

# activated

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

## COMPARING

—Friend or foe of happiness?

## YOU ARE UNIQUE

More proof of God's love

## DYING SLOW, DYING YOUNG

Confessions of an anorexic



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## PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Twenty years ago I came across a gem of wisdom that was soon to save my sanity. The thing that amazes me now is how easily I could have missed it. I was feeling happy and fulfilled at the time, satisfied with my life and where it seemed to be taking me. I could have brushed those words aside as not applying to me, but I was soon glad I hadn't. Things took an unexpected downward turn, and those words became a reference point that helped get me through the next few difficult months.

"If we would all be satisfied to fulfill our place in life and not want any more or any less, God could make us very happy. But we sometimes make ourselves unhappy by being dissatisfied, because we haven't learned, as the apostle Paul did, to be content in whatever state we're in" (Philippians 4:11).

That doesn't mean we should be content to continue on in our bad habits or stop striving to be better people. We also shouldn't take a fatalist attitude when our circumstances aren't what they could or should be.

But getting back to my experience of twenty years ago, that little bit of advice helped me realize that while my circumstances had suddenly changed, that didn't change the things that counted most in life. It didn't change who I was or my main goals, nor did it change God's love for me. Therefore it shouldn't rob me of the contentment I'd had before things fell apart. The happy ending? By focusing on what I still had and not what I had lost, I made it through that difficult time and came out happier in the end.

If circumstances sometimes get you down, I hope this issue of *Activated* will help you do the same.

Keith Phillips

For the *Activated* family

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# THE CRACKED POT

LONG AGO, A WATER BEARER IN INDIA HAD TWO LARGE POTS. Each hung on one end of a pole, which he carried across his shoulders. One of the pots had a crack in it. The other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, but the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his master's house after each trip to the stream. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. Perceiving itself to be a bitter failure, the cracked pot spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream.

"I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer.  
"What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the beautiful flowers beside the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had again leaked half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

But the bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on *your* side of the path? That's because I

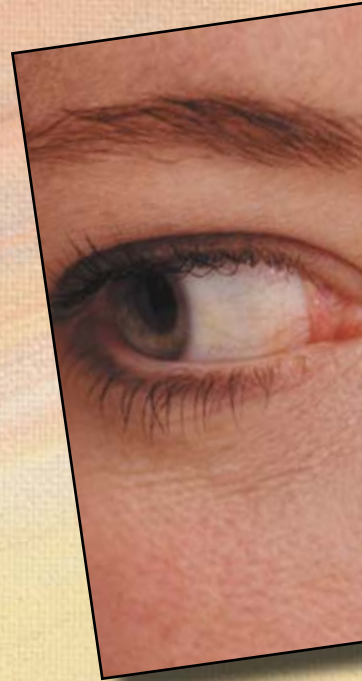
have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them.

"For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our own unique "flaws." We're all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, Jesus will use our flaws to grace His Father's table. As God calls you to the tasks He has appointed for you, don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and allow Him to take advantage of them, and you, too, can be the cause of beauty along His pathway.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN





**COMPARING OURSELVES WITH OTHERS!**  
We all do it in one form or another. We want to be better, stronger, more beautiful, more gifted. It's part of human nature to compare and be competitive, and for some it becomes a deeply ingrained habit.

Comparing isn't always a bad thing. Sometimes it's necessary to observe and analyze situations or other people in order to learn or gain insight, and it's a positive thing if it helps us count our blessings and get in a positive frame of mind. But when measuring our experiences, problems, or blessings against those of others causes us to be negative, critical, dissatisfied, or self-righteous, it's a very bad thing indeed!

People compare for different reasons and to different degrees. Some people have just one "trouble area" that they struggle with, like something they don't like about themselves. Others are chronic comparers who constantly battle with feeling that others are more talented, better looking, have more privileges, or have something else they want. Whatever the case, Jesus is able to help us overcome this negative mindset

# COMPARING

## Friend or foe of happiness?

BY MARIA FONTAINE



that can steal our joy and fulfillment in life.

It's important to understand that the Lord deals differently with each of us. Sometimes what's good for one person isn't good for another, so we can't compare and wonder why some people seem to have it so easy, while others don't. The Lord is fair and just and above all *loving*. He knows what's best for you, and He has your best interests at heart.

We are each a necessary part of God's magnificent, vast, overall plan. From our perspective, we can't see how we fit in with the overall fabric of life and the balance of the universe, but someday we will see how perfect it all is. Then we'll understand His reasons for making us the way He did, and we'll be thankful.

He made everyone different. There's nobody else in the world just like you or me. We are each His unique creation, He loves us, and He made us the way He did for good reason. He's happy with the way He made us, and we should be happy and thankful, too.

## What you look for is what you get

A lot of it has to do with your point of view and what you're looking for—as is brought out in the poem by Ogden Nash (1902–1971):

As you wander through this life,  
Whatever be your goal,  
Keep your eye upon the donut  
And not upon the hole!

If you look only at the “hole” in your life and not the “donut,” then look at others and see only the “donut” and not the “hole,” of course you're going to be unhappy. It may not be immediately obvious, but everyone else has problems and sorrows too. Nobody has a perfect life. Maybe others have something you want, but maybe *you* have something *they* want. Maybe they have something very special, but maybe they had to go through a lot to get it. People often want what someone else has, but they only see the silver lining—the benefits, the advantages; they don't see the cloud—the sacrifices and hard decisions that made others what they are.

We also need to trust that the Lord gives each of us what we need. It may not always be what we want or come in the way we would like it to, but if we truly have faith in God and His love, we will accept what He sends our way. Whether it seems to be a blessing or a burden at the time, each attribute and each experience is a gift from His hand and it all balances out in the end.

Those who learn to be content with who they are and what they have don't struggle as much inwardly as those who haven't yet accepted God's plan for them. Those who constantly compare, examine, observe, and analyze everything to see how they match up usually come to very unhappy (and often wrong) conclusions and lead very unhappy lives. Their negativity about

themselves and their circumstances not only makes them miserable to begin with, but it also drives others away, which seems to validate their negative feelings and thus perpetuates the cycle.

Comparing can make quite a mess of things, but there is a way out: Realizing that the Lord doesn't compare you with others and loves you no matter what is a giant step toward relieving problems you may have with envy and comparing.

The more you believe and accept that the Lord loves you just the way He made you, and the more you learn to value Him and His love and the things of His Spirit, the less reason you'll find to compare. The relatively trivial things of life—your looks, your body, your skills and abilities—will fade into the background as the things of true importance take on greater meaning for you.

### The “count your blessings” game

The solution is really that simple, but it's often easier said than done, especially if you have a deeply ingrained habit of negatively comparing yourself with others or your situation with theirs. It will probably take prayer and a conscious effort over time to form a new, more positive mindset, but the Lord will help you if you try.

I think one of the best exercises that we can do is to compare ourselves *favorably* with others who are much *worse* off than we are, and to count our blessings.

Whenever we are tempted to complain about our problems or the way we are, it's nearly



always easy to find others who are worse off than we are. Even with our worst problem, we can usually think of countless others who have even *worse* problems. No matter how bad off we are, we're always better off than millions of others. This is the way we should always look at it, and not the other way around.

If we will take the time for this little exercise in positive comparing, I dare say that without exception we will come out feeling better. It won't change the way God made you and it may not take care of our immediate problem, but it will cause us to be happy and thankful for all our blessings. As the old hymn goes:

Count your blessings, name  
them one by one,  
Count your blessings, see what  
God has done!  
Count your blessings, name  
them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what  
the Lord has done.<sup>1</sup>

It will not only surprise us,  
but it will also cheer us up!

I played this game myself the other day regarding my health, and of course I couldn't fail to see that I was very greatly blessed and that my problems were *nothing* compared to many people in the world. Besides all the things the Lord has healed me of, there are innumerable things that He's prevented me from getting in the first place. I realized that I should play this game much more often than I do. I am most richly blessed, and feel so loved and cared for!

I honestly think that whenever we are tempted to complain

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<sup>1</sup>Johnson Oatman, Jr. (1856–1922)

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 the 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



# Wings of Gratitude

BY ELISABETH SICHROVSKY

SOMETIMES WE BECOME SO EMBROILED IN LIFE'S PETTY TROUBLES, so focused on our own personal problems, that we take for granted the great blessings we enjoy. Such was my state that hot August morning. My older sister would return to her job in a few days, school was starting, and I had a great deal of work in helping to care for the house and my seven younger brothers and sisters, plus my volunteer work. I had few friends nearby, fun and free time were scarce, and I was absorbed in self-pity.

*I must have it harder than any other kid*, I thought, as I sat down at the computer for my weekly study of international news. Accounts of horror, poverty, and oppression soon appeared before my eyes. I was always affected by stories like these, and prayed hard for the innocents who were suffering. But today I was struck in an entirely different way.

I read: *I was fleeing with my children when a fire started. We tried to run, but the next moment there was a horrible boom and bodies and clothes flew everywhere. I screamed for my children, but it was too late. My four little flowers were gone—gone with the smoke. ...*

The next article began: *Life is a painful struggle for survival. My little sister was killed riding her bike near our home. Death hangs over us constantly. Each day might be the last. My mother can only cry all day. ...*

I couldn't read any more. Suddenly my life—with all its hassles and troubles—seemed wonderful. My family was a treasure, my work a privilege. I was healthy and strong. I awoke each morning with clothes to wear, food on the table, and a roof over my head. I had the support of loving parents and the joy and faith that come from a strong Christian upbringing. In an instant, those other things that I had considered so important dwindled before me. I was blessed with great gifts: love and peace. It opened my eyes, and I knew that was enough.

My life has been much easier since that day. Oh, the circumstances aren't any different. But *I* am different. I have found I can rise above any trial on the wings of gratitude.

(ELISABETH SICHROVSKY IS A 15-YEAR-OLD FAMILY VOLUNTEER IN TAIWAN.)



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.

He loves you  
the way He  
made you,  
and you're  
beautiful in  
His eyes.

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.)*

#### **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.

# PARENTING *From the heart*

## WHEN WORK IS PLAY

BY CATHERINE NEVE

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, YOUNG CHILDREN LIKE TO HELP OUT. It's true! Children actually enjoy and take pride in being helpful until they are "taught" otherwise. It's only when they hear their parents or older siblings grumbling about "having to do" this or that around the house that helping out becomes a chore.



### **What goes around comes around.**

Catherine Neve gets some love from granddaughters Kimberly and Lauren.

*Children actually enjoy and take pride in being helpful.*

If approached positively, helping out can seem more like play. It can also go a long way in building self-esteem and instilling other qualities that will greatly benefit the children in school and throughout life, such as self-discipline, initiative, diligence, perseverance, self-reliance, and being responsible.

There is at least one educational system that uses this "work as play" principle in a big way. Departing from traditional teaching methods in favor of capitalizing on the child's natural interests, Maria Montessori (1870–1952) gentled some of the most undisciplined preschool children from the ghettos of Naples, Italy, into highly motivated, creative, and accomplished students. One facet of Montessori schooling called "practical life" involves teaching children the basic skills they will need in everyday life, such as dressing, hygiene, and food preparation. Two-year-olds, with their "I can do it myself" attitude, are at the perfect age for practical life training, but there are plenty of practical life challenges for every age and stage of development, right up to learning to drive and maintaining a home.

I made a point of creating situations where my children could succeed and receive appreciation and praise. As a busy first-time mother, I usually found it quicker and easier to do the little jobs myself than to teach my little one to help. But I soon realized that I was being shortsighted. I needed help, and my children needed opportunities to learn and feel "grown up." Later, when helping to care for others' children as well as my own, I found that even rascally children were usually happy to channel their boundless energy into doing little jobs for me if I approached them right.

The kitchen is a great place for helping out. Preschoolers can help with simple meal prep, beginning with washing vegetables, spreading peanut butter onto sandwiches, or mixing cookie dough or pancake batter. The table needs to be set and cleared, and spills wiped up. Young children enjoy using hand brooms and dustpans, and they love getting under tables and into other places we adults have a hard time reaching. You can also let your little one sort and put away the silverware (or nonbreakable plates, bowls and cups) after the dishes are washed and dried. If you keep it fun and reward them with praise and recognition, they will be thrilled when they "graduate" to washing or drying alongside you, and eventually on their own.

And it doesn't need to stop in the kitchen. Even toddlers can learn to help tidy their rooms, put away their things, and fold their pajamas or clean laundry.

Nor does it need to end when your children reach school age. It was a milestone for my children when they were considered old and responsible enough to use the vacuum cleaner.

Some children like to clean bathroom sinks and change the hand towels. Others like to rake leaves or mow grass, or help wash the car. Some older

ones like to sew on buttons or do other simple mending. The list is endless—just look around!

Assigning game names to household jobs is good “marketing strategy.” The first such game I taught my children when they were little was

“Ant Hill.” They pretended they were ants and scurried around, taking every toy, block, or stuffed animal that was left out back to the “ant hill” (where it belonged). Even babies can learn to play this game, sitting in your lap or next to you as the two of you take turns putting blocks or other small toys into a box—then you praise, praise, praise!

Some possible pitfalls and how to avoid them:

- It can be frustrating for both of you if the job is beyond their ability or attention span, so don't expect too much.
- Make it easy for your children to succeed by making sure they understand the job and how to best go about it.
- Make helping out voluntary or give your children a choice between jobs, when possible. If you've succeeded in keeping it fun, your children will be quick to volunteer.
- Be consistent. If you let your children know you depend on their help regularly, they will be less likely to balk when you ask for it.
- It helps, especially when the job may seem daunting or tedious to the child, to talk about something fun as you tackle the job together.

Be coach, teammate, and cheering section.

- Don't wait till the job has gotten too big or your child is too tired to tackle it cheerfully. Teach your children to put away one thing before getting out another and to clean up as they go, whenever possible.
- If your child is old enough to be left alone to do a certain job, don't be surprised if you come back and find he or she has gotten busy with something else; children get distracted easily without supervision. Don't wait till time is up to find out how it's going.
- Be careful how you express disappointment, and always try to counter it with love and reassurance. Stay positive!

There are so many benefits to making work fun for children. Not only will they learn practical skills and develop character, but as you work alongside them they will also learn to work as a team and better appreciate how much you and others do for them.

Finally, if you want your children to get into that habit of helping cheerfully, then get in the habit of thanking and praising them. Thank them on the spot. Reward them with hugs and the occasional special treat. Sing their praises to your spouse, family members, and friends—preferably within your children's earshot. Nothing builds self-esteem like praise and appreciation from those we love most!

(CATHERINE NEVE [1951–2003] SERVED AS A VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY FOR 31 YEARS AND IN 12 COUNTRIES, RAISING TWO CHILDREN OF HER OWN AND TEACHING SCORES MORE ALONG THE WAY. SHE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER IN FEBRUARY 2003, AND PASSED INTO JESUS' ARMS FOUR MONTHS LATER, SURROUNDED BY HER LOVED ONES.)



*I found that even rascally children were usually happy to channel their boundless energy into doing little jobs for me if I approached them right.*

Answers to your questions  
**Do some people really “have it all”?**

**Q:** *Why is it that some people seem to lead charmed lives? They have perfect looks, perfect health, lots of natural abilities and lots of friends—everything—while other people seem to have no end of deficiencies and problems?*

**A:** On the surface things often don't seem fair or equal, but a lot goes on in every person's life that is unseen by others. In the wise words of King Solomon in the Bible, “To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under Heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Not everyone goes through the same rough spots or at the same time, but everyone has their share eventually.

No life is complete without a touch of suffering, sadness, and difficulty. God allows each person to experience some sort of difficulty because He wants each to learn to overcome. He wants us to experience coming to the end of ourselves, and then turning to Him and finding His power. It takes desperation to bring that about, and often that desperation is the result of great difficulty. So, while you may look at someone else and think they have it so easy, you can be assured that they have troubles too, or will yet.

It's also important to remember that God often sees things quite differently than we do. We consider a person blessed if they have a more carefree or obviously successful life with fewer problems, illnesses, and so on. But God's blessings often come disguised as problems. He would rather we have a *full* life than an *easy* life. He wants our lives to be rich in faith, depth of spirit, understanding, self-sacrificial love, inner strength, and tenderheartedness. All of these treasures of spirit come from an intimate relationship with Him, and often these come by way of trials, suffering, or surviving great difficulties.

If you could “have it all” at the cost of God's greater blessings, would you want that?

## FEEDING READING

### BEAUTY AS GOD SEES IT

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**Real beauty is on the inside.**

1 Samuel 16:7b  
1 Peter 3:3–4

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**Physical beauty without the Lord's Spirit is nothing.**

Proverbs 31:30  
Proverbs 11:22

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**Physical beauty is temporal.**

Jeremiah 4:30b  
Psalm 39:11  
1 John 2:15–17

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**The closer we live to the Lord, the more our outward appearance is transformed and made beautiful.**

Exodus 34:29  
Psalm 96:6,9  
Ecclesiastes 8:1b  
Acts 6:15  
2 Corinthians 3:18


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**The Lord helps us reflect His beauty.**

Psalms 42:11  
Psalm 90:17a  
Isaiah 61:10  
Ezekiel 16:14  
Matthew 5:16  
Ephesians 5:27



# How I Dying Slowly, Dying Young—



*How my eating disorder nearly killed me*

IS EXTREME DIETING WORTH IT? Before you answer that, let me tell you what happened to me.

Growing up, I was always the biggest kid in my class. I was the tallest and usually weighed more than any of my classmates, but I was never fat, just big-boned. Even as young as six years old, I was concerned about my weight, always wishing I was small and skinny. I watched two of my older sisters, then in their teens, struggle with weight problems, and I was determined not to let it happen to me.

I loved food, however, and didn't have much willpower. So around my fourteenth birthday I began pushing "maximum density." At my heaviest, I was clearly above the healthy weight range given for my sex, age, and height on medical charts. I needed to lose weight, but I wasn't expecting it to turn into an obsession and a horrible sickness.

I began simple dieting—cutting down on the amount I ate at each meal. I also began exercising several times a week. This helped me lose a few pounds gradually. By my sixteenth birthday I was within the healthy weight range listed on the charts. But I still wasn't satisfied.

My goal for the next year was to lose even more, which I did by dieting a little more strictly. I also started exercising at least five times a week. I made that goal, but I still felt fat. I also thought I would get more attention from the boys and be more popular with the girls if I was thinner, so I was determined to diet until I felt comfortable with myself. It was then that I had the "brilliant idea" of forcing myself to vomit after eating. After all, what didn't stay in couldn't turn to fat. I became bulimic.

This went on for a few months. Then something snapped, and I totally lost control of my eating habits. Even though I was by this time off the bottom of the height/weight chart, I was convinced I needed to be even thinner. I ate hardly anything, and then wondered why I had no energy. I also became so obsessed with exercising to lose more weight that I would wake up in the middle of the night to exercise if I knew I couldn't fit it in the next day.

Then one day my stomach and throat bled. I had read on the Internet about bulimia doing that to people in extreme cases. That scared me, but I couldn't stop.

By this time I was so thin that everyone was telling me to stop dieting, but I honestly thought I was still fat. I also enjoyed the attention—having

## KNOW YOUR ENEMY!

The Devil is not only the enemy of your *soul*, but since the Lord has put you in this earthly body and made it His temple (1 Corinthians 3:16), the Devil is also the enemy of your *body*, and he and his demons are out to damage and destroy it however they can. This is one way in which the Devil has deceived and deluded thousands of people around the world, especially women, into throwing their lives away.

—MARIA FONTAINE ON ANOREXIA AND BULIMIA



everyone tell me I looked thin, which I equated with looking good. Still, if I lost just a *little* more weight I thought I would be comfortable with myself and then everything would be fine.

So I lost, and lost, and lost, and lost some more. My parents were worried, and my boyfriend told me, “Niki, this is enough!” But whenever I looked in the mirror, I still felt fat. My thinking had become so messed up that when my stomach was completely empty, I felt elated—proud of myself, clean, happy. But when I had any food in my stomach, I felt disgusting and dirty.

My eating disorder also affected my personality. I am by nature an outgoing person—the talkative, all-out, “crazy girl!” type. I love to be around friends and have a good time, but during this time I was so obsessed with my

### VICTORY GUARANTEED!

Anorexia is a disease, a sickness, but it is a disease of the *spirit*. The cure is openness to the Lord’s Spirit and acceptance of His counsel, unconditional love and support from concerned loved ones, and desperation on the part of everyone involved. If these factors are all present, the victory is guaranteed!

—M.F.

weight and body that I quit joining in when my friends invited me to do things. I especially declined invitations if they had anything to do with food. I withdrew into myself, so caught up in my obsession with losing weight that I couldn’t see past it. As one friend put it, “Your personality went with your curves!”—And it was true. My eating disorder had me very depressed. I didn’t care if I lived or died, and even contemplated suicide.

Then there was a death in my family. That woke me up to how precious life is. The way I was abusing my body, I knew I could be the next to go. For about two weeks I made an effort to eat, but I was utterly terrified of getting fat. I fell back into extreme dieting and lost even more weight. I looked emaciated. I suffered from chronic fatigue, anemia, and a host of other ailments. My periods stopped.

Finally the Lord got through to me that I was slowly killing myself. When eating disorders get as bad as mine, they are an addiction—a



### THE AUTHOR TODAY

(NIKI RUDOW IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN JAPAN.)

very serious mental and spiritual problem that is almost impossible to break without the Lord's help.

I began asking my parents to pray for me every time I felt fat, and this was my lifesaver! For example, one day I weighed myself and when I saw that I had gained two pounds, I cried for several hours, until my dad came home and prayed with me.

I also put a request for prayer on a "prayer list" that we circulate among family and friends, so we can pray for each other. I asked for prayer against anorexia and bulimia, and that I would gain weight. It was very humbling, but the Lord blessed my confessing my problem and taking a stand against it. I began to gain weight slowly.

As I write this, I'm still not completely over this disorder. When I look in the mirror,

### HEALING FOR BODY AND SOUL

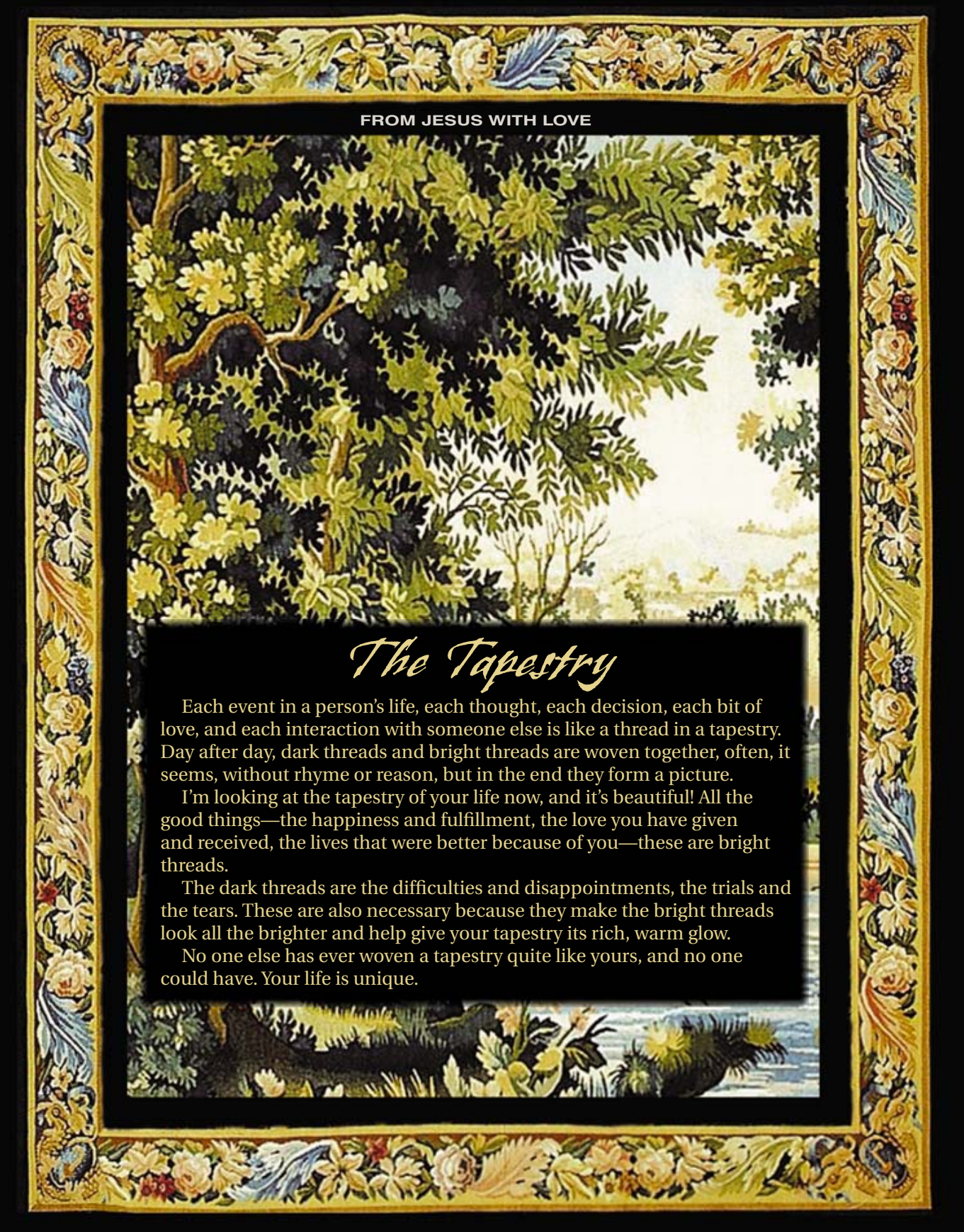
The victory [over anorexia] will come as you face your fears and allow the Lord to have full sway. As you feed your body, you will also be feeding your soul because you will be obeying the Lord.

—M.F.

I still feel fat, even though I'm *not* fat by any reasonable standard. I have to keep praying with all my might and asking the Lord to ward off thoughts that are not from Him. It's such a spiritual thing!

I've had times when I have fallen back into bulimia and lost weight again, but each time I've gotten desperate again, been honest with myself and others, and asked for prayer, and each time the Lord has helped me come a little further. I can now eat sensibly without feeling guilty, and I am now looking normal again—although most people would say I'm still quite thin. I also have some health complications from abusing my body, but the Lord is gradually healing me and I'm so thankful!

If you are toying with anorexia or bulimia, **DON'T DO IT!** It's not a game. It will ruin your life and your health, and it's *such* a fight to get over! Get your parents or a friend to pray for you, and keep telling yourself, "I am me, and I am beautiful because God doesn't make junk!"



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE



## *The Tapestry*

Each event in a person's life, each thought, each decision, each bit of love, and each interaction with someone else is like a thread in a tapestry. Day after day, dark threads and bright threads are woven together, often, it seems, without rhyme or reason, but in the end they form a picture.

I'm looking at the tapestry of your life now, and it's beautiful! All the good things—the happiness and fulfillment, the love you have given and received, the lives that were better because of you—these are bright threads.

The dark threads are the difficulties and disappointments, the trials and the tears. These are also necessary because they make the bright threads look all the brighter and help give your tapestry its rich, warm glow.

No one else has ever woven a tapestry quite like yours, and no one could have. Your life is unique.

