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ACTIVATED

PRAISE POWER

Rise above life's problems

THE THANKSGIVING SPECIAL

A different kind of thanks

SEE THE GOOD

How wrongs can
work for the best





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You may have heard the story about the optimistic old woman who had only two teeth, one upper and one lower. “Yes, it’s pretty hard,” she admitted, “but thank goodness they meet!”

The same woman also had a knack for seeing the best in people and pointing it out to others. “I believe you would say something good even about the Devil,” a friend once told her.

“Well,” the old woman said, “you certainly have to admire his persistence.”

One of our contributors this month is a lot like that old woman, except that she’s not old and has one of the most beautiful, genuine smiles I have ever seen. What the two women have in common is that fantastic quality of positiveness. That makes them about the happiest people around, as well as the happiest people to be around. In “See the Good” (page 11), Maria Fontaine shares her secret. And if you think that it’s too late for you to become such a positive person, you’ll be encouraged to know that she is also the Maria named in another article in this issue, “Praise Power” (page 4). She’s now living proof that optimists are made, not born. What “made” her?—She took the lesson Jesus had for her to heart, prayed for Him to help her change, and practiced praise power until it became second nature. Not only that, but she did it while coping with a rare and supposedly incurable condition that made her eyes so sore that for nearly 20 years she was rarely able to open them. I say “supposedly incurable” because Jesus eventually healed her—no doubt because He was so pleased with her praisefulness, which is a sign of faith and trust.

Want to be one of the happiest people around, as well as one of the happiest people to be around? You can be!

Keith Phillips

FOR THE ACTIVATED FAMILY

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A Hidden Blessing

IT'S THE END OF A LONG DAY OF CARING FOR SICK CHILDREN. No, not my own. They belong to a couple whose Christian volunteer work often calls them away to tend to others' needs at the sacrifice of some of their time together as a family. I am the children's teacher and usually enjoy being a substitute parent, but not this week.

"I'm feeling overtired, run down, and stressed," I grumble. "I'm way behind on the dishes and laundry, and I'm missing a beach trip with my friends to instead take care of a bunch of coughing, sniffing, whiny kids."

A creak on the stairs tells me somebody's awake. It's two-year-old Susana. "What do you need, Susy?"

She pauses for half a second, then runs to me, throws her little arms around my neck, and whispers, "I love you!" Then she turns and runs back to bed.

I hear four-year-old Martin stirring, so I go to check on him. He opens one eye and mumbles sleepily, "You're the bestest

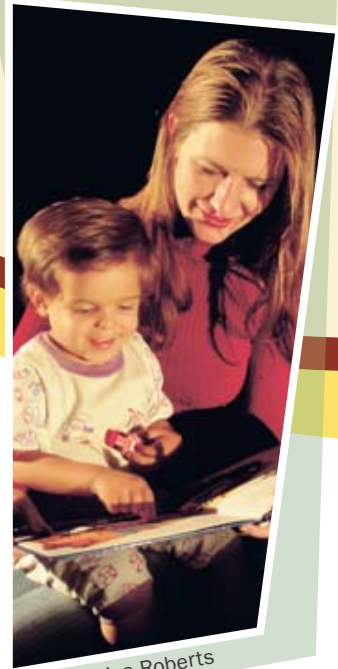
teacher ever!" Something about the way he smiles when he says that...

I think about their pure-hearted love and how they've adopted me. I remember all the laughs, the hugs, the discoveries we've shared.

Suddenly the mountain of dishes is no longer impossible. I'm not so tired anymore. I remember what Jesus said about loving the little people, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40).

Tomorrow we're going to have our "bestest" day yet! I'll make pancakes for breakfast. I'm sure there is a way to build a three-ring circus in the sick room. And when they reach that tired, grumpy hour before dinner, I'll just shoot up a prayer for more of the Lord's unfailing love. And I'll thank God for the blessing of having these kids to care for.

Jessica Roberts is a volunteer with the Family International in Mexico.



Jessica Roberts



THE GRATITUDE ATTITUDE

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others. —CICERO

Gratitude is the memory of the heart. —MASSIEU

Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow. —MELODY BEATTIE

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). ■

Death >> of horseshoes

I VIVIDLY RECALL THE MEN IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD GATHERING EVERY EVENING after work in a vacant lot next to our house for a game of horseshoes. The pace of life was more relaxed when I was a child. Work was from nine to five, and then it was time to knock off and play a game of horseshoes.

You may not know the game of horseshoes. A U-shaped metal horseshoe is thrown toward a metal stake placed in a sawdust or dirt square about 12 yards away. The player to land his horseshoes closest to the stake is the winner. When a horseshoe encircles the stake, it is called a “ringer.”

It was a perfect time to chat about the day. Each of the men would relate his latest triumphs or woes, or talk about current events. It all went over my head, of course, but I could see they enjoyed it.

All of that disappeared with the advent of TV in the '50s. As each family bought a TV set, people spent less and less time playing such games as horseshoes. Instead they spent their evenings in front of the new marvel with its flickering black-and-white images.

Did we suddenly become happier once we each owned a TV? I don't think so. You probably have read the research—how Americans now spend an average of 11 years of their lives watching TV. It seems that with

the advent of TV we gained easy entertainment, but lost the art of conversation and having live fun with our loved ones.

We entered the 20th century riding horses; we left it in cars speeding down superhighways and jets soaring through the skies. But has all this speed and technology made us happier? We live in perhaps the most traumatic era that man has ever experienced.

We race from birth to death with hardly time to stop and smell the roses. Do it more, do it better, do it yesterday, get rich quick—or in debt quick. Fast food, fast computers, fast money, fast cars in fast lanes, fast talk in sound bites. “Live fast” seems to be our slogan.

Sometimes we pile so much stress on ourselves in this speedy lifestyle that we find it hard to cope. Sometimes we get under stress and don't even know it. On a recent trip to the dentist, I found that I had developed cracks in some of my teeth. My dentist explained that stress had apparently caused me to bite and grind my teeth in my sleep. I was unaware that I was doing this.

So what is the cure for stress? We can't turn back the clock, nor do we necessarily want to. We live in a different world and must adapt. Major studies have been done on the subject of stress alleviation, as inefficiency, lost production, and absenteeism—all of which have been linked to stress in the workplace—sap the economy of billions each year. Some of the practical solutions these studies have come up with seem easy enough to do:

- ✧ Take up gardening.
- ✧ De-clutter your home or your work environment.
- ✧ Give more love and affection, and allow yourself to receive them in return.
- ✧ Get a massage.
- ✧ Work on having loving relationships.
- ✧ Make healthy changes in your diet and exercise, such as

drinking less alcohol, cutting down on caffeine, or stopping smoking.

- ✧ Take a walk, in nature if possible.
- ✧ Give three sincere compliments at work each day.
- ✧ Have a good laugh.
- ✧ Listen to soft music.
- ✧ Take a mini-vacation.
- ✧ Pet a pet.
- ✧ Get a good rest.

All of these practical suggestions are helpful, but finding that “peace that passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:7) takes more. It takes listening for a moment to that still small voice in our hearts, reassuring us that God still loves us in spite of our shortcomings.

Take a moment today to be refreshed in prayer so that you may find rest for your soul. The problems you face will melt away as you experience the awesome love of God. A prophecy about Jesus given shortly before His birth said that He would “guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79). May you follow the way He shows you.

C. Peter Van Gorder is a full-time volunteer with the Family International in the Mideast.

PASS ON THE PRAISE

“You’re a great wife, and I don’t know what I would do without you.” And as he spoke, he put his arms around her and kissed her, and she forgot all her cares in that moment.

And, forgetting it all, she sang as she washed the dishes, and she sang as she made the beds.

And the song was heard by the woman next door, and she caught the refrain and sang also.

And as the neighbor sang, a delivery boy who came to her door heard it and went away whistling the tune.

And the world heard the whistle.

And it was all because he had told her he loved her.

—*Author unknown*

THANKSGIVING, THE HOLIDAY CELEBRATED IN THE U.S. TOWARDS THE END OF NOVEMBER, IS TRADITIONALLY THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON THERE. WE OFFER YOU THIS STORY OF ONE WHOSE HEART WAS HEAVY AS THE TIME FOR GIVING THANKS BEGAN.

SANDRA FELT AS LOW AS THE HEELS OF HER BIRKENSTOCKS AS SHE PUSHED AGAINST A NOVEMBER GUST AND THE FLO-RIST SHOP DOOR. Her life had been easy, like a spring breeze. Then in the fourth month of her second pregnancy, an automobile accident had stolen her ease. During this Thanksgiving week she would

have delivered a son. She grieved over her loss. As if that weren't enough, her husband's company threatened a transfer. Then her sister, whose holiday visit she coveted, called saying she could not come. What's worse, Sandra's friend infuriated her by suggesting her grief was a God-given path to maturity that would allow her to empathize with others who suffer.

Has she lost a child?—No. She has no idea what I'm feeling. Sandra shuddered. Thanksgiving? Thankful for what?—she wondered. For a careless driver whose truck was hardly scratched when he rear-ended her? For an airbag that saved her life but took that of her child?

"Good afternoon. Can I help you?" The flower shop clerk's approach startled her. "Sorry," said the clerk, whose name was Jenny. "I just didn't want you to think I was ignoring you."

"I need an arrangement."

"For Thanksgiving?"

Sandra nodded.

the thanksgiving special

Author unknown

*Reflect upon your present
blessings, of which every
man has plenty; not on
your past misfortunes, of
which all men have some.*

—Charles Dickens

“Do you want beautiful but ordinary, or would you like to challenge the day with a customer favorite I call the Thanksgiving Special?” Jenny saw Sandra’s curiosity and continued. “I’m convinced that flowers tell stories, that each arrangement suggests a particular feeling. Are you looking for something that conveys gratitude this Thanksgiving?”

“Not exactly!” Sandra blurted. “Sorry, but in the last five months, everything that could have gone wrong has.”

Sandra regretted her outburst but was surprised when Jenny said, “I have the perfect arrangement for you.” The door’s small bell suddenly rang.

“Barbara! Hi,” Jenny said. “I have your order ready. Just a moment.” She politely excused herself from Sandra and walked toward a small workroom. She quickly reappeared carrying a massive arrangement of greenery, bows, and long-stemmed thorny roses. Only, the ends of the rose stems were neatly snipped, no flowers. “Want this in a box?” Jenny asked.

Sandra watched for Barbara’s response. *Was this a joke? Who would want rose stems and no flowers!* She waited for laughter, for someone to notice the absence of flowers atop the thorny stems, but neither woman did.

“Yes, please. It’s exquisite,” said Barbara. “You’d think after three years of getting the Special, I’d not be so moved by its significance, but it’s happening again. My family will love this one. Thanks.”

Sandra stared. *Why so normal a conversation about so strange an arrangement?* she wondered. Sandra pointed and blurted out, “That lady just left with, uh...”

“Yes?”

“Well, she had no flowers!”

“Right, I cut off the flowers.”

“Off?”

“Off. Yep. That’s the special. I call it the Thanksgiving Thorns Bouquet.”

“But, why do people pay for that?” In spite of herself, Sandra chuckled.

“Do you really want to know?”

“I couldn’t leave this shop without knowing. I’d think about nothing else!”

“Barbara came into the shop three years ago feeling very much like you feel today,” Jenny explained. “She thought she had very little to be thankful for. She had lost her father to cancer, the family business was

failing, her son was taking drugs, and she faced major surgery.”

“Ouch!” said Sandra.

“That same year,” Jenny explained, “I had lost my husband. I assumed complete responsibility for the shop and for the first time, spent the holidays alone. I had no children, no husband, no family nearby, and too great a debt to allow any travel.”

“What did you do?”

“I learned to be thankful for thorns.”

Sandra’s eyebrows lifted.

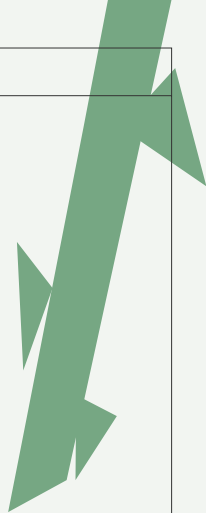
“Thorns?”

“I’m a Christian. I’ve always thanked God for good things in life and I never thought to ask Him why good things happened to me. But when bad stuff hit, did I ever ask! It took time to learn that dark times are important. I had always enjoyed the ‘flowers’ of life but it took thorns to show me the beauty of God’s comfort. You know, the Bible says that God comforts us when we’re afflicted and from His consolation we learn to comfort others.”

Sandra gasped. “A friend read that passage to me and I was furious! I guess the truth is I don’t want comfort. I’ve lost a baby and I’m angry with God.” She started to ask Jenny to go on when the door’s bell diverted their attention.

“Hey, Phil!” shouted Jenny as a balding, rotund man entered the shop. She softly touched Sandra’s arm and moved to welcome him. He pulled her to his side for a warm hug. “I’m here for twelve thorny long-stemmed stems!” Phil laughed, heartily.

“I figured as much,” said Jenny. “I’ve got them ready.” She lifted a



PRAYER FOR THE DAY

I love You, Jesus, for who You are—my Savior, and the Bright and Morning Star. I love You for what You are—the light of the world and the hope of my life. I love You for where You are—with me always, inside my heart.

I love the way You speak—so soothingly, so lovingly, so freely. I love the way You listen—so eagerly, so attentively, hearing and attending to my every prayer. I love the way You care for me—providing my needs and even my wants when You know they're good for me.

I love the way You can look into my heart and see my innermost desires, my secret longings, my hidden wishes, and make them come true. You see the longings of my spirit—some of which never even reach my heart or mind before You fulfill them, because You know better than I do what I need and what is good for me. And when my heart is overwhelmed within me, in the midst of sorrows, Your comforts delight my soul.

tissue-wrapped arrangement from the refrigerated cabinet.

“Beautiful,” said Phil. “My wife will love them.”

Sandra could not resist asking. “These are for your wife?” Phil saw that Sandra’s curiosity matched his when he first heard of a thorn bouquet. “If you don’t mind my asking, why thorns?”

“I don’t mind. In fact, I’m glad you asked,” he said. “Four years ago my wife and I nearly divorced. After forty years, we were in a real mess, but we slogged through, problem by rotten problem. We rescued our marriage—our love, really. Last Thanksgiving I stopped in here for flowers. I must have mentioned surviving a tough process because Jenny told me that for a long time she had kept a vase of rose stems—stems!—as a reminder of what she had learned from thorny times. That was good enough for me. I took home stems. My wife and I decided to label each one for a specific thorny situation and give thanks for what the problem taught us. I’m pretty sure this stem review is becoming a tradition.”

Phil paid Jenny, thanked her again, and as he left, said to Sandra, “I highly recommend the Special!”

“I don’t know if I can be thankful for the thorns in my life,” Sandra said to Jenny.

“Well, my experience says that the thorns make the roses more precious. We treasure God’s providential care more during trouble than at any other time.

Remember, Jesus wore a crown of thorns so that we might know His love. Do not resent thorns.”

Tears rolled down Sandra’s cheeks. For the first time since the accident she loosened her grip on resentment. “I’ll take twelve long-stemmed thorns, please.”

“I was hoping you would,” Jenny said. “I’ll have them ready in a minute. Then, every time you see them, remember to appreciate both good and hard times. We grow through both.”

“Thank you. What do I owe you?”

“Nothing. Nothing but a pledge to work toward healing your heart. The first year’s arrangement is always on me.” Jenny handed a card to Sandra. “I’ll attach a card like this to your arrangement, but maybe you’d like to read it first. It’s a prayer that was written by a man who was blind. Go ahead, read it.”

My God, I have never thanked Thee for my thorn! I have thanked Thee a thousand times for my roses, but never once for my thorn. Teach me the glory of the cross I bear. Teach me the value of my thorns. Show me that I have climbed to Thee by the path of pain. Show me that my tears have made my rainbow.
—George Matheson (1842–1906)

Jenny said, “Happy Thanksgiving, Sandra,” handing her the Special. “I look forward to our knowing each other better.”

Sandra smiled. She turned, opened the door and walked toward hope. ■



SEE THE GOOD

EVERYONE HAS TIMES IN THEIR PAST THAT THEY LOOK UPON AS “DARK NIGHTS” —

tragedies or difficulties that were largely beyond their control and sometimes the direct result of other people’s wrong choices or unloving actions. How people react to those wrongs determines whether they become bitter or better for them.

Those who have a hard time seeing any good in the difficult times they’ve been through usually become resentful and make themselves even more unhappy. Perhaps they were wronged, but if they love Jesus and know that He loves them, He could have and would have used those situations for their good in some way if they had let Him. “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).

The Lord was probably trying to use those circumstances to help them in some way, but they’ve missed the point or haven’t benefited as He intended. It’s very possible that in many of these cases that people look back on as “mistakes,” the circumstances were used or even engineered by the Lord in order to bring out the

best in them, or to draw them closer to Him, or to teach them something valuable, or even just as a test. It’s not that the Lord wanted these things to happen; He wants only the best for His children. But since they *did* happen, He wanted to turn them to *good*. That’s the way the Lord is—He can and will turn anything to good, if we’ll let Him.

Finding the good in a bad situation isn’t just a “glad game” exercise or a good idea; it’s vital to our spiritual health. If we can’t accept that there could be a silver lining to some of the rain clouds of our past, then we’ll probably never fully forgive and forget those things, and that can lead to bitterness, which is severely debilitating to your spirit.

For this reason it’s vital that we not allow ourselves to look back at any situation, no matter how terrible it was, remembering only the bad. It may not be our favorite memory, it may even be painful, but if we’ll reject the Devil’s negative spin and ask the Lord specifically how He would like to use that situation for good, then He can set us free from that bitterness or other ill feelings and bring about beautiful victories.

What greater triumph is there than to bring good out of bad? That’s the ultimate way to conquer our past hurts—not by bitterness and thoughts of revenge, but by allowing the Lord to make us better on account of it. ■

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



> MORE ON THE COMING ECONOMIC CRASH



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IS INEVITABLE.

TODAY'S NEWS HEADLINES OUGHT TO READ "JESUS IS COMING!" BECAUSE THAT'S THE REAL STORY BEHIND WHAT'S HAPPENING. Wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes—"distress of nations"—and dramatic increases in technology and scientific knowledge are all among the signs that Old Testament prophets and Jesus Himself said would herald His return (Matthew 24:3–12; Daniel 12:4; Luke 21:25).

One of the next world-changing events that we can expect is an economic crash far worse than the Great Depression of the 1930s. You can hear the first rumblings in the news all the time.

The total federal U.S. debt is quickly approaching \$8 trillion. In 1981, when the federal debt first topped \$1 trillion, then President Ronald Reagan declared that sum "incomprehensible" and likened it to a stack of \$1,000 bills 67 miles high. Today the stack would be over 500 miles high. To finance its current account deficit with the rest of the world, the U.S. has to import or borrow about \$2.6 billion every working day.

More and more economists are saying that an economic crash is inevitable. Stephen Roach, chief economist at the international investment firm Morgan Stanley, has long warned that America's increasing reliance on foreign lending puts it at risk of a major economic crisis. A sudden drop in the value of the dollar could

trigger, among other things, a stock market crash, a plunge in the real estate market, a deep recession, or all of the above. “The funding of America is an accident waiting to happen,” Roach wrote in a report. The International Monetary Fund warned that the colossal U.S. trade deficit was like “a noose around the neck of the economy,” emphasizing that the once-mighty dollar could collapse at any moment. Alan Greenspan, head of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board, has warned that the deficit in U.S. trade with the rest of the world can’t be sustained indefinitely.

The U.S. can’t go on living on borrowed money forever, saying, “I sit a queen, and shall see no sorrow” (Revelation 18:7). As economist Paul Krugman put it, “Things that can’t go on forever, don’t.” America’s financial preeminence is based on the dollar’s role as reserve currency, a role threatened by the dollar’s long downward slide in value as the result of trade and budget deficits. The dollar’s 30 percent tumble over the past few years has stirred concern about a potential dollar rout that could destabilize the global economy.

This is much more serious than a simple decline in the value of the dollar. Any decision by Asian central banks to move significant parts of their foreign exchange reserves out of the

dollar and into the euro or other currencies in order to protect themselves from dollar depreciation will likely produce a meltdown of the American economy. Already reports indicate that two-thirds of the world’s 65 central banks have “begun to move from dollars to euros.” A falling dollar also causes global investors to get nervous. After all, who wants to be stuck with investments in a currency worth less and less? If major global investors start pulling out of dollars, there could be a run on the dollar. Accordingly, most economists agree that a severe economic downturn in the United States would drag the rest of the world down with it. Economist Josh Bivens says, “If a country as big as the U.S. gets sick, *everybody’s gonna get sick.*”

Another problem is that if the major oil producers convert from the dollar to the euro as the currency of payment, the American economy will sink almost overnight. If oil is traded in euros, then central banks around the world would be compelled to follow and America will be required to pay off its enormous \$8 trillion debt. That, of course, would be doomsday for the American economy, and the economies of other nations would fall like dominos.

When the crash happens, it could be the ideal opportunity for the coming Antichrist world government to take power.

The world will be in such dire financial straits that they will welcome the Antichrist rule and hail him as a hero, since he will cunningly persuade the nations to cooperate with his plan for solving the economic situation (Daniel 11:21,24).

Eventually the world’s present cash-based economic system will be replaced by the “mark of the Beast” economic system, under which no one will be able to buy or sell unless they receive the enigmatic mark of the Beast in their forehead or right hand (Revelation 13:16–17). This will be made mandatory halfway through the Antichrist’s seven-year reign (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; Matthew 24:15,21). Then, after the next three and a half years under the Antichrist’s oppressive rule—a period known as the Great Tribulation—Jesus will come “on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” to rescue His own out of this world (Matthew 24:29–31; Revelation 1:7), and return a short while later with His army of saints to destroy the Antichrist and his evil forces in the great Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:12–16; 19:11–21). Jesus will then set up His kingdom on Earth, and there will be truth, love, joy, peace, and plenty for all in a world without money and without marks (Daniel 7:18; Revelation 20:6; Isaiah 2:4; 11:6–9; 14:7; Habakkuk 2:14). ■

WHY PRAISE

Positiveness lifts your spirit. It's a law of both the natural and spiritual realms that when you dwell on the good, then good surrounds you. When you think positive thoughts, speak positive things, and take positive action, you feel better and things generally work out better. Praising Me accelerates that positive cycle because it not only helps you to think on the good, but it moves you out of the physical realm with all of its limitations into the spiritual realm, where all things are possible.

Praise brings you closer to Me. When you praise Me, it opens and strengthens our connection. That enables Me to speak to you more clearly so I can help put things in perspective. Praise puts you on My wavelength, receiving My vibes. It opens a channel in the spirit through which I can pour out My blessings upon you.

Praising Me reminds you that only I am capable of solving your problems. It also tells Me that you're trusting Me and My power to bring victory. Your praises prove to Me that you're depending on Me, that you're letting go of your own works and depending on My power to work the needed miracle.

Praise activates your faith. It pleases Me and moves Me to answer your prayers, but it also encourages you and causes you to see beyond your request and present circumstances, to focus instead on the fulfillment.

Praise brings so much of My Spirit and so many of the fruits of My Spirit into your life, particularly the gifts of faith and positiveness, and those put you in line for healing, good health, and miracles of all sorts.

Focus on the good, no matter how bad the situation seems to be. Praise Me for all the wonderful things I have done for you in the past. Praise Me for the good that you can imagine Me accomplishing through this. Once you start praising Me more, you'll realize how much there is to praise Me for. Praise will turn your times of trouble into times of triumph.

PRAISE
WHY