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WHO CALLS THE SHOTS?

God's power-sharing plan

MAKING GREAT DECISIONS

It's easier than you think

ENDTIME INSIGHTS

The woman, the prince,
and the dragon



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In his literary classic *Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo tells the story of Jean Valjean, whose already difficult life is brought down by one rash decision. Valjean steals a loaf of bread to feed his sister's starving children and spends the next 19 years on chain gangs and as a galley slave. Unable to find work after his release because he is an ex-convict, Valjean begs at the home of a bishop who feeds him and gives him a bed for the night. But Valjean is overcome by despair at what seems an impossibly bleak future, yields to temptation, steals some of the bishop's silver, and slips away in the night. He doesn't get far, however, before he is arrested with the silver and hauled back to face the bishop. Knowing what will happen to Valjean if he is convicted a second time, the kind bishop takes a chance on Valjean and tells the police, "I gave him the silver." Valjean is free from the law, but not his conscience. After he steals yet again, he is driven to another point of decision, and this time he makes the right one. He repents, and from that moment on he is a changed man. He goes through more upheavals and faces more tough decisions in the years that follow, but he stays true to the new course God has helped him chart.

Les Misérables is a moving portrayal of the redeeming power of God's love, but it also illustrates how our lives are shaped by our decisions. Even seemingly small decisions can have far-reaching rewards or consequences. How can we ensure that we make right decisions? The only way is to involve God in the decision-making process, because He alone knows what's best. He wants to see us make good choices and is always there to back us up when we do, so the smartest decision we can ever make is to get in the habit of asking for His help.

KEITH PHILLIPS

FOR THE ACTIVATED FAMILY

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EDITOR Keith Phillips
DESIGN Giselle LeFavre
ILLUSTRATIONS Doug Calder
PRODUCTION Francisco Lopez

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WHO CALLS THE SHOTS?

Adapted from David Brandt Berg

I WAS TALKING to a pretty young travel agent the other day, and during the course of our conversation we began to talk about God.

“I don’t believe in God,” she said, “but if there *is* a God, why is there so much suffering in the world today?”

“You can’t blame God for all the suffering in the world,” I replied. “It’s not God who causes all these things. A lot of it is the work of the Devil. He just loves to hurt people and see them suffer. In fact, that’s one of his main tactics to try to turn people away from God—he tries to give God the blame for his own dirty deeds.”

The young lady was quiet for a moment as she thought about that, and then she asked, “Well, if there is a God and He’s all-powerful, why doesn’t He *stop* the Devil? Why does God *allow* so much evil in the world? Why didn’t He stop Hitler?”

“If God had put a stop to Hitler,” I began, “He would have to stop *everybody* from ever doing anything bad. We may not be as bad as Hitler, but we’ve *all* been guilty of doing bad things from time to time.”

“Then wouldn’t it have been better if God had made us all to be good?” she asked.

“If God had wanted robots, yes, He could have programmed everybody to do what was right in every situation. But He made us with a will of our own and gave us free choice so we could *choose* between



right and wrong, good and evil. Of course He wants us to always choose the right thing, the loving and just thing, or at least something that won’t be harmful to us or others, but even when He sees that we’re about to make a bad choice, He doesn’t usually intervene. Why? Because He has given us the power of free choice and has bound Himself within certain limitations in order to not interfere.

“Unfortunately, everyone makes bad choices from time to time, and some people consistently make bad choices. *That* is the cause of most of the problems in the world today—

people’s bad choices. There is hope though, at least on a personal level. God is ready, willing, and able to guide our decision-making. You and I may not be able to solve all the world’s problems, but we *can* improve our own lives and make a positive difference in our corner of the world—and it all starts with asking God to help us learn to make wise and loving choices.”

At that point the travel agent was called away to help another customer. “I think *you* made a difference just now,” she said as she excused herself, “because *I* feel different. I think I’m going to give God a try!” •



BRINGING GOD INTO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

THE WISEST AND SOUNDEST approach to decision-making is a three-step process:

First, realize that you don't have all the answers and ask the One who does—God—to help you make the right decision.

Second, determine that you will 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 help you 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.

Third, receive His answer. If you sincerely ask God to show you what He knows is best in any given situation, He will. His answer will probably come through one or more of the following means, which are listed in order of importance and reliability.

1. God's Word. The first place to look for the will of God is in His words recorded in the Bible and other inspired writings. He has put the basic answers to nearly every question or problem we will face in life right there, sometimes clearly spelled out and sometimes in the form of spiritual principles that apply. "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

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's 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 faced? That is also the voice of the Word. God applies His Word to you personally, and you get the answer you are seeking. "The Word of God is living and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12).

3. Direct revelation. God also speaks to us through dreams and

visions, as well as messages we receive directly from Him when He speaks to our hearts, which the Bible calls “prophecy.” “It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

4. Godly counselors.

If you want to learn to play the piano, ask an accomplished pianist to teach you. If you want to learn to cook, ask somebody who knows how to cook, whose meals you’ve enjoyed. If you’re trying to find God’s will in a given situation, ask others who are established in their faith, have a strong personal relationship with Jesus, and are wise in His ways. “Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Proverbs 15:22).

5. Circumstances and conditions. Sometimes obvious circumstances indicate God’s leading. Imagine a long hallway lined with doors. Which room are you going to enter? You walk down the hallway knocking on doors and trying the doorknobs. You can only go through the door that opens. If something is

God’s will, He will usually open a door of opportunity that makes it possible. “I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it” (Revelation 3:8).

6. Strong impressions or desires. These are sometimes referred to as “the witness of the Spirit” or “burdens.” Feelings can be deceiving when it’s your own spirit leading you, but if God wants you to take a certain course of action, He will sometimes give you a strong desire to do that or an inner conviction that it’s the right thing to do. “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

7. Specific pre-determined signs. These are sometimes referred to as “fleeces.” You can sometimes check or double-check your decision by asking God to give you a specific sign, like Gideon did in the Bible’s book of Judges. Asking for such a sign is like making a contract with God. If He fulfills His part of the bargain, you need to fulfill yours. “Gideon said to God, ‘I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.’ And it was so. When



he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, ‘Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.’ And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground” (Judges 6:36–40).

Above all, believe that God loves you and will help you make the right decision—the one He knows will be best for you and others 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 decisions, write to one of the addresses on page 2 for *God Online*, a collection of articles by David Brandt Berg that includes “Seven Ways to Find God’s Will.” Or for more on the gift of prophecy, write for the booklet *Hearing from Heaven*.) •

MAKING GREAT DECISIONS

PERFECT DECISIONS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN because life is messy. A *great* decision is always possible, however. Great decisions don't all have fairytale endings, but they do achieve the best possible outcome under the circumstances.

The most successful decision-makers don't act on impulse, intuition, or even experience alone; they have a system that they work through step by step. Here is one such system:



- **Define the issue.** A problem well stated is a problem half solved. Employ the “who, what, when, why, and how” regimen of the journalist, although not necessarily in that order. Why is the decision necessary? What is the objective? How can a great decision change things for the better? Whom will it affect? When does it need to be made?
- **Take a positive approach.** Make a conscious effort to see the situation as an opportunity rather than a problem.
- **List your options.** The more alternatives you consider, the more likely you will be to not overlook the best solution.
- **Gather information about your options.** You will not only make better decisions if you have investigated thoroughly, but you will also have more peace of mind as you carry out your decision.
- **Be objective.** If you already have an opinion on the matter, the natural tendency will be to look primarily for evidence to confirm that opinion. That works if you happen to be right, but if you're not...

Welcome alternatives and opposing views. Remind yourself that the goal is not to prove yourself right, but to make the right decision.

- **Consider your options.** Write down the pros and cons for each option and see how they stack up against each other. Try to determine both best-case and worst-case scenarios for each option. See if there is some way to combine several promising solutions into one potent solution.
- **Be true to yourself.** Do any of the alternatives compromise your values? If so, scratch them from the list.
- **Make a decision.** When you're convinced that you've found the best alternative, commit to it.

- **Be open to change if circumstances change.** Once you make a decision and begin to act on it, a better option may open up. This is sometimes referred to as the “boat-and-rudder effect.” It's not until a boat is in motion that the rudder can come into play, but when it does, it makes greater maneuverability possible.
- **Ask Jesus.** Last but certainly not least, pray for guidance at each step of the decision-making process. The answers to all your questions and problems are simple for Jesus, so if you're smart, you'll be like the man who said, “I may not know all the answers, but I know the Answer Man!” Jesus has all the answers. He *is* the answer! •



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."

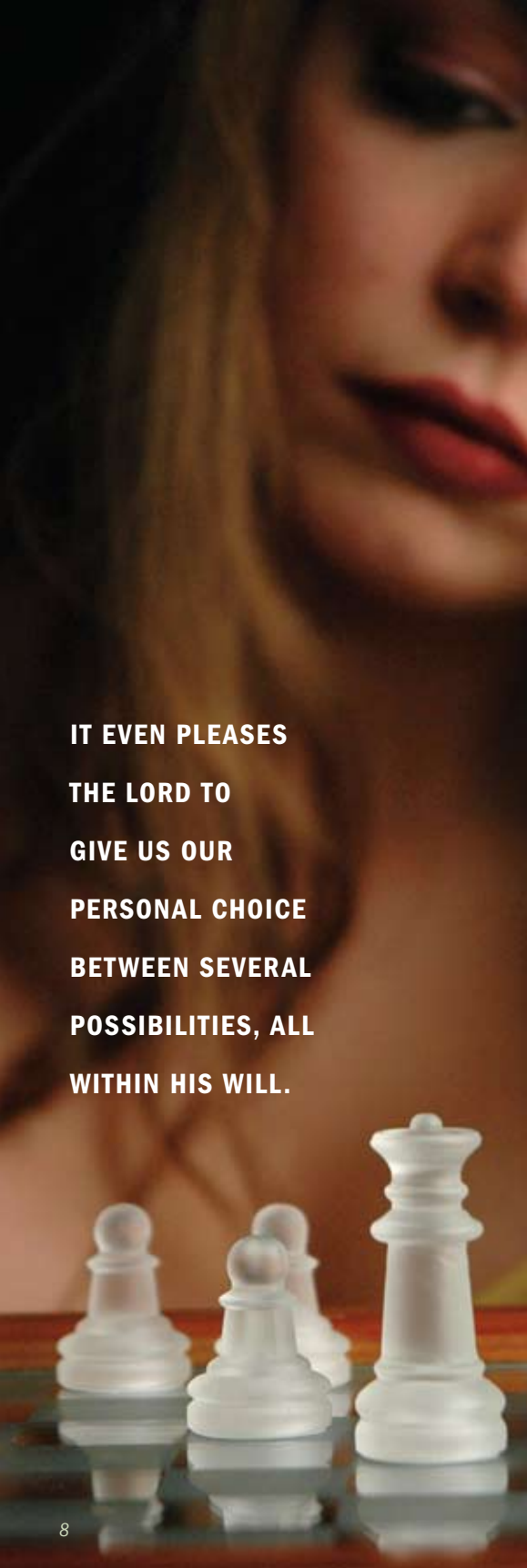
When making a major, life-changing decision such as you are doing, time is often the great tester. I'd certainly advise you to wait until you're sure in your own mind and heart of God's will. As Paul says, "Let each be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5).

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





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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

Finding SOUTH STATION

By Joyce Suttin



FAITH PERMEATED MY LIFE AS A CHILD. I never doubted the existence of a loving God who was concerned about my life, answered prayer, and helped me on a daily basis. I prayed from the time I could form words. I sang songs about Jesus and loved Him. He was a very real presence in my life. When my great uncles died, it wasn't a grievous occasion but a celebration of their passing on to a better world.

But when I was a teenager, I began to question the principles of faith I had

been taught as a child. I saw my parents and their faith in God and the Bible as fallible, and I began a quick slide from believer to doubter to agnostic. What I heard and saw in the world around me no longer made sense alongside the simple childlike faith I had been taught. As I emphatically stated my new belief system, my parents just

smiled and told me that they were willing to listen, but that they couldn't be deterred from what they knew to be right.

My spiritual searching coincided with moving from a small town in upstate New York to Boston, Massachusetts. One day I was to take the train home for the holidays. I had called ahead

and reserved my ticket, and I was confident that I could find my way to South Station by subway. I studied the map, found my route, and began my trip in plenty of time.

After some time in the tunnels of the “T,” as the Boston subway is known to locals, I exited at the South Station stop, climbed a long flight of stairs, and was blinded by bright sunlight as I arrived at street level. I knew the station had to be there, but I looked around and couldn’t see it. I stepped into the shadow of a huge archway, but still I couldn’t find the station. I kept checking my watch and became nervous that I would miss my train. I asked a passerby, but he just looked at me oddly and rushed on.

Then I decided to cross the street. After the next rush of cars had passed, I looked back across the street to where I had been standing. In gigantic letters ten feet above street level were the words “South Station.” There, right where I had exited the subway, was the train station entrance—the same huge archway I had stepped into to let my eyes adjust a few minutes earlier. It was so enormous and encompassing that I

couldn’t recognize it from my previous perspective. Only after I had stepped away and looked up could I see that I had been where I belonged all along.

Shortly after that experience I began to realize that I was different from my nonbeliever friends. For one thing, I enjoyed eating my lunch in a lovely old cemetery on Tremont Street, where gravestones dated from the 1600s. One day a friend joined me there and commented, “Don’t you think it’s a bit strange to come into a cemetery to relax? Doesn’t it make you think about death, and doesn’t that frighten you?”

I thought about that as I finished my sandwich. “Actually, I am not afraid at all,” I answered. “I believe that death is only a passageway from this world to the next, kind of like a rebirth. I believe that when I die I will find myself in a bigger, better world.” What made me different from my friends was that deep down inside, I still had faith—I still believed in God and Jesus.

A few days later I wrote my parents about my South Station experience and related it to my recent trek into agnosticism and back. From my new vantage

point, I had no doubts about what I really believed. I thanked them for having imparted their faith to me, as well as for their patience and understanding. They had known all along that all I needed to do was “cross the road and look up.”

I eventually became the mother of eight, and as my children have grown, I have watched some of them have doubts about their faith and step back. I have tried to follow my parents’ example of understanding by picturing my children standing under one of the arches of South Station, searching for it. I pray for them and know it is there, whether they believe it or not, and I pray that they will look up and realize where they are standing.

Sometimes we all feel lost and wonder where God is. We search around for faith and meaning in life, only to find that it is right in front of us, larger than life. Like South Station, we are standing right in front of it and only need to move to a different vantage point to realize that we are right where we belong. •

Joyce Suttin is a member of the Family International in the U.S.

By Abi F. May

THE TALE OF A

self- made MAN

Joseph Penrose Barnes smiled smugly to himself. He had just acquired another share of the market in a hostile takeover. He lived for moments like this. Dressed immaculately in a tailor-made suit and looking every inch the tycoon he was, he reflected on how far he had come from his humble beginnings.

Barnes settled into his leather chair and surveyed the inner sanctum of his growing empire. Plaques on the wall proclaimed his success as an entrepreneur. Every item in the room was top quality, from his latest hi-tech gadgets to the rich mahogany paneling and the plush carpet. Each detail was impressive on its own, but together they had an overpowering effect on those Barnes invited there for private negotiations.

Only the most observant noticed that there were no pictures of family. In truth, Barnes stayed remotely in touch with only one relative, his father. The elder Barnes had been in a senior's home ever since Alzheimer's papered over reality, leaving him oblivious to his son's success. Perhaps that's why Barnes stayed in contact. His father was the one person who didn't try to sponge off of him.

Barnes kept himself so busy with his expanding business that he seldom thought about just how alone he was. Apart from business contacts, there was only one person he spoke to most days, and it wasn't Magda, the housekeeper who arrived each morning after he left for work and finished before he returned, or the doorman or security guards, whose existence he barely acknowledged. The one person he was more or less forced to speak with was his secretary, Dorothy.



Dorothy was in her late 30s and had worked for him for about four years. She was probably the best assistant he had ever had. She was conscientious, thorough, and willing to put in the long hours the job demanded. She probably could have used an assistant herself, but Barnes figured that was unnecessary. That she had two school-aged children who also needed her hadn't crossed his mind since he interviewed her for the job.

He had worked on this new acquisition for six months, and now that the papers were signed his revenue was about to increase substantially—perhaps as much as 40% in the next year. He smiled that smug smile again. *Now that's growth!* He only allowed himself to gloat for a few minutes, however, and was soon fixed once more on his computer monitor, analyzing the other new developments in the market and plotting his next move.

Nothing was amiss when Barnes got home that night, apart from what seemed to be a bad case of indigestion. The feeling had been building all day, but he had attributed it to the stress of weeklong around-the-clock negotiations. He microwaved the beef casserole that Magda had prepared for him, ate it as he watched the financial

news on a cable channel, puffed halfheartedly at a celebratory cigar, and retired early.

The indigestion didn't pass however. Before he could drop off to sleep, the pain worsened to the point that he wished he wasn't alone. His jaw began to ache, then his arm. He gasped for breath and realized that the intense pain that had now moved to his chest was a heart attack. He reached for the phone, but before he could dial the emergency number, the pain overwhelmed him and everything went black.

When Barnes opened his eyes, it seemed as though he had just awakened from a long, strange dream. His mother was standing in front of him, beaming a smile that was almost surreal and looking somehow younger and slimmer than he remembered her. Barnes was confused. Hadn't his mother died fifteen years earlier?

He looked around for something familiar, something to help him get his bearings, and quickly realized that he was no longer home. Instead, he seemed to be in motion, traveling through a long, dark tunnel with a light at the end. His mother never left his side and never stopped smiling. There was sadness in her eyes, though—a sort of gentle reproach for having neglected his brothers and sister, for having been put off by their requests for help, for eventually becoming oblivious to their struggles, for being so wrapped up in himself and his own plans that he hadn't given a thought to anyone else, really. She didn't speak a word, but he knew exactly what she was thinking.

For an instant he seemed to be back at his desk, scrutinizing the latest balance sheet, and he sensed that someone was looking over his shoulder. Then he was back in the tunnel and picking up speed, this time in the opposite direction. Barnes knew in that moment that his life had been given back to him and that he was being given another chance. His balance sheet had been checked, and his accounts weren't so healthy after all. Now was the time to put things right and become the man he should have been. •

Abi F. May is a member of the Family International in England.

The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."

But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?"

So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

—Jesus, Luke 12:16–21



THE *woman,* THE **PRINCE,** *and* THE **DRAGON!**

By Scott MacGregor

A MYSTERIOUS WOMAN, A CHILD DESTINED TO BE A KING, and a hideous hydra-headed dragon. These are the principals in the mysterious book of Revelation, chapter 12. It reads like one of those fabulous mythological stories from antiquity. But it is not a myth. It is a true allegory of the past and the near future.

The apostle John, the author of Revelation, sees a beautiful woman in the heavens, clothed with the sun, wearing stars in her hair, and with the moon at her feet. She gives birth to a royal child as a dreadful fiery red dragon lies in wait to slay and devour. But before he can pounce, the child is whisked away into Heaven.

We are soon told that the dragon is Satan, the Devil, the notorious serpent from the Garden of Eden, and it becomes clear that the child who ascends into Heaven is Jesus. But who is the woman?

The first thing that comes to most people's minds is that she is Mary, Jesus' earthly mother, who gave birth to Him in a Bethlehem stable. Mary was, as said the angel who told her she had been chosen to bear God's Son, "highly favored" and "blessed among women" (Luke 1:28). But as we read further, it becomes clear that Mary does not fit the description of this woman. This heavenly woman is someone else.

The dragon tried to kill the child at birth. The Gospel of Luke tells us that King Herod, no doubt inspired by this Devil

dragon, tried to do just that. His assassination attempt was thwarted and he died a few years later, but not before he had shed the blood of many innocent children in his maniacal quest to kill the child who was foretold to become "King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:16-19). Jesus eventually did die so that we could all be saved, but He was resurrected three days later and spent another forty days on Earth being seen by hundreds of people before being "caught up into Heaven" (Acts 1:1-9; 1 Corinthians 15:4-7). He will return soon, after the

few remaining Endtime prophecies are fulfilled, to rule the world.

As John continues to describe his vision, he tells us that he saw a war in the spirit world. The great archangel Michael, who the prophet Daniel said would stand up for God's people in the last days (Daniel 12:1), led an army of angels in war with the Devil dragon. The dragon loses, and he and his army of fallen angels—the “third of the stars” that he had drawn out of the heavenly host—are cast down to the earth.

The Devil has always been the great accuser. He stands even today before God like a prosecutor before a judge and accuses humanity, especially those who have accepted Jesus' atonement for their sins, of crimes against God. The Bible's ancient book of Job confirms that he has been doing this since time immemorial.

“There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.’ Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant

Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’” (Job 1:6–12).

The Devil was right in his assessment of the vast majority of humankind. When extreme hardship hits, many of us have been guilty of waving our fists in the air and blaming God for our troubles. We are all sinners, but the Great Judge has already forgiven our sins. Still, the Devil hasn't given up trying to have us condemned. However, one day soon that will end.

After losing the cosmic battle to the forces of good, the Devil is cast down on the earth and can no longer accuse us to God. Heaven rejoices! But it is woe to the inhabitants of the earth because when the Devil is cast down he starts the 1260-day reign of terror that is called the Great Tribulation. The Devil can no longer tell God to condemn us, but he can

do everything in his power to hurt us. He knows his time is short, so he does his damndest. But he is damned, and just as he lost the fight in the heavenlies, he will also lose the war on Earth. Have no doubt about that! Good and God will prevail.

So who is the woman? The answer may surprise you! •

(Continued in the next issue of *Activated*)

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.”

—Revelation 12:1–10



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Quietness of spirit

As you wait on Me in prayer, I am able to fill you with My strength. What does it mean to wait on Me? It means to give your thoughts and will to Me and to accept Mine. Often I do not reveal My will—what I know will prove best in the long run—all at once. That is often a step-by-step process. You surrender your thoughts and plans to Me, whether they be your plans for the day, your personal desires, your opinions on a certain subject, or whatever the case. But even after that initial yielding, it's still a step-by-step process as My plan unfolds. As I reveal more and more of My will, you must give Me more and more of yours.

As that process takes place, you are filled with My strength and My grace for each step. It is only when you begin to buck against My will or insist on keeping some of yours that you find you don't have the strength to keep up. As long as you're yielding and accepting, you'll receive all the grace and strength and peace of mind you need; you'll never lack. This is the simple principle of operating in My strength. To do it right, you must acknowledge Me and listen for My instructions at every turn.

It's a three-step process. First, you humbly give Me your will; second, you ask Me to show you My will in the matter; and third, you take action by asking Me for strength, yielding to My will, and doing it. As you do these things, My Spirit flows into you, supporting you and giving you exactly what you need in that situation. It is a beautiful state—the state of perfect peace with Me.

