14).

Which of these two men did Jesus say was justified before God?—The Pharisee who appeared to be so righteous and holy, and who no doubt felt that he was a very righteous and good man?—Or the tax collector, the sinner, who was despised by others and who apparently even despised himself?—The tax collector who knew he had no goodness of his own and needed God’s mercy.

So often, God’s way of looking at things is very different from ours. He says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Although that publican’s sins were undoubtedly many, because of his honest and humble confession that he was a sinner who needed God’s help, Jesus said this publican was the one who left the Temple justified that day.

In God’s sight, self-righteous pride like this Pharisee manifested is the greatest sin of all—that hypocritical holier-than-thou attitude that causes people to look down on others who they think aren’t as good as they are. When people get this way, others usually find them to be the hardest people to be around—narrow-minded, intolerant, critical, and judgmental.

The Gospels also tell us that when the Pharisees saw Jesus sitting down and

eating with publicans and sinners, they were enraged and accused Jesus to His disciples. When Jesus heard that, He said to the Pharisees, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Matthew 9:10–13). In other words, “I would rather see you have love and mercy, and not just your dutiful keeping of the Law. I’d rather you’d give love to others than to be so self-righteous and condemning!”

None of us have any goodness of our own. Anything good about us is only the Lord, and *His* goodness. His Word says, “*All* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Even the apostle Paul said that there was nothing good in himself (Romans 7:18).

Jesus got so infuriated by the hypocritical, self-righteous hypocrisy of the Pharisees that He told them that they were worse than the drunks and prostitutes, publicans and sinners they despised, and that there was more chance for such sinners to make it to Heaven than there was for them (Matthew 21:31). He even told His own disciples, “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:20). And the only way to be better than the Pharisees is to have

***So often,
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The worst kind of people in the sight of God are those who pretend to be good and look down on everybody else.

Jesus' righteousness—salvation, through accepting His pardon for your sins—because the Pharisees were as “good” as anyone could possibly be in the natural.

Jesus so hated the hypocritical pretense of the Pharisees that He denounced them publicly. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matthew 23:25–28).

The thing that made the Pharisees so self-righteous and hypocritical was their pride. They were too proud to confess that they were sinners like everyone else. In fact, they not only couldn't confess their sins, they couldn't even see their sins. Therefore they became “blind leaders of the blind” (Matthew 15:14).

It's a big relief to honestly admit that we can't be good or righteous in ourselves. After all, God has said in His Word that nobody is good: “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

The worst kind of people in the sight of God are those who pretend to be good and look down on everybody else. We

just need to be honest and confess, “I'm no good. I'm a sinner. Of course I make mistakes! Anything good about me is only Jesus!”

God's idea of righteousness is not the supposedly sinless perfectionist, but the pitiful, hopeless, humble sinner who knows he needs God. Those are the ones He came to save.

God's idea of goodness is *godliness*—a sinner who knows he needs God and depends on Him for salvation—not the self-made, self-righteous, hypocritical Pharisees who think they can save themselves by their own goodness.

God's idea of saintliness is a sinner saved by grace, a sinner who has no perfection, no righteousness of his own at all, but is totally dependent on the grace and the love and the mercy of God. Believe it or not, that is the *only* kind of saints there are!

You cannot save yourself by your own works, your own goodness, your own attempts to keep God's laws and to love Him, or even your own endeavors to find and follow His truth. You cannot save yourself no matter how good you try to be. There's nothing you can do to get it except receive it by faith—that's all! You have to humble yourself and acknowledge that you *don't* deserve it, that you're just a lost sinner, and that there's no way you can be saved except by the grace of God.

The worst sinners in the world can go to Heaven through faith and God's forgiveness, and the seemingly best people can go to Hell because of unbelief and unwillingness to confess their need for God. Heaven is full of sinners, saved by grace through faith. •

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Jesus, self-righteousness is pride and pride is the opposite of love and humility, so please give me love and humility today. Help me not to criticize or condemn others, but to love and forgive and encourage. You said, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” Help me to have that kind of love for others, to be quick to forgive others' sins and shortcomings, as You have forgiven me. Help me to be as merciful to others as You are to me. Amen.



FLESH OR SPIRIT?

THE MOST RAGING RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY the world has ever known has been between the do-it-yourself religions and the God-alone-can-save-you kind. Man has always been trying to save himself, to work his way to Heaven, with just a little help from God thrown in. That way he can give himself most of the credit and go his own way.

The first murder was committed by a religionist of the do-it-yourself kind, Cain, the oldest son of the first couple, Adam and Eve. Cain decided he would sacrifice to God whatever he wanted, instead of the lamb that God had asked. He would set his own standards, and that would be his religion. But Cain's sacrifice—fruits and vegetables from his garden, the fruit of his own labors, his own righteousness—displeased God and was rejected. Meanwhile

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his brother Abel simply and humbly sacrificed a lamb—exactly what God had asked. When Abel’s sacrifice was accepted and his own rejected, Cain became so enraged that he killed Abel (Genesis chapter 4). This was the beginning of the persecution of the true Church by the false Church. Cain was religious—very religious. He tried very hard to save himself in his own way, even sacrificing to God and claiming to worship God. He did his best to earn his own salvation, but his best wasn’t good enough, because his way was not God’s way but rather the way of all false religions.

Those who follow false religions all depend on self-righteousness and their own way. Most of them claim to be worshiping God and seek a little help from Him to make it. But because they work so hard at trying to earn it, they figure they deserve it, with or without His help, and are quite offended if He doesn’t seem to appreciate their goodness. They say, “Why, look at all we’ve done for You, God! You ought to give us a medal! We really deserve to be saved! If You’re ever going to save anybody, You should save us! If anybody’s going to make it to Heaven, we should certainly make it!”

On the other hand, Abel just did what God told him to do—and he “offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Hebrews 11:4): the sacrifice of pure faith as demonstrated in doing what God had told him to do. By sacrificing a lamb, which was a foreshadowing of Jesus dying on the cross for the sins of the world (John 1:29), Abel showed that he was trusting God alone to save him. He knew he had only God’s righteousness and none of his own, and that salvation was purely a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Abel’s humble sacrifice made such a fool out of the hard-working Cain—the self-made man and devout religionist, devoted to his own form of worship—and so totally exposed the futility and hypocrisy of Cain’s hard work that Cain was furious. After all his labors of the flesh, his legalistic reasoning and his demands for salvation in return for all he was doing, Cain was so humiliated that he tried to wipe out the awful truth that his religion had failed to save him—and he did so by killing the man whose simple faith in God’s grace had exposed him.

Thus began the battle royal between pride and humility, between the damned religionists and the saved sinners—the perpetual warfare that has been waged ever since between flesh and spirit, works and faith, law and grace, self and God.

This conflict has resulted in some of the greatest misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the Scriptures that have ever existed. Most people have been trying to save themselves ever since, with as little thanks to God as possible, and they have twisted the Scriptures to try to prove they could do it! But God can’t help them to save themselves. He does not help those who think they can help themselves, but only those who know they can’t. They can’t save themselves, no matter how much they try to get His help to do it their way.

As a young Christian, I too was deceived for a time by the delusive doctrine of “on and off, now it’s here, now it’s gone” eternal insecurity taught by some churches and “works” religions. But then one day as a teenager, I was thrilled to discover the simple truth of John 3:36. After years of discouragement and defeat and lack of assur-

“Look at all we’ve done for You, God! If anybody’s going to make it to Heaven, we should certainly make it!”

The Devil's message has always been, "Save yourself! You're your own god, your own savior. Why depend on another?" But God's message is, "Only I can save you. You cannot save yourself!" God doesn't save those who think they can save themselves, but only those sinners who know they can't!

—D.B.B.

ance of my own salvation, I found that all I had to do was believe. That was enough! Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life"—right now! No ifs, ands, or buts about it! No "providing you're a good boy or girl and go to church every Sunday," and none of this "sinless perfection" business.

I just hadn't been able to make it on my own, and I knew it. It seemed that the harder I tried to be good, the worse I got! As the apostle Paul lamented, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24–25).

That was all there was to it. There was nothing else, no other way, no righteousness of my own, none of my own good works. None of these could keep me saved any more than they could save me in the first place! Only Jesus could do it! Not only had He had to save me, but He also had to do the good works through me. It was all Jesus, and nothing of myself or my own goodness or self-righteousness—just Jesus. I was so relieved to learn that, as I knew I could never make it otherwise. It had to be God. I just couldn't do it, so He did!

The trouble with many Christians today is that they're still living in the Old Testament. Their Christianity is a works religion. Years ago I remember hearing about some missionaries who had gone overseas. Upon arrival they were asked by the local people, "Are you Old Testament or New Testament Christians?" At first the missionaries didn't understand what they meant, but they soon found out that "Old Testament Christians" referred to those who placed a great deal of importance on church buildings, ceremonies, formalism, and tradition—those whose

religion was primarily a works religion. A "New Testament Christian" was one whose major emphasis was not on things that are seen (buildings and pomp and circumstance), but rather on the unseen things of the spirit and the simplicity of everyday Christian living, like that of Jesus and His disciples. What a comparison, and how true!

In the Old Testament, God had a hard time getting the children of Israel away from the idolatry of Egypt. He used the Mosaic Law as their schoolmaster to teach simple truths through object lessons and rituals: the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, and animal sacrifices. These were types and shadows, analogies, mere pictures of the spiritual realities and eternal truths He was trying to lead them into, almost like you would do with little children. He had to take what they understood—the forms and ceremonies that they were familiar with in the religions of Egypt and other heathen nations around them—in a fatherly attempt to audio-visualize for them the genuine spiritual truths of the true mature worship of God Himself. As the apostle Paul says, these were all types of the true (Romans 5:14), mere visual likenesses or illustrations of the unseen realities of the spirit world!

Paul says, "When that which is perfect has come [when we join Jesus in Heaven], then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (1 Corinthians 13:10–12).

Paul was saying that even the gifts of the Holy Spirit of this New Testament era are almost like toys, gifts from a loving Father to His simple little children to help communicate understanding of Himself and His will. How much more, then, were the material object lessons of the temple worship of the Old Testament childish toys for even tinier children spiritually, to help them understand their heavenly Father's love? But "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

When Jesus came, He told the Samaritan woman at the well, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). This is the spiritual era in which we are now living.

But Paul goes even further than this in his prediction to the early Christians of Corinth when he says that the time is coming when we shall see Jesus face to face and put away even these childlike gifts of communication in the spirit. For "whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Even what we have now is only a sample of the glorious realities to come!

In the Old Testament were the illustrations, and in the present New Testament era are the spiritual truths that we have now by faith alone (John 1:17). But when Jesus comes again, we shall see Him as He is and literally be like Him and actually experience the fullness of the realities of God and the world to come!

"Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). •

(THE ABOVE ARTICLE AND 11 OTHERS ARE AVAILABLE IN *MORE LIKE JESUS*, FROM AURORA PRODUCTION.)

The most encouraging thing about King David's example, believe it or not, was his human failures, sins, and shortcomings, which gave God a chance to get all the glory and show there's hope for you and me. I never got much encouragement from the perfectionism of people like Enoch, who walked so close to God that he got completely out of touch with humanity, so God had to take him out of this world (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5). I take a lot more heart from the pathetic stories of the drunks and the harlots and the publicans and the sinners who came to Jesus for love and mercy, who He treated kindly and forgivingly. They didn't go to the harsh, rigid, self-righteous, unyielding, unforgiving, critical, and condemning religious leaders who told them to be perfect or go to Hell, but they came to Jesus for His love, mercy, forgiveness, encouragement, and patience.

—D.B.B.

THE BEST YOU CAN DO THING FOR OTHERS

GOD HAS HIS REASONS for allowing problems in life, and one of the main reasons is to teach us to pray. He lets us come to the end of our rope, the end of our strength and what we think we can do to solve the problem at hand, so we will realize that *He* is the One who has got to do it and then pray for *Him* to work, by His power.

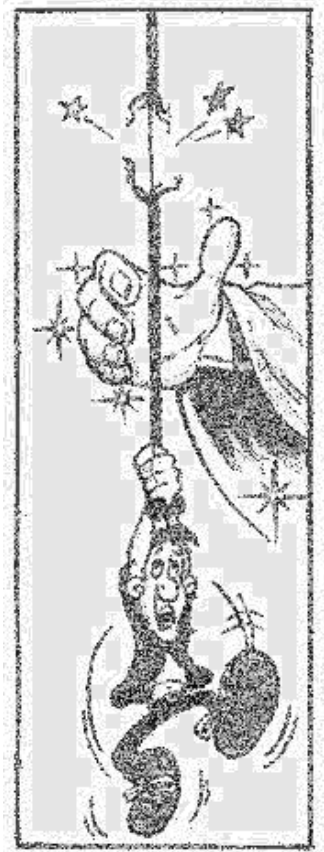
If there's something we can do to help the situation and we ask Him what that is and how to go about it, He will show us and help us do it. But in the end, the thing that will help more than anything and without which all our labors are incomplete is prayer—to pray for *Him* to do the work in the *spirit*.

He's the only One who can change hearts and minds. He's the only One who can bring people to the point where they're willing to change or do whatever's necessary to make progress or fix the problem. So the best thing we can do to help people in problem situations is to pray for them. We can't do the miracle that's needed, but the Lord can. Our prayers move His hand and make things happen in the spiritual realm that change things in our physical realm. Praying for the person or situation not only helps to set things up for the miracle

to happen, but it gives us peace of mind that we've done the best thing we could possibly do. When we commit things to the Lord in prayer, then we can trust that whatever happens is in His hands and under His control.

People don't fully realize how important prayer is, especially people who are by nature accomplishment oriented. It's all the harder for them to pray and not always be trying to do something in the physical. We need to understand and believe that only God can work in the spirit to change people and situations, and the best thing we can do to help God help others is to pray for them. If we don't pray, He often has to wait before He can bring about the needed change. His Word says, "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). Prayer is a very mysterious spiritual phenomenon. It's impossible to fully understand how the Lord chooses to work, how He chooses to answer prayer, why some prayers are answered quicker than others, or why He does an obvious miracle in one situation and not in another. We can't expect to know everything about God's business, but we can be sure that we have His ear and that our prayers have a big effect. •

**People don't
fully realize
how important
prayer is**



BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

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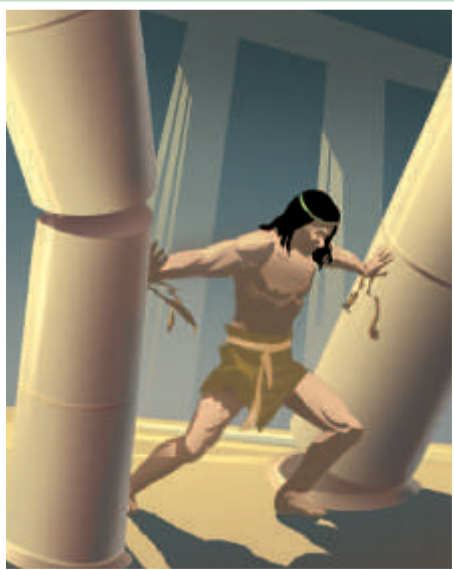
talents AND gifts, strengths AND weaknesses

Most of us don't consider ourselves particularly strong or capable, and we feel we lack certain strengths or abilities that we wish we had. That's when it helps to remember that God specializes in using people who *aren't* great in themselves.

The apostle Paul wrote, "You see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Corinthians 1:26–29).

Why does God purposely choose weak people?— Because the weaker we are, the better God can show what *He* can do. It's in our weakness that He is able to manifest His mighty power, overcome our human limitations, and perform miracles. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

When we don't feel capable or sufficient for the task God has set before us, then He has a chance to take over and do things to suit Himself. In fact, the weaker we get in ourselves,



the stronger we can be in His Spirit, because that's when His strength comes in (2 Corinthians 12:10).

The very fact that we feel incapable is one of the best things possible, because then we depend on the Lord and He has a chance to work—and He will. “It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). The Lord likes for us to be dependent on Him, to know that we need His help, and to ask Him for it. It's then that “the things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

The weakness of strength

The biggest temptation for people who have a lot of natural ability and drive is to push things through in their own strength, but that has its limits and dangers. “Men of force are men of faults,” and their biggest fault is when they keep on going in their own strength, their own force, instead of letting the Lord work through them.

Having so much natural ability, strength, and drive is often the very thing that stands in the way of the Lord showing His strength. It's more difficult for such people to depend on the Lord because they're used to depending on themselves.

My mother, for example, had a lot going for her in the natural—a lot of God-given talents, abilities, drive, personality, looks, and so on. But it wasn't until after she broke her back in an accident and was bedridden and in a wheelchair for five years that the Lord was able to use her the way He wanted to. After she and her doctors had tried everything they could with no success, when she didn't have anyone else to turn to and no more strength of her

IT'S IN OUR WEAKNESS THAT HE IS ABLE

TO MANIFEST HIS MIGHTY POWER

own, the Lord stepped in and healed her miraculously—and she knew *the Lord* had done it! She still had the natural traits and abilities He'd originally given her, but through this experience she learned to lean on Him, to let Him use those traits and abilities for His glory, and to give Him the credit for whatever got accomplished—and that's when He was finally able to use her to the full. Of course, all of us depend on our natural abilities to some extent at different times, so to rely more on the Lord and His strength is a lesson we all need to learn.

How to win spiritual victories

It's been said that “Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.” Well, that certainly is the truth, because when you're weak in yourself, that's when you can be “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Ephesians 6:10). However, the Devil might not tremble so much if you're one of those people who think that they're “strong.” If you're too self-confident, that in itself is a major spiritual weakness. “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). As Martin Luther wrote:

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing.
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus it is He!
Lord Sabbaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle!

We cannot strive in our own strength. We must look to the Lord, and *He* must win the battle. We don't have to try to win victories by our own striving, struggling, and working in the flesh. We just have to do our part by putting our will on God's side, and God will do the rest, which is virtually everything! ■

Tribulation Triumphs

The Great Tribulation, the last three and a half years of the Antichrist's rule that immediately precedes the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, is sadly misunderstood by many people. They envision the Tribulation as a time of complete defeat and a terrifying time of hell on earth for all believers in the true God. But I can prove from the Bible that this is *not* the case, thank God!

FIRST, HERE IS THE APOSTLE MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT of what Jesus told His disciples about the Tribulation and the events leading up to it.

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation' [the image of the Beast—an idol of the Antichrist], spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand). ... then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."

—Matthew 24:3–15, 21

Yes, it's going to be a time of awesome and terrible events, but God's people are going to have even more awesome powers to protect and defend and deliver and keep them going right to the End! Yes, it's going to be a time of great persecution and great battles, but we don't need to fear the Tribulation, because if we're God's, He's going to take care of us somehow.

He's also going to use mighty men and women, His prophets and prophetesses, to lead His people and, with supernatural help from Heaven, protect them from the Antichrist and his forces as they continue to proclaim the truth until the day that Jesus returns, when "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up ... to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

"The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits" (Daniel 11:32). The people who truly know Jesus are going to be strong, in spite of the Antichrist and in spite of persecution! The worse things get, the more God's Spirit is going to be poured out from on high to help us withstand the evil forces that will be warring against us. "As your days, so shall your strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25).

All through the Bible there are stories about how the Lord miraculously empowered and protected His prophets and people, so I'm sure our power is going to be tremendously increased and magnified and multiplied during the End-time. God is going to give supernatural powers to those who believe in, know, and follow Him, so that they will be able

By David Brandt Berg

**ALTHOUGH THEY WILL BE DIFFICULT DAYS, GOD'S
PEOPLE ARE GOING TO SHINE BRIGHTER WITH THE
TRUTH THAN THEY HAVE EVER SHONE BEFORE.**

not only to defend themselves, but even to attack the forces of the Antichrist.

Revelation chapter 11 describes two of God's Endtime witnesses who will have power to bring curses and plagues upon the wicked and to actually call down fire from God to devour their enemies. What a picture of mighty men and women of God fighting victorious battles over the minions of Hell! The Antichrist won't be able to stop these two until just three and a half days before Jesus returns. The Antichrist will finally be allowed to kill them, but as the wicked are rejoicing over the two witnesses' deaths, suddenly Jesus will return in His glory to resurrect and rapture them and the rest of the "dead in Christ," the saved from all ages (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:51–54). It will be a mighty triumph for God's people, showing that He holds power over death itself.

I think these two witnesses of Revelation chapter 11 are also symbolic of all those who know and side with God. I believe they'll all have "power for the hour" in that day to help them survive as long as possible. The apostle Paul wrote, "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20). And where satanic power is going to abound, God's power is going to abound much more to protect His own. God's purpose is not going to be defeated. He's going to have millions of witnesses right up to the End.

God's Word makes it very clear that He will defend His own during those last three and a half years, not only by

means of the mighty powers He will give them, but also by means of monsters and plagues that He will send to afflict their enemies. In Revelation chapters 8 and 9, we read about the "trumpets of Tribulation" and the mighty judgments that they unleash—horrible monsters released from the "bottomless pit," sent by God to torment the wicked—but He commands them not to hurt those who have the seal of God in their forehead (Revelation 9:4). When God lets loose those pestilences and plagues and monsters on the people of the Devil, the wicked, the wicked will be so busy in their futile attempts to defend themselves that they won't have much time to persecute the righteous. They may catch up with and kill some of God's people, as they are sworn to do so to those who refuse to take the mark of the Beast and worship the Antichrist—some will suffer martyrdom, even as some do today—but a host of God's people are going to march triumphant, protected by God, straight through the Tribulation!

So don't look ahead to the Tribulation as a horrible defeat with nothing but persecution and suffering. There will be some of that, but I'm convinced from both Scripture and the nature of God and His dealings with man that it's going to be primarily a time of great victory over the forces of Satan—a tremendous triumph over the anti-Christ wicked. Although they will be difficult days, God's people are going to shine brighter with the truth than they have ever shone before.

If you belong to Jesus and are following Him closely, you'll have what it takes when the time comes. You'll have power for the hour and every hour—the supernatural, miraculous power of God. The forces of God cannot be defeated, and the plan of God cannot be frustrated. If you're on God's side, you're bound to win. You *can't* lose. God's going to take care of you and use you like you've never been used before! ■

UPHILL GAINS

By David Brandt Berg

LIFE CAN BE A STRUGGLE AT TIMES. It takes faith and courage and a lot of fight. The trouble with some people is that they stop trying in trying times. They give up mentally and they give up spiritually. But the Bible tells us, “Men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1), and, “Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Galatians 6:9).

It’s amazing what faith can accomplish, especially if you’ve got not only faith but a lot of gumption and get-up-and-go. You’ve got to put some gumption into it. You’ve got to put some real “umph” into it! It’s been said that triumph is 10% “try” and 90% “umph!” The will is powerful. “The spirit of a man will sustain him ... but who can bear a broken spirit?” (Proverbs 18:14).

Strong faith and a strong will have many times overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles and handicaps. When you’re weak and incapable and insufficient, then Jesus has a chance to be strong and capable and sufficient in you. He says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Jesus always has the victory for you if you’ll keep going to Him for help. So don’t give up too soon. Don’t quit just before the victory. Anything wonderful can happen in that little margin of time when you don’t give up but keep on believing and keep on praying.

It’s thrilling to look back and see your progress—to look back down that rugged mountain road you’ve just come over and to see that you’re really getting somewhere—but it’s even more exciting to look forward and up to heights you’re soon to attain and views you’re soon to thrill to if you keep climbing and don’t quit! □



FEEDING READING

Personal growth

WE MUST DESIRE TO LEARN AND APPLY OURSELVES.

Proverbs 2:1–5
Proverbs 18:15
Matthew 5:6
1 Corinthians 9:24–27

GOD’S WORD IS OUR SCHOOLMASTER.

Deuteronomy 6:6–7
Joshua 1:8
Job 22:21–22
Psalm 119:9
Psalm 119:98–100
Proverbs 6:22
2 Timothy 2:15
1 Peter 2:2
2 Peter 1:2–4

WE SHOULD PRAY ABOUT THE LESSONS GOD HAS BROUGHT OUR WAY.

Lamentations 3:40
Matthew 7:7–8
James 1:5

WE NEED TO PUT OUR LESSONS INTO PRACTICE.

Matthew 7:24–25
James 1:22–25

GODLY INSTRUCTION IS A SHORTCUT TO LEARNING.

Proverbs 4:13
Proverbs 9:9
Proverbs 19:20

LEARNING TAKES TIME, SO BE PATIENT.

Proverbs 4:18
Philippians 1:6
James 1:2–4

M

ANY PEOPLE CONSIDER A LACK OF SELF-CONFIDENCE A WEAKNESS, but it can actually be a good thing if it makes us depend more on Jesus. We always come out ahead when we depend on the Lord and turn to Him for the answers we need, because He's a lot wiser and "stronger" than we could ever be on our own.

That's the true strength of weakness—knowing that you need Him, that you need to turn to Him for the answers, and then doing that. You're weak in yourself in that you don't automatically feel like you know the answers or understand the situation or rely on your own ideas, but instead pray and ask Jesus. Your first reaction should always be to pray about things.

It's good "weakness" when, even if you know what to do or think you do, you still ask Jesus about it and follow His lead, which may differ from your initial thought or plan. It's good because then you're letting the Lord work through you and perform His will. You're letting Him have control. You're letting Him make the decisions and do things His way, and that's when He is able to turn your weakness into a strength.

You'll never go wrong by continually turning to Him in prayer. The more you ask Him about things, the more He can work through you.

The more you feel incapable in yourself, the more you realize that you don't know what to do and turn to Him for the answers, the better off you'll be.

There's nothing wrong with feeling incapable if it causes you to run to Jesus in prayer. That's not a weakness; that's really your greatest strength, because He'll always be there to lead and guide you. Those are good feelings to have because they keep you desperate and in need of Jesus, and that's exactly the way He wants you to be. He uses those feelings to keep you coming back to Him time after time, so that He can continue to bless you and work through you. He does it for your own good, as well as for the good of others who He knows will be affected by your choices and decisions. Just because you might *feel* incapable and insufficient doesn't mean that you really *are*, as long as you keep turning to Him.

The only problem you might have with feeling incapable and weak in yourself is if, after you've gone to Jesus and prayed and heard from Him, for whatever reason, you don't follow through and implement what He told you to do. Maybe you aren't sure that you got your signals from Him straight, or maybe you don't see how His answer could be true or possible, or maybe you think it's going to be too hard, so you put off doing it. But you need to have the faith that it's really Him speaking to you, that He knows what's good and right, and you simply need to obey and carry through with what He's shown you. You may not get it right every time, especially in the beginning, but the more you

TURN YOUR WEAKNESS

get in the habit of asking Him for His guidance, answers, and solutions, the easier it will become, the clearer you will hear Him speak, and the more often you *will* get it right.

If you lack the faith you need to get started, He can help you with that, too. If you don't see how you can do what He's asked you to do, ask Him to show you how. If you think it's going to be too hard, ask Him to help you take the first step. As you obey and take each little step for Him, He'll take bigger steps for you and help you to make progress. He won't fail to keep His word to you.

Ask Him about whatever specific situation you need help in. That's using your weakness and tapping in to Jesus' power. But after you've received some direction and guidance from Him, if you don't do anything with it, if you don't try to apply it and act upon it in some way, then you forfeit the benefit of being able to tap into His strength and you're left with your weakness. Your natural weaknesses will have become more of a hindrance than a help because you didn't accept the Lord's help after He offered it. We all do that sometimes. Nobody's perfect and He doesn't expect us to be, but most of us can do a lot better in this regard of asking Him about the problems we face and the decisions we make, big and small.

It's a three-step process. We have to remember to *ask*, first of all, and *believe* what He tells us and *grab on* to it, and then we have to follow through and *do* it.

Jesus told the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made

perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9), and He extends that same promise to you. When you feel weak, He will be strong in you. When you feel you can't do something you know He wants done, He will do it through you. When you don't know how He's going to accomplish His will through you, do what you can and He will do the rest. That's letting Jesus make a strength out of your weakness. ■



INTO STRENGTH

By David Brandt Berg

Spiritual Power

POINTS TO PONDER

Power from God makes possible things that are beyond our human capabilities. This power can manifest itself in many ways: a miraculous healing from physical affliction; an easing of stress and emotional pressure; a change in circumstances that couldn't be brought about through human effort; insight that transcends earthly wisdom, knowledge, and experience; the capacity to love sacrificially and unconditionally, as God loves us. From simple solutions to outright miracles, all come from a force outside of us. It is the power of God.

There is tremendous power in God's love. It forgives sins, changes hearts, renews spirits, restores health, gives hope to the despairing and strength to the weary, and brings sunshine where there is darkness.

God is all-powerful, and all things are possible for those who tap into His power through faith and prayer. With faith no bigger than a mustard seed, anyone can cast mountains into the sea (Matthew 21:21), heal the sick, raise the dead, and give new life to the desperate and needy (Matthew 10:8).

Do you think millions of people throughout the ages would have believed in prayer if it didn't work? Discover the power of prayer for yourself. It's no secret.

God knows each person's heart and innermost needs, feelings, and fears, and it's in His power to give each person exactly what he or she needs.

The secret of spiritual power and victory and overcoming and fruitfulness and fire and life and light—the secret to everything good—is found in God's Word!

God has unlimited power, but to tap in to that power you need a conduit, a line. Faith is like a cord that carries God's power from the source to the appliance.

We've all seen superhero movies like *Superman* where people had supernatural powers. Though they lived in the physical world, they had powers that enabled them to defy its limitations and to do things that were impossible for mere humans. That's how it is in the spirit. God's Spirit in you gives you power to break out of the problems and despair of life by bringing you happiness, hope, courage, and new strength that is unquenchable and unstoppable.

Including God in everything adds a whole new dimension to life. It's like stepping into a new world where even things that used to be mundane can become extraordinary. ←

GOD ENGINEERS EVERYTHING

DAVID BRANDT BERG

GOD HAS THE WHOLE WORLD TO THINK ABOUT, yet somehow He manages to keep everything under perfect control and ultimately going the direction He wants it to go. Everything is planned; everything is ordered in “decency and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40), and nothing can happen without His will. Whatever happens is what ought to happen or what God allows to happen for a reason. Everything is in His hands and nothing happens without His will, especially to His children whom He loves and to whom He wants to be good.

God engineers every situation and has a good purpose for everything—even our troubles. “We know that *all* things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28). So the next time you find yourself in a situation that doesn't look so good to you, take another look. It may not be immediately apparent, but sooner or later God will turn your “bad” to good! ←



IT PAYS TO BE AS A LITTLE CHILD. In fact, Jesus said, “Unless you ... become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 18:3) and, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). We’re to be like little children—loving, sweet, simple believers, in childlike faith believing and receiving all that the Lord has for us.

Children are samples of the citizenry of Heaven, like little angels dropped from the sky. They’re so fresh from Heaven that they understand prayer and other spiritual matters better than most adults. They talk to God and He talks to them. It’s that simple. They have no

problem at all getting His ear with their pure, simple, childlike faith. It is given to children to be rich in faith. Faith just comes naturally to them. They have faith to believe anything God says, and with them nothing is impossible.

The problem with many grown-ups is that they know too much. They’ve been educated out of their childlike faith. But there are others of trusting childlike faith who are daily doing things that doubting intellectuals say can’t be done. So be like a little child, and anything wonderful can happen! •

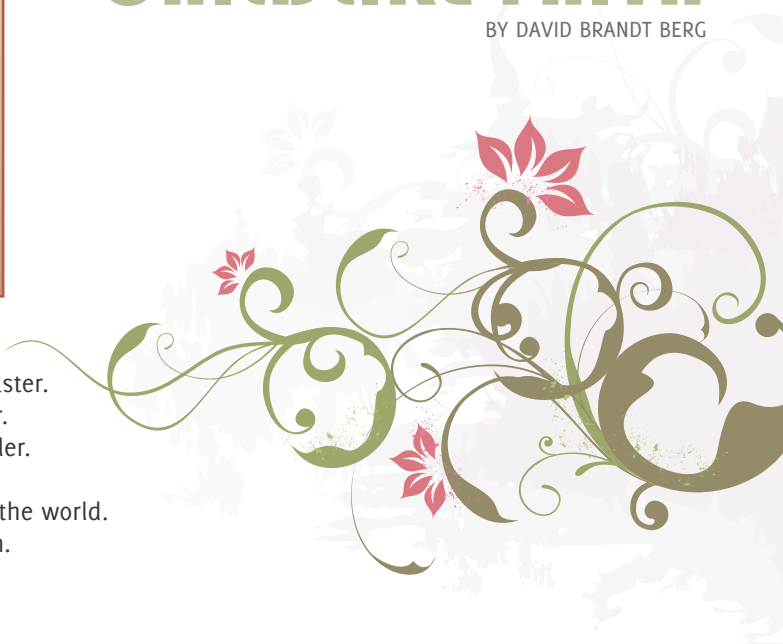
CHILDLIKE FAITH

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

PARADOX

Jesus had no servants, yet they called Him Master.
He had no degree, yet they called Him Teacher.
He had no medicines, yet they called Him Healer.
He had no army, yet kings feared Him.
He won no military battles, yet He conquered the world.
He committed no crime, yet they crucified Him.
He was buried in a tomb, yet He lives today.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN



The Will of God

The will of God will never take you
Where the grace of God cannot keep you,
Where the arms of God cannot support you,
Where the riches of God cannot supply your needs,
Where the power of God cannot endow you.

The will of God will never take you
Where the Spirit of God cannot work through you,
Where the wisdom of God cannot teach you,
Where the army of God cannot protect you,
Where the hands of God cannot mold you.

The will of God will never take you
Where the love of God cannot enfold you,
Where the mercies of God cannot sustain you,
Where the peace of God cannot calm your fears,
Where the authority of God cannot overrule for you.

The will of God will never take you
Where the comfort of God cannot dry your tears,
Where the Word of God cannot feed you,
Where the miracles of God cannot be done for you,
Where the omnipresence of God cannot find you.

—*Author unknown*

FEEDING READING

Our Best Protection

The Bible is full of amazing stories of how God protected His children who looked to Him when things couldn't have looked worse—stories that can strengthen our faith that God will also protect us. Here are a few that have encouraged millions down through the ages.	<i>Delivered!</i> 2 Samuel 22
<i>The great escape</i> Exodus 14	<i>The invisible army</i> 2 Kings 6
<i>A giant challenge</i> 1 Samuel 17	<i>Four in the fire</i> Daniel 3
	<i>A night in the lions' den</i> Daniel 6
	<i>Assassination plot revealed</i> Matthew 2

MIRACLES COME NATURALLY TO GOD

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

We usually think of things that are beyond our comprehension as supernatural or miraculous, but those things aren't supernatural to God because He operates in the spiritual realm where everything is "natural" to Him. There is nothing that's impossible for God.¹ A lot of things God does are beyond our power and grasp of things and what we consider natural, so when they happen we say they are supernatural. But with God nothing is impossible, so nothing is supernatural to Him.

God can do things that are contrary to what we consider His natural laws. When someone is healed of an incurable disease, for example, we call it a miracle because we're seeing the evidence or manifestation of some of God's laws that link the spiritual and the physical realms—laws that we know little about. To God, on the other hand, it's simple! He knows how to undo whatever damage the disease may have done and thereby creates what to us is a miracle—a supernatural act that is beyond our capabilities.

God is always ready, willing, and able to work miracles on our behalf—miracles of healing, supply, protection, or whatever else we may need when we ask Him to in faith and claim the promises from His Word. We can't work miracles; we can only pray for Him to do them and marvel at His power when He does. ✠

¹Luke 1:37

COMPILED FROM THE WRITINGS OF DAVID BRANDT BERG

falling upward



LIFE IS ONE BIG LEARNING EXPERIENCE, and for those of us who know and love Jesus, He is our teacher. More than anything, He wants to teach us all we need to know about Him and His love, so things will go better and we'll be happier.

He knows that none of us can accomplish any real good if we depend on our own supposed strength and wisdom. In fact, He said, "Without Me you can do nothing."¹ But the Bible also says that we "can do all things through Christ."² That's the key right there. We need to learn to let Jesus do things through us.

1. John 15:5
2. Philippians 4:13
3. See Genesis chapters 37, 39–41.
4. See Exodus chapters 2–3.
5. See 2 Samuel chapters 11–12, 15.

6. See Acts chapter 9.
7. 1 Corinthians 1:25–29
8. 1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4
9. Isaiah 55:8–9
10. Matthew 25:21

Of course, learning to be more dependent on Jesus is not something that we can learn overnight. It takes time and experience, and often that involves some difficulties and seeming defeats. The list is almost endless of people in the Bible whom God had to humble before He could use them.

Look at Joseph. Of Jacob's 12 sons, he was his father's favorite. Joseph's older brothers finally became so jealous of him that they nearly killed him, threw him into a pit, and then sold him into slavery. Joseph had to be made a slave and later be condemned as a criminal before God could exalt him to the second most powerful position in Egypt and use him to save His people from famine.³

And look at Moses. For 40 years Moses was groomed as a prince in the courts of Pharaoh, but God couldn't use him until he had spent another 40 years in the wilderness doing nothing but tending sheep.⁴

And consider King David. When David fell in love with a married woman, Bathsheba, purposely had her husband killed in battle, and then tried to lie and cover up the entire crime, God had to expose him and severely punish him. And later David's own traitorous son, Absalom, drove him from the throne for a time.⁵ Was David's a fall downward? Or did he fall upward? Sometimes God's way up is down—just the opposite of what we think. David was humbled and reminded that it was God who made him great. From that squeezing and twisting of David's life came forth the sweet honey of the Psalms, praises to God for His love, goodness, power, and mercy.

Or consider the apostle Paul. He was an up-and-coming Jewish activist, then named Saul, who had taken it upon himself to put an end to a fast-growing new sect. As he journeyed by horseback to Damascus, where he intended to capture, imprison, and execute as many of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth as he could find, God had to knock him off of his horse and blind him with the brilliant light of His presence. Trembling, helpless, and blind, Saul had to be led by the hand into the city, and was so astonished by what had happened to him that he was unable to eat or drink for three days. A disciple of Jesus then came and prayed for Saul, and Saul regained his sight, was converted, and became the apostle Paul. God had to break him and make him a new man before He was able to use him to help many.⁶

Nearly everyone who has ever been of any real use to God had to first come to the end of themselves. Otherwise, they would have been too proud and self-confident, and would have taken the credit to themselves. God uses weak and foolish things.⁷

When we learn from our mistakes, we become better for them, like these men in the Bible did. We can also learn from their mistakes. "Now all these

things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our benefit, that we might find hope."⁸

God does not see things as we see them, for His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not ours.⁹ He doesn't judge or reward us according to our successes or failures, but according to our motives. In heaven one day, He won't say to those who are true to Him, "Well done, My successful servant," but "Well done, My good and faithful servant."¹⁰

So even if you don't always understand why you're going through tests, trials, hardships, and breakings, remember that God has a purpose and knows what He's doing. God gets some of His greatest victories out of seeming defeats—victories of yieldedness, brokenness, humility, and utter dependence on Him. So don't be discouraged when you make mistakes, but learn from them. Fall upward.

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994)
WAS THE FOUNDER OF TFI. ■

TO FIND YOUR WAY TO GOD'S
LOVING ARMS, START WITH THE
FOLLOWING PRAYER:

*JESUS, I WANT TO KNOW YOU AND
EXPERIENCE YOUR LOVE. I OPEN
MY HEART AND INVITE YOU IN.
AMEN.*

WITNESSING

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

⁴1 John 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?

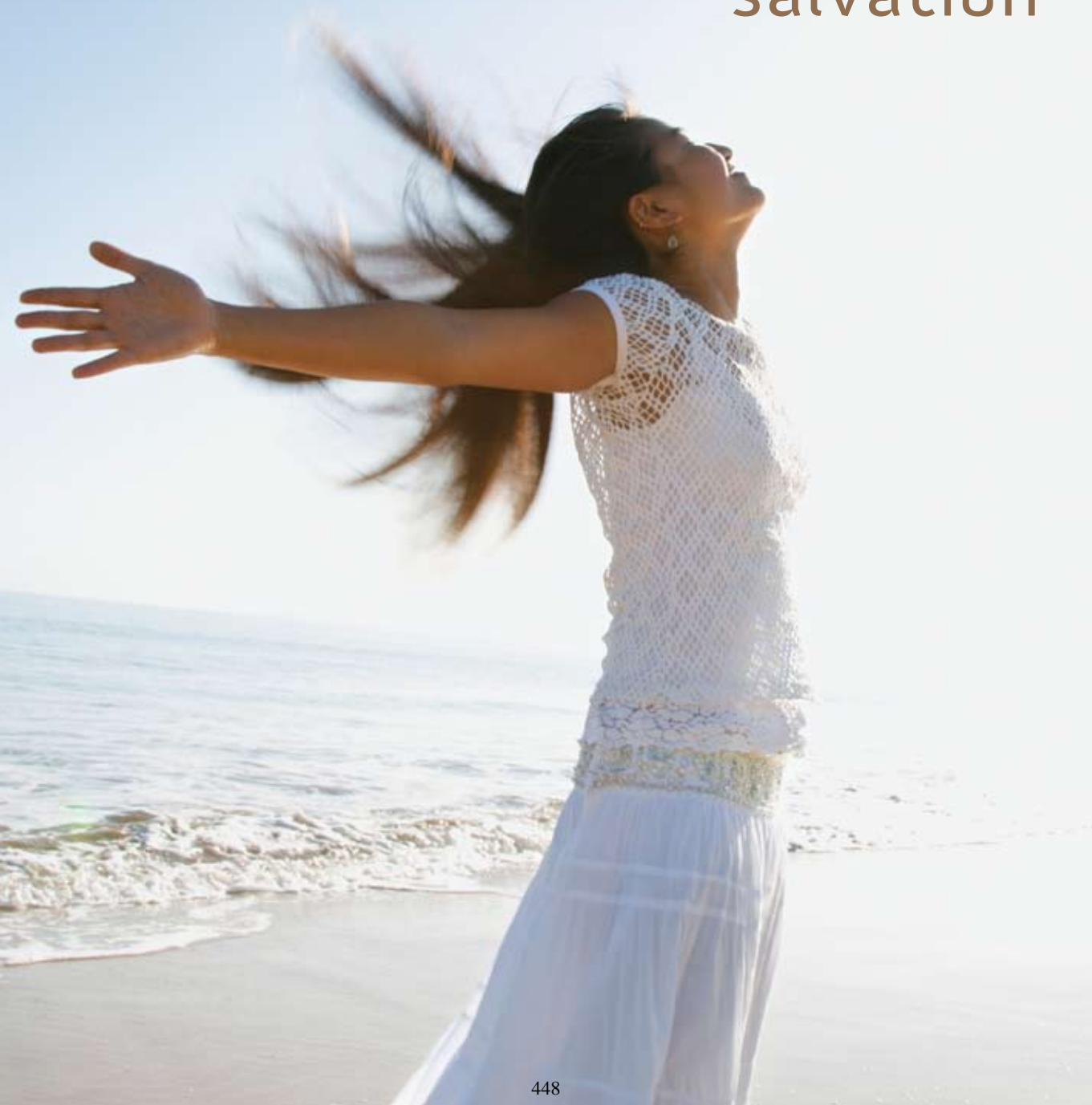
DAVE: You got it! We only have to make the connection that lets God's power into our daily lives. All we have to do is reach out our hand of faith and flip the switch of decision which makes contact and starts the flow of God's power into our lives to light, guide, warm, feed, provide, protect, work 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. ☞



answers to some
of the most frequently
asked questions about
salvation



WHO NEEDS IT?

Most people seem to think God grades on a curve. If you try to be a good person and don't make too many serious mistakes, you'll probably be given an average or above average grade when you die, pass the course of life, and go to Heaven; if you're below average, you fail, and, well ...

That might sound like a fair enough arrangement, especially if you consider yourself a better-than-average person, but according to the Bible, it doesn't work that way.

None of us deserve to go to Heaven. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."¹ "There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin."² "There is none righteous, no, not one."³ Anyone who thinks they're good enough to make it to Heaven on their own is only kidding themselves—and they will miss out on God's greatest gift. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."⁴

You can't be good enough. You can't earn salvation or work your way to Heaven. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."⁵ "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."⁶

So who needs it? Everyone!

WHAT'S IT GOING TO COST ME?

"Surely there's a catch," you're probably thinking. "Surely I have to give up something, work hard, or do *something* to deserve salvation." No, you don't—and that's the beautiful thing about salvation! "It is the gift of God."⁷ When have you ever had to earn or pay for a gift someone gave you? A gift is a gift. If you had to earn or pay for it, it wouldn't be a gift.

Salvation is not a reward for good works. Your good works can't get you into Heaven any more than your bad deeds can damn you to Hell once

you've asked for and received God's forgiveness through Jesus' sacrifice. You're saved purely by faith in Jesus. You just have to accept the fact that you couldn't possibly pay enough to buy your way into Heaven, and then humbly accept God's gift. It's as simple as that.

ARE THERE ANY SINS TOO BAD FOR GOD TO FORGIVE?

God wants to freely forgive everyone for every wrong they have ever committed. He says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon,"⁸ and, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."⁹

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."¹⁰ He wants to forgive everyone, and the way to experience His forgiveness is to believe in Jesus.¹¹ "He who believes in [Jesus] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."¹²

When people hear the truth—God's plan of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus' sacrifice, explained in terms that they can understand—the Holy Spirit speaks directly to their hearts and brings them to the point of decision. If they believe and accept Jesus as their Savior, their sins are forgiven; but if they willfully refuse His forgiveness, God's hands are tied. "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."¹³ This deliberate rejection is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which God cannot forgive.¹⁴ God has given every person the

¹Romans 3:23

²Ecclesiastes 7:20

³Romans 3:10

⁴1 John 1:8

⁵Ephesians 2:8–9

⁶Titus 3:5

⁷Ephesians 2:8

⁸Isaiah 55:7

⁹Isaiah 1:18

¹⁰John 3:17

¹¹Acts 16:31

¹²John 3:18

¹³John 3:19

¹⁴Mark 3:28–29

majesty of free choice, and He will not override their decision to reject His offer.

Of course, just because someone rejects the truth the first time they hear it doesn't mean they'll never be given another opportunity to make the right choice. Many people get more than one chance. Still, the Bible tells us, "Now is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."¹⁵ "For you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."¹⁶

HOW MUCH FAITH DOES IT TAKE?

You'd be surprised how little faith it takes to receive God's gift of salvation! God doesn't expect you to have great faith in something you know so little about and understand even less, and it's impossible to understand or appreciate salvation, really, until you've experienced it. All it takes is enough faith to concede that Jesus could possibly be the way to salvation, and a sincere desire to let Him prove Himself to you. If you only have enough faith to pray, "Jesus, if You really *are* real, and if You really are the way to salvation, *show* me," He will! If you're convinced enough by what you've heard about salvation to give it a try, He's given you all the faith you need to be saved.

WHY JESUS?

"Why must I ask Jesus into my heart?" you may ask. "Why do I have to use that name? Why can't I just pray to God and find salvation that way, through His name?"

Because Jesus is the only One who came to earth and gave His life for you. Jesus said, "I am the door"—into His Father's house, the kingdom of God. "If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved."¹⁷ So if you want to get to Heaven, you have to walk through Jesus, the open Door.

Jesus is also the only door. "There is no other name"—no name but Jesus—"under Heaven by

which we must be saved."¹⁸ "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."¹⁹ And Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."²⁰ That's just the way it is!

Then what about the adherents of all the other religions in the world? Can't they be saved? Yes, they can all get saved, regardless of their religion. Even if they don't have any religion, they can still be saved—but only through Jesus.

CAN I LOSE MY SALVATION?

No! One of the most marvelous things about the gift of salvation is that once you have received Jesus into your heart, He is there to stay. He has come into your life, and He will be with you forever. Jesus has said that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and that He will be with you always, even to the end of the world.²¹ There is nothing you could ever say or do that would nullify these wonderful promises.

Jesus knows you're not perfect and never will be—and He loves you just the same! When He forgave you for your sins, He not only forgave your past sins but your present sins and those you will yet commit as well.

True, you can keep yourself in line for more of God's blessings by trying your best to please Him and do what's right, but you can't keep yourself *saved!* Jesus did that once and forever. Eternal life is not a sometimes thing—saved and lost and saved again, every time you make a mistake and say you're sorry. There's no such thing! Once you're saved, you're saved forever!

Of course, if you willfully do wrong once you're saved and don't repent and make things right, you'll suffer for those sins in some way. The Lord will have to let you reap the bad results so you'll learn a lesson. "For whom the Lord loves He chastens."²² But even then, you won't lose your salvation! ❧

¹⁵2 Corinthians 6:2

¹⁶James 4:14

¹⁷John 10:9

¹⁸Acts 4:12

¹⁹1 Timothy 2:5

²⁰John 14:6

²¹Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20

²²Hebrews 12:6



CHANGE THE WORLD

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG



Change your life, your
home, your family, and
you've changed a whole
world—your world!

BACK IN 1913, a man about 20 years of age took a walking tour in the rural province of Provence, in southern France. Provence was a rather barren and desolate area at the time, as it had been almost totally denuded of trees due to overcutting and too-intensive agriculture. The soil had then been washed away by the rains, as there were no trees to hold it in place. The whole region had become barren and dry.

Little farming was being done now because of its poor condition. The villages were old and run down, and most of the villagers had deserted the countryside. Even the wildlife had fled, as without trees the protective undergrowth had thinned, food was scarce, and few streams remained.

The hiker stopped one night at the humble cottage of a shepherd, who, although gray-haired and in his mid-fifties, was still very stalwart. The young man spent the night there, enjoying the shepherd's hospitality, and ended up staying several days with him.

The visitor observed with some curiosity that the shepherd spent his evening hours sorting nuts by lamplight—acorns, hazelnuts, chestnuts, and others. He very carefully examined them and culled out the bad ones, and when he finished his evening's work, he put the good nuts in a knapsack.

Then, as he led his sheep to graze the next day, he would plant the nuts along the way. While his sheep were pasturing in one area, the shepherd would take his staff, walk several paces, and then thrust the end of the staff into the ground, making a small hole. He would then drop in one of his nuts and use his foot to cover it over with earth. Then he would walk several paces more, push his staff into the dry ground, and drop in another nut. He spent all his daylight hours walking over this region of Provence as he grazed his sheep, each day covering a different area where there were few trees, planting nuts.

Watching this, the young man wondered what in the world this shepherd was trying to do, and he finally asked him.

"I'm planting trees," the shepherd replied.

"But why? It will be years and years before these trees ever get to where they could do you any good! You might not even live long enough to see them grow!"

"Yes," the shepherd replied, "But some day they'll do *somebody* some good, and they'll help to restore this dry land. I may never see it, but perhaps my children will."

The young man marveled at the shepherd's foresight and unselfishness—that he was willing to prepare the land for future generations, even though he might never see the results or reap the benefits himself.

Twenty years later, when in his forties, the hiker once again visited this area and was astounded at what he saw. One great valley was completely covered with a beautiful natural forest of all kinds of trees. They were young trees, of course, but trees nevertheless. Life had sprung forth all over the valley! The grass had grown much greener, shrubbery and wildlife had returned, the soil was moist again, and farmers were again cultivating their crops.

He wondered what had happened to the old shepherd, and to his amazement found that he was still alive, hale and hearty, still living in his little cottage—and still sorting his nuts each evening.

The visitor then learned that a delegation from the French Parliament had come down from Paris recently to see this new forest of trees, which to them looked like a miraculous new natural forest. They learned that it had, over the years, been planted by this one shepherd, who day by day as he was watching his sheep, diligently planted nuts. The delegation was so impressed and grateful to this shepherd for having reforested this entire area single-handedly that they persuaded Parliament to give him a special pension.

The visitor said he was amazed at the change, not only in the beautiful trees, but also in the revived agriculture, the renewed wildlife, and the beauti-



You may not be able to change the whole world, but you can change your part of the world

ful lush grass and shrubbery. The little farms were thriving, and the villages seemed to have come to life again. What a contrast from when he had visited there 20 years before, when the villages had been run down and abandoned!

Now all was thriving, just because of one man's foresight, one man's diligence, one man's patience, one man's sacrifice, one man's faithfulness just to do what one man could do, day by day, day in and day out for a number of years.

So if you're sometimes discouraged with the world the way it is, don't give up! We read that great empires and governments, armies, and wars change the course of history and the face of the earth, so sometimes we're discouraged and think, *Who am I? What can I do? It all seems so hopeless and impossible! It looks like there's nothing that one person can do to change things for the better, so what's the use of trying?*

But as proven by this humble shepherd, over a period of years one man can change the world! You may not be able to change the whole world, but you can change your part of the world. You can start with your own heart, your own mind, your own spirit, your own life, through receiving Jesus into your life and reading His Word and putting its principles into practice in your life. Change your life, your home, your family, and you've changed a whole world—*your* world!

Then you and your little family can start trying to change your neighbors and friends and the people you come in contact with from day to day. You can make a special effort to reach lonely, hungry, needy hearts who are seeking love, seeking truth, seeking they know not what, but seeking happiness—desperately seeking to satisfy their yearning hearts that are empty and barren and desolate for lack of the water of the Word and the warm sunshine of God's love.

You can start individually, personally, just you or your little family, planting seeds, one by one, in heart after heart, day by day, by doing loving deeds for others and telling them about Jesus. You could also give or recommend Christian materials to those you meet, to help them understand God's Word. Patiently plant the seeds of the truth into that empty hole of an empty heart, and trust the great, warm, loving sunshine of His love and the water of His Word to bring forth the miracle of new life.

It may seem only a tiny little bud at first, just a little sprig, just one insignificant little green shoot. What is that to the forest that's needed? Well, it's a beginning. It's the beginning of the miracle of new life, and it will thrive and grow and flourish and become great and strong, a whole new "tree," a whole new life, and maybe a whole new world! So why not try it?

If you're faithful to plant seeds of God's truth, like the old shepherd that the government rewarded for his efforts, God is going to reward you one of these days when you finally come to your reward! He's going to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord!"¹

You can change the world! Start today! Change your own life, change your family, change your home, change your neighbors, change your town, change your country. Change the world! ✠

(EXCERPTED FROM DAVID BRANDT BERG'S ORIGINAL ARTICLE BY THE SAME TITLE. THE FULL ARTICLE AND OTHERS ON A VARIETY OF THEMES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE BOOK *DARE TO BE DIFFERENT*.)

¹Matthew 25:21

EACH OF US WHO HAS ANSWERED Jesus' call to follow His example and bring His light to others is engaged in a war of the worlds.

We are fighting together for our faith, for truth, and for freedom. Freedom from want, freedom from bondage, freedom from pain, free-

By David
Brandt Berg

defiance of His laws of love and faith and peace and harmony. These laws are basic to the faith of every true believer in God and His love.

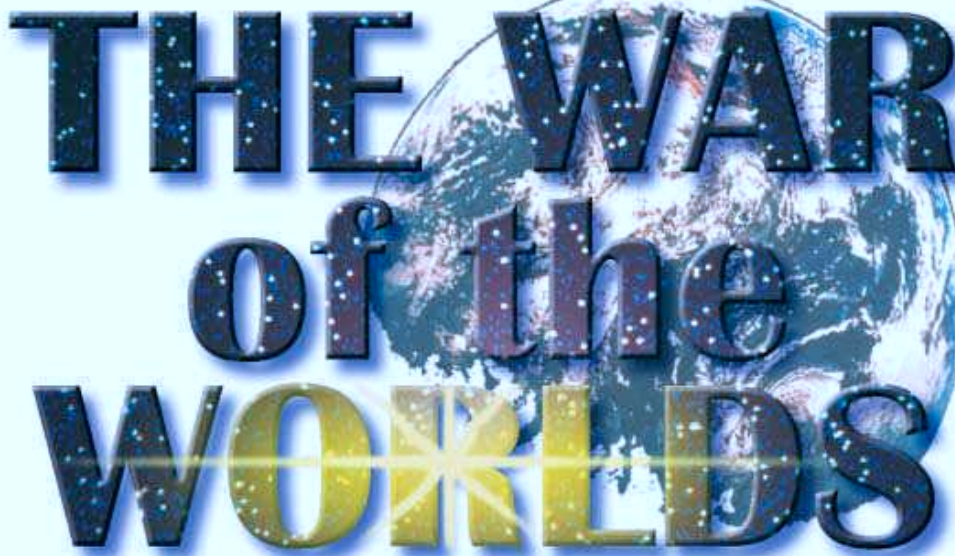
Ours is a war of the *spirit*, in *faith* and *love*, to win the minds and hearts and to save the souls of men.

Ours is a war to free men from the evils of the spirit and mind and heart which cause them to be selfish, unloving and cruel to each other. Man has little knowledge of the love, faith and power of God, or of the loving laws that God designed for our eternal happiness.

Ours is a war to free men's minds

and hearts and spirits from the bondage of evil and the soul-slavery of the Devil, which bring misery upon us. Ours is a war between good and evil, God and the Devil, goodness and wickedness, love and hate, life and death, joy and misery. Ours is a war of the universe between the good spirits of Heaven and the evil spirits of Hell, which are contending for our souls as well as our bodies, not only on this earth but also in the world of the spirit.

We must free people from fear with faith; we must free them from



THE WAR of the WORLDS

dom from evil and freedom from fear—these are some of our common goals. Mankind cannot be happy when suffering from hunger, malnutrition, disease and ill health. Mankind cannot be fulfilled when enslaved by oppression and tyranny, or overworked and exploited. Mankind cannot be satisfied when suffering from the horrors of war and constant strife and the nightmares of perpetual fearful insecurity.

We believe that all of these evils are caused by people's lack of love for God and each other, and their

A call to
action for
all those
who truly
wish to
change the
world!

hatred with love; we must free them from sorrow with joy; we must free them from war with peace; we must free them from poverty with plenty; and we must free them from death with eternal heavenly happiness!

We must inspire people to believe in God and His love and His plan for the glorious future of mankind in the soon-to-come kingdom of God on earth, run by the righteous, in which there shall soon be no more sorrow nor crying nor pain nor death, but all shall be light and health and happiness and peace and plenty for everyone. (See Revelation 21:1-4.)

We must teach people the loving, life-giving Word of God, the Bible, that they might have His life and love and happiness forever. Mighty empires of the sword have come and gone, but His words of love and life endure and continue to give joy and peace and love and life and hope to billions for generations. Alexander, Caesar, Genghis Khan, Napoleon and others like them have come and gone, but the words and ideas of the prophets of God live on forever.

The Word of God knows no boundaries, no nation, no race, no empire. Neither is it bound by time or space, nor limited by people or war or force of arms. It embraces all mankind and unites their minds and hearts and spirits in faith and love of God and each other for the good of all.

We cannot change the world without changing people's minds,

The Word of God knows no boundaries, no nation, no race, no empire. Neither is it bound by time or space, nor limited by people or war or force of arms.

and we cannot change their minds unless we change their hearts, and we cannot change their hearts without the inspiration of God's Spirit to save them, body and soul.

We must work to save the *entire* person, not merely their body and their environment. No one will ever be happy with a heavy heart, a troubled mind, a discouraged spirit and an unsaved soul. We must work to save the whole person, not just part of them. We must work to save the whole world, not just part of it. We must work to save people for *eternity*, not just for this present time. Only the power and life and light and love and Words of God can do this.

We must tell everyone, even though not all will listen or respond nor be saved. We owe the message of God and His life of love to everybody. Feed the hungry, give sight to those who long for light, and love the unloved now.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but [God's] Words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35 NIV).—So *use* them and spread them and His love in word and deed and by every means at your command, to give people light and hope and life and love and peace and plenty and contentment and heavenly happiness forever!

You are no fool to give a life you cannot keep for a love you will never lose! •

(The above was excerpted from David Brandt Berg's article by the same title.)

GOD'S

ONLY LAW IS

LOVE!

**“The Law
was given
by Moses,
but grace
and truth
came by
Jesus
Christ”
(John 1:17 KJV).**

In the beginning, God created us to freely choose to love and obey Him as His grateful children. He preferred that our obedience to Him be out of love, and thus there were very few rules. Everything was to be done voluntarily, because we loved and respected Him and appreciated His love and care. That was God's original plan.

But as people became more and more disobedient and evil, God had to give them more and more stringent laws and regulations, which are found in the Old Testament, primarily the first five books of Moses. These laws were not made for the righteous, because truly good people don't harm or do wrong to their neighbors; their actions are governed by love and consideration. God's laws were made for the wrongdoers.

Because people didn't act out of love, God had to crack down with the law—rules for

the transgressors. But the rules couldn't actually save anyone; they only showed them where they were wrong. “No one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what the law commands. For the more we know of God's laws, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying them; His laws serve only to make us see that we are sinners” (Romans 3:20 TLB). “There is none righteous, no, not one! For all have sinned and fall short” (Romans 3:10,23).

The Old Testament Law was only our teacher, our instructor or “tutor,” as the Bible says, to show us that we're sinners, to make us realize that we need to go to God for mercy and forgiveness, so that we might be reconciled and receive His goodness through faith (Galatians 3:24).

Like any parent, God far prefers that His children will-

ingly and cheerfully obey Him and do what He asks simply because they love Him and want to please Him and do what's right. If a child only obeys because he's forced to obey or because of fear of punishment, that's no proof of the child's love for his parent.

When the religious leaders asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment in the Law, He replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

He then shocked them by saying, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:40). ("Law" refers to the five books of Moses, and "Prophets" to the other books written by the prophets of the Old Testament.) There were many hundreds of complicated, ritualistic, restrictive religious laws, but Jesus told them that they now only needed two: Love God, and love others. That's it! He said that was all the law they needed—love! And that's just as true today as it was then. If we truly love God and others, we're not going to be selfish, act irresponsibly, or do anything else that will hurt anybody.

Therefore Jesus' Law of Love frees us from the old Mosaic Law. God's only law is love, and as long as something is done in real, unselfish, sac-

rificial love—God's love—then it's lawful in God's eyes. The Bible says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love. . . . Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). Against pure love, unselfish sacrificial love for God and our fellow man, there is no law of God.

"For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14). Think about it—all the Law is fulfilled by one new and glorious commandment: Love! "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is [sums up] the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). We are to "owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8). If you act in love, you are fulfilling all the laws of God!

In many ways the Law of Love is actually more binding than the Mosaic Law—the hundreds of laws of the Old Testament, which are often summarized by the Ten Commandments—because it says that not only can you not do bad things to others, but that you've also got to love everybody. Under Jesus' Law of Love, we are to go beyond mere justice and righteousness; we are to have love and mercy and forgiveness.

Love is greater than righteousness, and mercy is greater than justice. We are now to treat others with love, mercy,

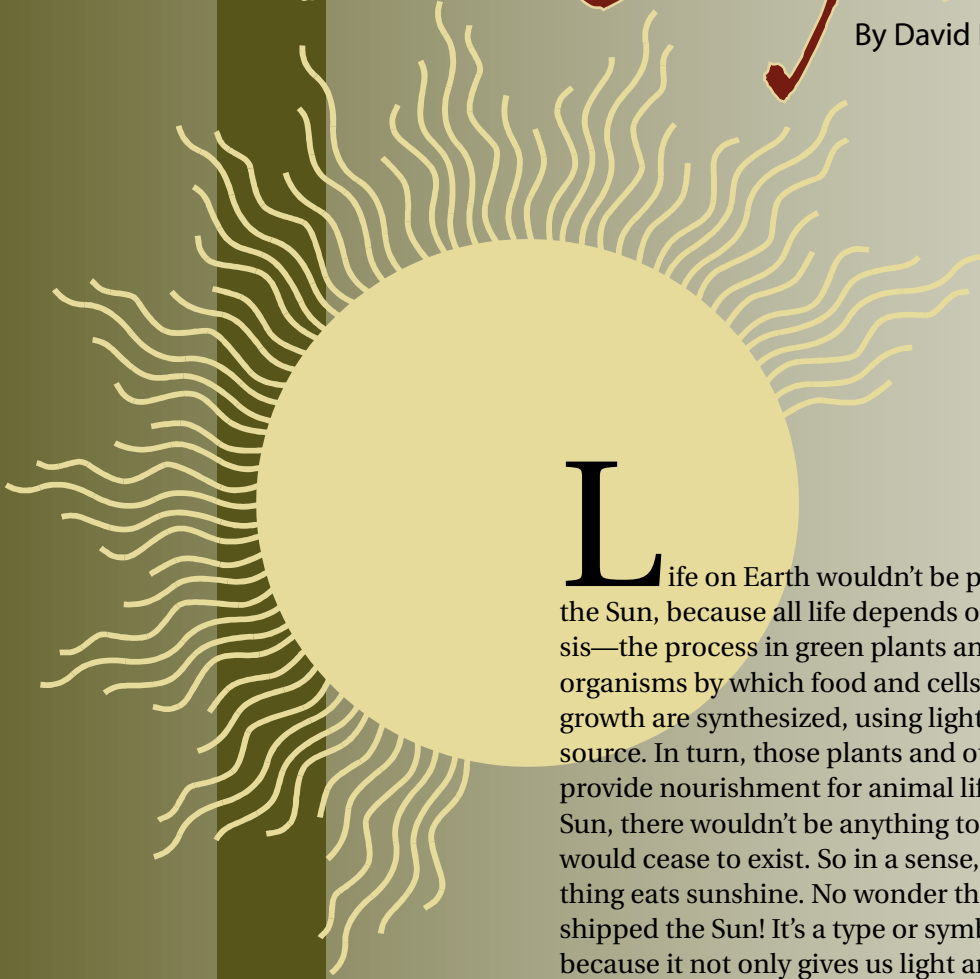
and kindness. In the Mosaic Law there was virtually no forgiving. It was "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20). Moses said that if someone knocked out our tooth, we were allowed to knock out his. But Jesus said that we should treat even those who harm us the way we would want them to treat us. This is God's love.

So the Law of Love is actually much stricter and more difficult to keep—in fact, it's impossible to keep without Jesus! If the old Law was impossible, then Jesus' Law of Love is even more impossible! That's why He says, "Without Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). You can't possibly keep His Law of Love without His power. Unless you have Jesus in your heart and God's love within you, you will never be able to truly love others as much as you love yourself. But once you have received Jesus, then His Spirit in you can help you do the humanly impossible: Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Do you have the Spirit of God's love living in your heart? Do you love the Lord and others as much as you do yourself? Do you "do to others as you would have them do unto you"? If so, you are free from the old Mosaic Law. Now all you must do is keep Jesus' Law of Love. ■

Lovelight

By David Brandt Berg



Life on Earth wouldn't be possible without the Sun, because all life depends on photosynthesis—the process in green plants and certain other organisms by which food and cells needed for growth are synthesized, using light as an energy source. In turn, those plants and other organisms provide nourishment for animal life. Without the Sun, there wouldn't be anything to eat and all life would cease to exist. So in a sense, every living thing eats sunshine. No wonder the ancients worshipped the Sun! It's a type or symbol of God because it not only gives us light and warmth, but it actually manufactures the food that we eat.

Without the warmth of the Sun, Earth would be too cold to support life—like on the dark side of the Moon and other places in space that are shielded from the Sun's rays, where temperatures are hundreds of degrees below zero.

The Sun's gravitational pull also keeps Earth in its orbit. It keeps the whole world on the right track.

The Sun performs these four major functions: It gives light, supplies warmth, produces food, and provides the gravitational pull needed to keep Earth in orbit. Now if the Sun has that much power, think how much spiritual power our spiritual sun, God, has!

What does it all mean?

God's physical creation often illustrates spiritual truths, and I'm sure He created the Sun, the Moon, the stars, Earth and the other planets the way He did in part to help us better understand our relationship with Him.

God is a Spirit, and the Bible also says that He is light (John 4:24; 1 John 1:5). If He is both of those things and if light can be powerful energy, as science has proven, then the Spirit of God can also be powerful energy—spiritual energy.

Without the light of the Sun, we'd be in total darkness, except for starlight. Even the Moon wouldn't shine without the Sun, because the Moon has no light of its own; it only reflects the light of the Sun. Just so, if it weren't for the Lord we would be in almost total spiritual darkness.

Without the warmth of the Sun's rays, we'd also freeze to death. In fact, we'd freeze solid! Without the Lord, we'd all be dead cold spiritually.

Without the Sun's rays, there would be no food, and without the Lord to feed us spiritually, our spirits would die of hunger.

Finally, without the Sun's gravitational pull, instead of staying in its well-planned orbit, Earth would go wandering off through space and probably crash into some other astral body eventually. Without God's guidance, His gravitational pull on us in the spiritual world, we too would certainly get out of the well-planned orbit of His will—our proper spiritual orbit—and we'd go wandering off into the darkness of spiritual space and probably crack up somewhere.

Wandering off in spiritual darkness is like being out of orbit, having no direction, no guidance—lost in space! That's what people who don't have the Lord are like: They're lost in spiritual space, spiritual darkness. Cold, hungry people are wandering around in darkness without God, just as Earth would be without the Sun.

God even calls the wayward angels, the rebellious angels and spiritual powers of the Devil "wandering stars" (Jude 6,13). They've tried to run away from His control. They've left their center and gotten out of orbit. In their rebellion, they're wandering off, lost in space!

That has the most horrible sound to it—"lost in space"—wandering off through the vast darkness of space, so alone! It's just like people without the

Lord—freezing, starving, blind, and lost.

Let it shine!

God is our sun; we are His moon. We merely reflect His light. And when should we reflect His light the most? When does the Moon shine brightest? At night, when the Sun is out of sight. As the world slips deeper and deeper into spiritual darkness, so we must keep on shining and lighting the world with His reflected light.

We are also like the Sun's rays. Each of us who has received Jesus as our Savior is like a sunbeam, a little ray of sunshine coming from the Lord. Each of us has become part of His light and part of His power, spiritually.

The Bible tells us that God is also love (1 John 4:8). Love is the power and light of God. So when you give God's love to people, you're showing them His light.

God's Spirit of love and power and light will lead you to those who especially need your loving help and who will respond in loving appreciation, just as it will also lead them to you.

Have you got God's love-light? You do if you have Him! Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's love, and if you have Jesus, you have God's lovelight too!■

HOW CAN ONE PERSON MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way,
That even when I kneel to pray,
My prayers will be for others.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true,
And know that all I do for You
Has to be done for others.

Let self be crucified and slain
And buried deep, and all in vain
May efforts be to rise again—
Unless to live for others.

And when my work on Earth is done,
And my new work in Heaven begun,
May I forget the crown I've won
While thinking still of others.

Others, Lord, yes, others!—
Let this my motto be.
Help me to live for others,
That I may live like Thee.

Elizabeth A.
Fenley

for **OTHERS**

What does love look like? It has hands to help others. It has feet to go to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and sadness. It has ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.



God cares for people through people.



Even the little things you do can mean a lot: A little bit of love goes such a long way! The light of your smile, the kindness of your face, the influence of your life, can shed light on many and have an amazing effect on some people you think might be the least likely to be impressed.

When people feel your love and you tell them it's God's love, they can't help but think, "Maybe somebody up There does love me!" It can change their whole outlook on life.

So many people are searching for love! People everywhere are looking around for some little ray of hope, some salvation, some bright spot somewhere—a little love, a little mercy, someplace where they can find some relief. If you can show them that love exists, then they can believe that God exists, because "God is love!" (1 John 4:8).

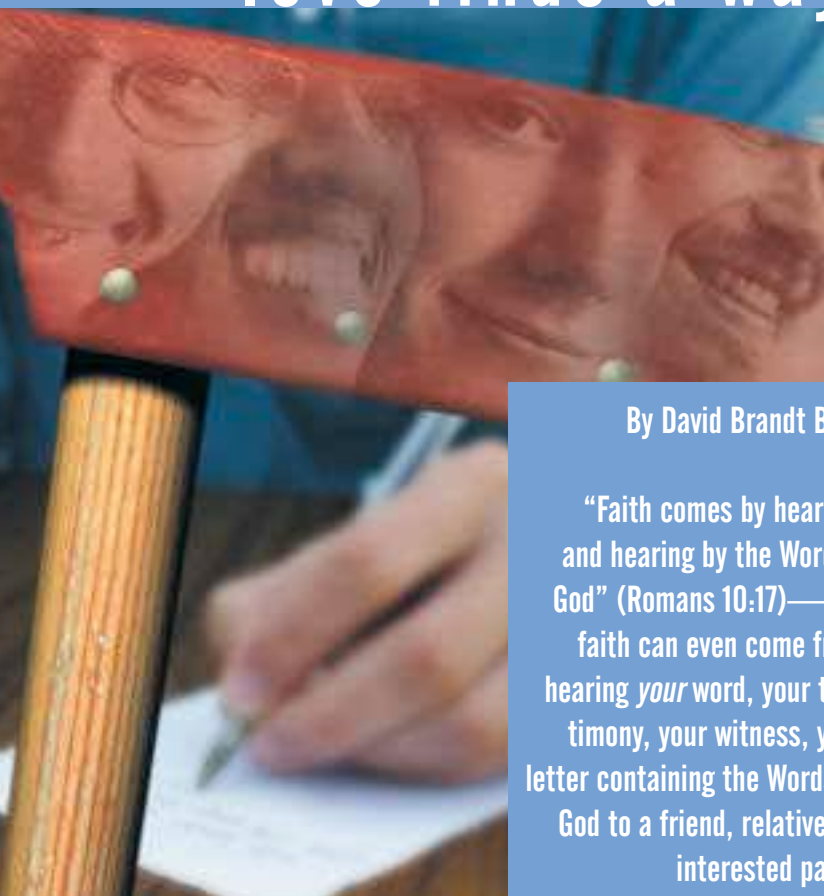
—D.B.B.



Stephen Grellet was a French-born Quaker who died in the U.S. in 1855. Grellet would be unknown to the world today except for a short prayer he wrote, which lives on:

"I shall pass through this world but once. Any good that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now and not delay it. For I shall not pass this way again."

love finds a way



By David Brandt Berg

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17)—and faith can even come from hearing *your* word, your testimony, your witness, your letter containing the Words of God to a friend, relative, or interested party.

I’m reminded of a true story I heard when I was young, about a crippled boy named Tommy, who lived in poverty with his aunt in a small third-story apartment of a rundown tenement on a busy city street. He was so severely handicapped that all he could do was lie helplessly in bed.

One day Tommy asked a newsboy friend of his to bring him the book about “the Man who went about everywhere doing good.” The little lad searched and searched for

this unnamed book, until one book dealer finally realized that Tommy must have been talking about the Bible, and the story of Jesus. The newsboy scraped together what little money he had, and the kindly bookseller gave him a copy of the New Testament, which he took back to Tom.

The two boys began to read that Bible together, and after a time Tommy understood the message of salvation it contained. He received Jesus as his Savior, and decided that he, too, wanted

to do good, like the wonderful Man in the book. But Tommy was crippled, and could not even leave his little one-room apartment. So he prayed and asked Jesus to help him, and the Lord gave him an idea.

Tommy began to copy helpful verses from the Bible onto little pieces of paper, which he would then drop from his window to flutter to the busy street below. Passers-by would see them drifting down, and out of curiosity pick them up and read them, and there find the words of the Man who went around everywhere doing good—Jesus Christ. Many were helped, encouraged, and comforted, and some were even saved through the simple ministry of this young boy and his New Testament.

One day a wealthy businessman found Jesus through reading the verse in one of Tommy’s little notes. He later returned to the spot where he had found the scrap of paper that had led him to the Lord, hoping to find some clue as to how it got there. Then he noticed another little bit of paper floating down to the sidewalk. He watched as a poor, tired old woman stooped painfully to pick it up, and noticed her countenance brighten as she read it. There seemed to be new

strength in her step as she journeyed on.

The businessman, now transfixed to the spot, kept his eyes glued upward, determined to find the source. He had to wait a long time, for it took poor Tommy many painful minutes to scrawl even one verse on one of those pieces of paper. Suddenly the businessman's eyes were drawn to a certain window, as he saw a scrawny little arm reaching out to drop another piece of paper, like the one that had brought a whole new life to him. He carefully noted the location of the window, dashed up the stairs of the tenement, and finally found the humble abode of tiny Tom, the sidewalk missionary.

The businessman and Tom soon became good friends, and the businessman brought Tom all the help and medical attention that he could. Then one day he asked Tom if he would like to come and live with him in his palatial mansion outside the city.

Much to his new friend's surprise, Tom answered, "I'll have to ask my Friend about that"—meaning Jesus.

The next day the businessman returned, eagerly seeking Tom's reply. Instead, Tom asked him some rather surprising questions.

Suddenly the businessman's eyes were drawn to a certain window, as he saw a scrawny little arm reaching out to drop another piece of paper...

"Where did you say your home is?"

"Oh," said the businessman, "it's in the country, on a large and beautiful estate. You'll have a room all your own, servants to care for you, delicious meals, a good bed, every comfort and attention, anything your heart desires, and my wife and I will love you dearly and care for you as our own son."

Hesitantly, Tommy queried again, "Are there any people that would pass under my window?"

Surprised and somewhat baffled, the businessman replied, "Why, no, only an occasional servant, and perhaps the gardener. You don't

understand, Tommy, this is a gorgeous country estate, far from the tumult of the city. You'll have quiet there and be able to rest and read and do whatever else you want, away from all this filth and pollution and noise and the busy throngs."

After a long and thoughtful silence, Tom's face looked very sad, for he hated to hurt his newfound friend. Finally he said quietly, but firmly, with tears in his eyes, "I'm sorry, but you see, I could never live anywhere where people don't pass under my window."

Here's the story of someone so simple, so helpless and so isolated, you might have thought he could never have had any ministry at all—but love found a way!

Someone passes under the window of your life every day. Has your love found a way to help them? Has Jesus shown you how you can help them? He will if you want to, no matter what the conditions or your limitations.

God has a window too, and He has promised that if you obey Him and open the window of your life to others, He "will open for you the windows of Heaven, and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). ○



REAL

By David Brandt Berg

LOVE

how to

find it

how to

give it

how to

keep it

Love and happiness are like perfume: You cannot pour them on others without getting a few drops on yourself.

TO BE GENUINE AND LASTING, love must be based on a more enduring foundation than mere physical attraction or fleshly gratification. It must include an unselfish desire to protect and help and make someone else happy. It must also involve admiration for the other person's finer qualities. A man or woman can be in love with their partner's mind, sentiments, spiritual reactions, and companionship—all of which have little or nothing to do with physical beauty. Real love is a spiritual thing; it's not merely physical. It's mostly manifested in spiritual and mental companionship and compatibility, the likes and dislikes and habits that the two have in common.

Even the things the man and woman don't have in common can sometimes be

interesting and amusing. Take my wife's interest in clothing, for example. I enjoy her little fashion shows because I know she enjoys doing that and does it to please me. As for myself, clothes have never been of any particular importance to me as long as I look clean and neat. I'm more interested in people. I often couldn't have told you five minutes later what someone I had just met was wearing, but I might have been able to tell you what they were thinking and what their character was like because I may have looked closely and deeply into their heart.

As a young man seeking a wife, my mother once told me not to put the physical features first in my quest, but to seek something more in a woman than that. Most of all seek that indefinable thing called personality. Seek the liveliness of the spirit, the fascination of the mind, the irresistibility of the heart, the magnanimity of the soul—that spiritual part that, in turn, can only be satisfied by the spiritual in you. The things of this earth can satisfy your body, but God has made you so that your spirit can only be satisfied by the things of the spirit.

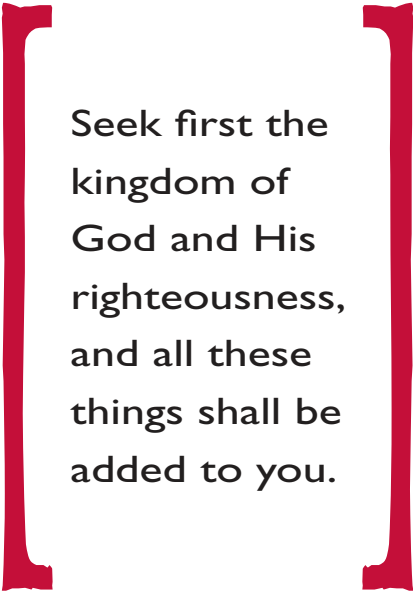
God's Word tells us, "Do not love the world or the things in the world ... the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15–17). "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2, KJV). "For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

God didn't say you wouldn't or shouldn't need or desire or enjoy the things of this life, but He admonishes you not to have an inordinate love for

them to the point that you put these things before the even greater needs of your spirit.

If you love the material world more than the spiritual, then it becomes a form of worship of the creation more than the Creator, and God and His spiritual world refuse to take second place in your affections or life. He says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37–39). "You shall have no other gods before Me. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:3,5). "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [your necessities] shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). But then if you do that, He's happy to give you "all these things," including the desires of your heart, as long as you delight yourself in Him (Psalm 37:4).

He's always given me not only everything that I've needed according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19), but also everything I've wanted as long as it was good for me, including good health, a safe and comfortable place to live, enough to eat, sufficient rest, enjoyable exercise, pleasant sights and sounds, and lots of affection and love. He supplies my wants as well as needs because my greatest desire and lifelong delight has been to please



Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Him and to try to make others happy. In return, He's given me the greatest blessings any man can ask for: friends and family, the love of many children, joy, satisfaction of heart and soul, a feeling of genuine accomplishment, and sublime fulfillment in life. I sometimes feel I could depart at any moment in peace and contentment and complete satisfaction because I have not only seen the glory of the Lord, but the fulfillment of virtually every desire of my heart.

But if you put the desires of the flesh above God or others or the needs of your spirit, then you'll find that nothing ever satisfies, not even the most total indulgence in the flesh. Those who seek only to gratify their flesh or that of their mate will never find complete satisfaction and happiness. The things of this earth can satisfy the body, but only God and His true love can ever fill that aching spiritual void in the heart, because He created that place for Himself alone.

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

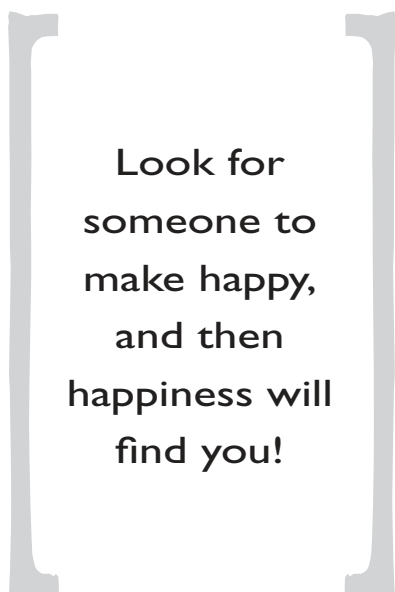
I once knew a woman who was always seeking a new lover but never finding one that satisfied or lasted because she was always seeking to get love, to receive love, to be loved. When I suggested to her that, after years of searching, perhaps she needed to learn to *give* love and to love unselfishly for the benefit of another, this struck her as an entirely new thought. It had never even occurred to her before! She went out and soon found what she had been looking for all the

time—by finding someone who she could make happy by giving him her love.

That's the secret: Look for someone to make happy, and then happiness will find you! "Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38). "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Those are God's laws of the spirit and are just as definite as the laws of physics, such as gravity. God's laws of the spirit never fail. They *always* work, either for you or against you according to whether or not you follow them. And the first law is the law of love—unselfish love for Him and others. If you will obey that law and give the love that is His and others' due, you will also receive love, "for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

This is why so many people love me, because they know that I truly love them and really would prefer their happiness and well-being to my own. Seeing others happy and making others happy is my happiness. And it could be yours, too!

Life, liberty, and the giving of happiness to others—these are things that only God can give and the only things that will ever satisfy your spirit. So if you want to be happy and make someone else truly happy, seek the satisfaction of the spirit that can be found only in God and His love!♥



**Look for
someone to
make happy,
and then
happiness will
find you!**



A LOST AND LONELY WORLD

So many people today are lost, lonely, downtrodden, weak, and weary. There are those who are trampled on—the poor, the persecuted, the hungry; those who are victims of war and crime and exploitation; those who nobody wants and for whom nobody cares; those who have so little in the way of material goods, who lack even the basic necessities.

Then there are others who do have material goods and who appear to “have it together” in the eyes of others, but who are lost and lonely prisoners of their own selfish desires. They are weary and heavy-laden with problems, stress, fears, and phobias. There are those who wear a smile, yet ache inside; those who are engulfed in a sea of emptiness; those who suffer from pain, guilt, bitterness, and condemnation; those who feel remorse over the past or fear the future—so many lost and desperate folks in the world today!

There is a great need for His love to shine through. You, dear Christian, must hold up the light for all to see. If you will shine His light on people, He’ll do all the rest. He’ll cause it to accomplish His purpose in their lives and hearts and minds. Let others see Jesus in you!

—David Brandt Berg

often our fault for not praying.

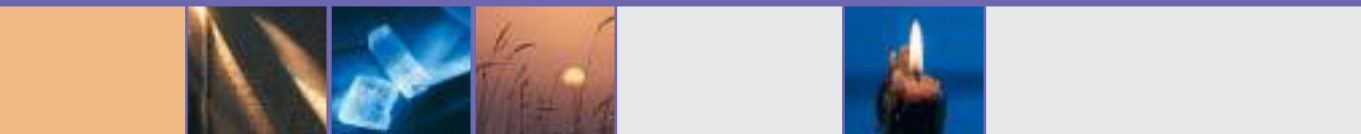
There are times, it’s true, that God’s will *is* set about certain things. At times like that, we have to trust that He knows best. But this is not always the case. Many times, when situations don’t change for the better it’s not because our prayers couldn’t change things, but rather because we lack the faith and conviction and determination to persevere in prayer, to really fight in the spirit for whatever it is we desire or need.

Jesus once taught this principle through the following parable: “Suppose you went to a friend’s house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You would shout up to him, ‘A

friend of mine has just arrived for a visit and I’ve nothing to give him to eat.’ He would call down from his bedroom, ‘Please don’t ask me to get up. The door is locked for the night and we are all in bed. I just can’t help you this time.’ But I’ll tell you this—though he won’t do it as a friend, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you everything you want—just because of your persistence. And so it is with prayer—keep on asking and you will keep on getting; keep on looking and you will keep on finding; knock and the door will be opened. Everyone who asks, receives; all who seek, find; and the door is opened to everyone who knocks” (Luke 11:5–10 TLB).

If you truly need something and you are doing your best to obey God and are convinced that whatever you need or desire is within His will, then *pray* for it! “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14–15). Be persistent! Keep praying for God to help you or give you what you need, and He will! “Seek and you *shall* find.”—And if the Lord doesn’t answer your prayers right away, don’t give up. Just keep knocking on Heaven’s door with your prayers and “the door will be opened”! ○

DON'T EVER THINK BECAUSE THERE'S SO MUCH DARKNESS THAT IT'S NO USE TO HAVE JUST A LITTLE LIGHT, BECAUSE EVEN ONE CANDLE CAN BE SEEN A MILE AWAY WHEN IT'S DARK.



GOD PUT ON A “LIGHT SHOW” THE OTHER DAY, and we were there to see it. He said a lot of things, too, and we tried to listen. I’m sure He must have shown it before, but we were all too busy to watch.

The Lord let three tiny rays of sunlight beam their way into our dark room—not through the shutter, which was obstructing the light, but through pinholes, letting it in. It’s like your life for the Lord: The smaller you are, the clearer others can see Jesus. The less there is of you, the more His light shines through!

The rays were many different colors, all showing a different color of God’s light, but the same light. It is similar to what the Bible says about each Christian being given different gifts, but all from the same Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4). Each of us reflects in our own way the light of God—each one letting our light shine, showing our particular kind of works to cause men to glorify the beauty of God (Matthew 5:16).

We’re like little rays of light in this spiritually dark world. Even a few rays of light can make a difference. Don’t ever think that because there’s so much darkness it’s no use to have just a little light,

because even one candle can be seen a mile away when it’s dark.

Even a speck of dust, as small as it is, can sparkle like a diamond if it will get in the sunshine—and the greater the darkness, the brighter the light! A little diamond of dust or a little ray of sunshine shows up best when the room is very dark. “Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Romans 5:20).

You don’t dare look right at the sun; it’s so bright it could blind you. But you see its reflection in the things that it shines on. Just so, people can only see God as His children reflect Him, like little diamonds of dust. They can’t look at God, because He’s too bright. They have to look at us believers to see God in our reflection of Him.

God’s light can only be seen if you reflect it! People can only see God in you as you reflect Him. So “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven” (Matthew 5:16). If the dust weren’t there, you couldn’t see the light, and if the light weren’t there, you couldn’t see the dust. It takes both.

You may never see one of those

little diamonds of dust again, for some of them just float into the light, sparkle for a moment, and then vanish back into the darkness. Some only have their moment of truth, but if only once in its life that grain of dust scintillates with the light of the Lord, it's worth it! Even if only once in its life, it is life and joy to someone, it's worth it! But if it could

is only in one direction. Likewise there is only one way to the Source, God, and you've got to follow that way or you won't make it! Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). He's the only way. Only in Him is there light—the straight and narrow beam that points to the love of God—and unless you get in that beam of love, you'll never shine. Jesus

DIAMONDS OF DUST

By David Brandt Berg

stay in the Lord's light, it could sparkle its life out to the end, like one candle gives light to the whole house until it is finished. The longer that little grain of dust stays right in the light, the longer it shines and the longer it stays a diamond.

Those diamonds of dust can sparkle so short a while, and then they're gone—like a man's life that is like the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is gone! For what is your life? It's but a vapor that reflects His rays of light for a little while and then it's gone (Psalm 103:15–16). You have no guarantee of tomorrow, so you'd better sparkle now while you have the light, or you may fade into oblivion (James 4:14). Hardly anyone will know you even existed, because so few ever saw God's light reflected in you, shining through you, because you didn't stay in the light. "He who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:21).

The path of the light, the ray we see, is very straight and very narrow. It only shines in one direction, and its source

said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Think how much God can show you from even a little beam of light if you're just simple and childlike enough to appreciate it. Unless you become as a little child, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:3).

To learn from the Lord, you have to stop, look, and listen. If you don't, you'll get run over by all the cares of this life, instead of running over with His truth, His love and His joy. You'll be overcome by the world, instead of overcoming the world through Him. If you're too busy or in too big of a hurry or too full of your own doings, your own things, you'll never learn anything.

Watch the diamonds of dust: They don't try to sparkle and shine. They just let the light shine on them. They don't work at shining or moving. They're not trying to get anywhere. They're not in a hurry. They just float so quietly on God's air.

So stop—look—listen—and let your dust become a diamond that shows the beauty of God! •

Ambassadors

OF LOVE

Through His children, God is trying to show the world what He is like. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). Jesus came to love the world and He calls us to do likewise in every facet of life, in every way—to give God's love to others. The only way that others will ever find His joy and peace and love and happiness and Heaven is through us. No matter where we are from, if we have Jesus, we are now His ambassadors and represent the King of kings, the One who runs the universe.

What was Jesus' last message to His disciples at the Last Supper, just before He was arrested, taken to jail, beaten, and killed? "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). He talked about love, that love was the most important thing.

Wouldn't it have been enough for His disciples to simply *tell* others about the love of Jesus? Couldn't the Lord just as well have said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you preach My message"? Evidently not. It's not good enough to just talk about love. Jesus said His disciples had to *have* love; they had to *live* love. He knew that there would be no denying that example.

And those first Christians turned the world upside down with the love of God. The way they lived convinced others that their faith was real. Even their Roman persecutors marveled. "Look at how

these Christians love one another!" "Who is this Christ?" they asked. "And how does He make you so happy? Even though you have nothing, you've got everything! How can I find this kind of happiness too?" And within two hundred years, one out of five people in the Western world were professing Christians.

Today, nearly two thousand years later, the heart of man is still the same. So many people are searching for love, but seldom, if ever, finding it. People everywhere are looking around for some little ray of hope, some salvation, some bright spot somewhere, a little love, a little mercy, someplace where they can find some relief. We who have found God and His love have what others have been searching for all their lives and need desperately, and if we can show them that love exists, then they can believe that God exists, because God is love.

Even the little things you do can mean a lot. The light of your smile, the kindness of your face, the influence of your life can shed light on many and have an amazing effect on some of the people you think might be the least likely to be impressed. When they feel your love and you tell them it's God's love, they think, *Maybe Somebody up there does love me!* It can change their whole outlook on life and give them a new start.

May we always be known by our love!

Even the
little things
you do can
mean a lot.



{Why suffering?}

Why suffering?

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT TO GO ON?

*Answers to one of life's
most troubling questions*

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

IF GOD IS LOVE AND HE LOVES US, AS THE BIBLE SAYS, WHY IS THERE SO MUCH SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

A: God is not to blame for all the suffering in the world. He's not some kind of monster that enjoys making people suffer. It's not *God* who causes the pain, death, and heartache. The truth is, much of what we suffer is caused by people's selfishness and destructive attitudes and actions.

Take wars, for example, which have

caused untold suffering throughout history. The Bible says, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 4:1 KJV). *People* are to blame for the suffering caused by war, because of their own selfishness, greed, pride, and competitive spirit—the destruction of others for selfish gain.

WHAT ABOUT POVERTY? WHAT ABOUT THE MILLIONS WHO DIE OF STARVATION AND DISEASE IN SOME OF THE IMPOVERISHED NATIONS OF THE WORLD? SURELY THEY HAVEN'T BROUGHT THAT UPON THEMSELVES!

Believe it or not, man is largely responsible for poverty as well. Global warming is increasing, rainforests are disappearing, deserts are expanding, and seas are dying. These combined ills are having a disastrous effect on food supplies, especially in already impoverished regions, and all are largely the result of the haves relentlessly striving to have more at the expense of the have-nots. For example, indiscriminate logging for fast money in some developing countries is bringing about ecological disasters and population displacement.

In addition, civil conflicts, driven by political greed contribute to famine and poverty in many nations. Can God be blamed for this? Again it's a case of people bringing suffering on others through selfishness, lack of love, and lack of foresight and concern for future generations.

BUT THE SHORTAGE OF FOOD IS NOT CAUSED SOLELY BY DESERT EXPANSION, FOREST DEPLETION, AND WAR. THERE ARE OFTEN NATURAL

FORCES BEYOND MAN'S CONTROL THAT CONTRIBUTE TO EXTREME POVERTY AND STARVATION. ISN'T GOD TO BLAME FOR THAT?

It's true that some factors are beyond man's control, but ironically, while millions are undernourished, in other parts of the world there are huge surpluses of food. No one needs to go hungry; God's earth provides more than enough. But unfortunately, while many rich Western countries spend hundreds of millions of dollars on storing or destroying their surpluses, even paying farmers *not* to grow certain crops, the poor of the world starve.

Another example of manmade misery and suffering is the pitiful squalor of the poor in the huge cities of some developing countries. God never intended for people to live in crowded, filthy, dehumanizing slums. In most cases those people would have been better off if they had stayed out in the country where the air is clean and there is more food and fewer people—healthful country living as God intended.

In some countries, the poor crowd into the cities to escape civil war, guerrilla activity, or criminal activity in the countryside—more suffering brought on by others' greed and oppression of their fellow man.

Others, unfortunately, are responsible for their own predicament. They see the material success of the middle class and rich in the cities and think that would make them happy. They are drawn to the cities, but often find their economic state worse than before. Modern cities and the suffering they bring are not God's fault; they're a manmade curse.

Also, most of the rich don't share their wealth or lands as they should,

and many don't pay the poor fair wages for their labor or fair prices for their produce. If they did, there would certainly be enough to go around. The Bible repeatedly advises and even commands the rich to share with the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7–8; Psalm 41:1; Matthew 5:42). God doesn't want the poor to suffer!

Science has also proven to be a two-edged sword. God has helped man learn more about the world in which we live, which has led to many beneficial discoveries, but much of this knowledge has also been misused, culminating in horrific weapons of war, polluting factories and refineries, cancer-promoting substances, etc. These death-dealing and destructive inventions bring on untold pain and suffering, but they are *not* God's fault.

IS MAN, THEN, SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THE PAIN IN THE WORLD TODAY?

No, a lot of it is the work of Satan, also known as the Devil—the powerful spirit being and archenemy of God, whose relentless goal is to make people suffer. In fact, one of the Devil's main objectives is to turn man away from God by pinning the blame on God for his own dirty deeds!

IF GOD IS LOVING AND ALL-POWERFUL, WHY DOESN'T HE STOP THE DEVIL AND THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FROM INFLICTING ALL THIS SUFFERING? IF GOD IS NOT DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE, WHY DOES HE ALLOW IT TO GO ON?

The Bible speaks of a great war in the spirit realm between the forces of good and evil (Ephesians 6:12). God and His angelic forces *do* often stop

Science
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the Devil from wreaking even more havoc and destruction, but in some cases God allows the Devil to perform his destructive work as a judgment on those who have rebelled against God or refused to follow His natural and spiritual laws.

But as far as God stopping people from perpetrating suffering and evil, if He were to do that, He would have to put an end to our free will and majesty of choice, whereby we can choose to do good or evil.

WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN BETTER, THEN, IF HE HAD CREATED US ALL TO BE GOOD?

If God had wanted robots, yes, He could have made everybody do only what is right and good. But He purposely limited His own power by creating us with a free will so we could *choose* to both love Him and do what is right—just as parents want their children to love them of their own free will, not because they're forced to. We were put here to make a choice between good and evil, between doing things God's way or our own.

This is the main reason there is so much suffering, misery, pain, ill health, wars, economic troubles, and other woes in the world today—because instead of choosing to love and obey God, many people have decided to rebel against His loving rules, which He made for our health and happiness. Most people want to do things their own way and so must suffer the consequences of their own wrong choices. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12, NIV).

BUT WHY DOES GOD ALLOW BAD THINGS TO HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE? NO ONE IS PERFECT, OF COURSE, BUT

WHY DOESN'T HE REWARD THOSE WHO GENUINELY TRY TO DO GOOD AND MAKE RIGHT, LOVING CHOICES BY SPARING THEM FROM SUFFERING?

He does, for the most part. We're all acutely aware when things go wrong, but we often don't see or appreciate what *could* have gone wrong but didn't because of God's loving intervention on our behalf.

Nevertheless, good people do sometimes go through difficult times. That's when it's important to remember—and this can be difficult to grasp—there are *benefits* from suffering. Difficult times shape our character and teach us important lessons. Often more is learned from failure than from success. Also, suffering often brings out the best in those who choose not to become embittered or hardened, and engenders love, tenderness, goodness, and concern for others. The Bible says, “We comfort others with the comfort that we ourselves are comforted with [by] God” (2 Corinthians 1:4). Often those who turn to God for comfort and strength in their suffering later want to point others to the One who can also ease their sufferings and help them solve their problems—God and His love, personified in Jesus.

And the best news is that one day soon, God's Word promises, all suffering will come to an end for those who love God. Jesus is going to return to rescue His own from all suffering and whisk them off to Heaven, where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, for all these things will be passed away (Revelation 21:4). •

(THE ABOVE ANSWERS ARE BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF DAVID BRANDT BERG.)

But as far as God stopping people from perpetrating suffering and evil ... He would have to put an end to our free will and majesty of choice.

POWER FOR A PURPOSE

Shortly before His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus promised His disciples that He would send them a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to strengthen, empower, lead, and guide them in their spiritual lives and personal relationships with Him.

When Jesus was with them in body, His disciples loved Him and knew that He loved them. They enjoyed being in His presence and hearing the comforting sound of His voice, but they didn't yet know Him the way they were to know Him later in spirit.

But after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, when the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples found that even though His body was gone from them, His Spirit was with them in greater power than ever before—and not just *with* them, but *in* them!

✱

Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He told His followers to not depart from Jerusalem, but to “wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me. . . . And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me’” (Acts 1:4,8). So they waited in Jerusalem, fasting and praying (Acts 1:14).

“Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with



BY DAVID
BRANDT
BERG

one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1). About 120 people, both

men and women, were numbered with the disciples at that time (Acts 1:15), and they were all together and united in mind, heart, and spirit.

Jesus had them wait in Jerusalem so that when the infilling of the Holy Spirit came, they would be in a position to win many others to Him. That was the main purpose of the Day of Pentecost—not just the supernatural manifestations that took place. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples was a means to an end.

“And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages they had never learned or spoken before], as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:3–4).

Because this took place on an annual holy day, the Feast of the Harvest, Jerusalem was filled with Jews “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). “And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:5–6).

“So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine’ (Acts 2:12–13).

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit .

drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day [9 AM]. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh. ... And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved’” (Acts 2:14–17,21).

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about 3,000 souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41). Thousands of people accepted Jesus and were saved! That’s the most important thing that happened on the Day of Pentecost. Power for witnessing is the main purpose of the Holy Spirit.

“Continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46–47).

Then came another one of God’s great setups. God picked somebody that everybody in town knew—a lame man who daily sat begging on the Temple steps. Along came Peter and John, and God performed another great miracle. The man was instantly healed, and the people were filled with wonder (Acts 3:10).

“So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers,



glorified His Servant Jesus. ... And His [Jesus'] name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts 3: 12–13,16).

“Many of them which heard the Word believed,” and another 5,000 people received Jesus as their Savior (Acts 4:4).

What was it about those first Spirit-filled disciples that convinced so many that Jesus was who He had said He was, the Messiah? “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they

*It shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh.*

had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Peter, John, and the others didn't let their backgrounds or anything else hold them back. They just went ahead and witnessed boldly, and they had tremendous power that got tremendous results. It was obvious that they had been with Jesus. They had the Master's power to carry on the Master's work!

✱

Have you been filled with the Spirit of God's love?

Before the time of Christ, God only anointed certain leaders, kings, and prophets with His Spirit, but now the Holy Spirit is available to *all* who receive Jesus. “It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on *all* flesh” (Joel 2:28).

Ever since the Day of Pentecost, when the first disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Lord has made the same Holy Spirit power available to every Christian. Now everybody can have the Holy Spirit and be led directly by the Lord. Now we can *all* enjoy Him anywhere, everywhere, any time, all the time, in all His power and fullness, and we can all be reached equally, fairly, and simultaneously through the communication of the Holy Spirit.

Everyone who receives Jesus as their Savior is given a certain amount of the Spirit, but receiving a complete infilling—or “baptism”—of the Holy Spirit is usually a subsequent experience to that of salvation. This is why the apostle Paul inquired

of certain disciples he met, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since

you believed?” (Acts 19:2). If you are saved, this power from God is yours for the asking. Like salvation, it is a gift of God. “Your heavenly Father [will] give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13).

Be filled with the Holy Spirit, and you will be closer to Jesus and understand His Word better. The Holy Spirit will also give you the boldness you need to share your faith with others. If you haven't already, you can receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit right now by praying this prayer:

Dear Jesus, please fill me to overflowing with the Holy Spirit so that I can love You more, follow You more closely, and have greater power to tell others about Your love and salvation. Amen. •

FLATLANDERS

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELT! We are about to leave the drab and restrictive domain of the Flatlander and delve into the thrilling realm of the spirit world!

Come now and tune in to the mysterious dimension of eternal realities: the

living world of forever rather than the dying world of now, the everlasting realm of eternity rather than the temporary space of time, the fascinating dimension that is largely unseen by us in mortal flesh, rather than this mundane plane, which is so temporary.

The Bible tells us to set our affection on things above—Heaven—not on things on the earth, for the things which are seen are only for a time, but the things which are not seen are eternal (Colossians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 4:18).

All God's children of faith since the beginning of time have been looking for an unseen world, a "city which has foundations"—eternal foundations—"whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Not having received all that God had promised them but having seen those promises from afar, they remained strangers and pilgrims on the earth because they sought a better, heavenly, country.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, and He has prepared just such a place for them, the awesome Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, which will come down from God, out of the heavens, to rest on planet Earth (Hebrews 11:13–16; Revelation 21:2–3).

This is the hope of all ages: that now unseen eternal world where we shall dwell with Him forever, the heavenly city described in the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, and mentioned in many other places throughout the Scriptures. That's what we're all looking forward to—not pie in the sky, but literal Heaven on Earth.

But God's invisible heavenly kingdom is already in operation and existence, here and now! It not only surrounds us but is within us. As Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

Science tells us that in order to exist, all material objects must have four dimensions: length, breadth, and depth, which comprise space, and one more—time. Einstein brought out clearly in his theories of relativity that time and space are definitely related. Nothing can occupy material space without time; things must have time to exist.

I'm holding in my hand an amazing little postcard, a beautiful underwater scene of God's gorgeous and colorful creation. Now

the strange thing is that as I look at this postcard nearly edge-on, I can really only see about two dimensions, length and breadth. I am in the land of the Flatlander who can only understand his own little world of two dimensions, with no depth whatsoever. He can't see anything else. And as I look at this card edge-on, I can't see anything else either. If I were a Flatlander, I would insist that there was no other world beyond my two dimensions, just because I couldn't see it.

But as I move in a direction unknown to the Flatlander so that I'm looking down on the postcard from above, I find myself in an amazing world indeed, because this is a three-dimensional postcard. Suddenly it seems to have an altogether new dimen-

sion, depth. I seem to be able to see into the picture and observe some objects in front of others. A reed is growing in front of a lovely red coral, fish are swimming in between, and the pebbled bottom fades away into the distance, even beyond my new 3D vision.

So now we have entered a new world, beyond the scope of the poor Flatlander who can only see two directions, if he could exist at all, and we are looking in a new direction which opens a whole new beautiful world to explore. We have become like a god to the Flatlander, a being entirely beyond his comprehension.

We are now above his lowly plane of only two dimensions, and because he can

neither look up nor down, we have passed completely out of his sight. Unless we stoop to his lowly level, he cannot see us at all, much less understand our new dimension. For him to be able to see us, we have to get on the exact same plane as him; the moment we vary the slightest fraction out of his plane we are truly “out of sight”!

Our 3D world is one of almost unlimited space, so much larger and greater than his that he could not possibly begin to understand it or us. Ours is a whole new world, marvelous and magnificent, that the Flatlander does not even know exists, simply because he cannot see it.

Even if it were possible to show it to him, it would be so beyond his two-dimensional understanding that he would probably be like the old country farmer, who, the first time he saw a giraffe, said, “There just ain’t no such thing!”

The fact of the matter is that the dear little Flatlander, in his pride, hates to admit that there’s anything beyond his level. Poor fellow! How limited his vision, how narrow his realm, how restricted his scope of operation! Since he can’t go anywhere else, he just hates to admit that there is anywhere else. And he is particularly furious with anyone who claims to have been lifted up into that other world and caught a glimpse of what is beyond his own little domain. But just because he doesn’t believe in a realm that is invisible to him, that doesn’t make it not so!

And so it is with what the Bible calls the “natural man” who refuses to believe that anything such as a fifth dimension, a spirit

world, could possibly exist, simply because he’s never seen it or been there. “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him” (1 Corinthians 2:14). And so he says, “There just ain’t no such thing,” simply because he never saw it before.

To dismiss the entire spiritual realm like that would be just as absurd as if you were to say, “I don’t believe that New York City or London exist because I’ve never been there.” How ridiculous can you get!

The Bible is full of evidence, stories, and positive declarations of the existence of this fifth dimension, the spirit world. Some of its immortal characters, having passed on into it through death, even came back to tell us about it. Others were lifted up into the realm of the spirit to get a brief glimpse or vision of it, and many received messages from there. And some of us have even been there! I have, so I know it exists.

And you can know too! If you really want to know the truth and are willing to admit that others have something you haven’t got but would like, and if you will humbly confess your limitations and ask God and His children to help you find that whole new world, you too can know the indescribable joys, the beautiful scenes, the delightful sounds, and the ecstatic feelings of that marvelous heavenly realm! It’s such a wonderful, happy place; it’s “out of this world”! You’ll love it! Why not try it? What have you got to lose? ←

**DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994)
WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY
INTERNATIONAL.**