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CHANGE YOUR LIFE | CHANGE YOUR WORLD

BLESSINGS FROM BATTLES

The upside of problems

THOUGHTS

Where are yours taking you?

ENDTIME INSIGHTS

Seals and signs



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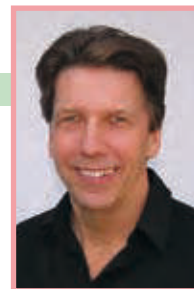
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PERSONALLY SPEAKING



A reader in the U.S. sent in the following true story about a gracious, legally blind 92-year-old woman named Maurine Jones. It seems Maurine discovered one of the secrets to happiness years ago. Since that secret is also one of the themes of this issue, here's her story:

After Maurine's husband of 70 years passed away, she moved into a nursing home. Cheri Pape, who went along to help Maurine make the transition, tells about that day.

"After waiting patiently in the nursing home lobby for hours, Maurine smiled sweetly when told that her room was ready. As she maneuvered her walker to the elevator, I provided a visual description of her tiny room, including the eyelet curtains that had been hung on her window."

"I love it," she stated with the enthusiasm of an eight-year-old having just been presented with a new puppy.

"Mrs. Jones, you haven't seen the room. ... Just wait."

"That doesn't have anything to do with it!" she replied.

"Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged—it's how I arrange my mind. I already decided to love it.

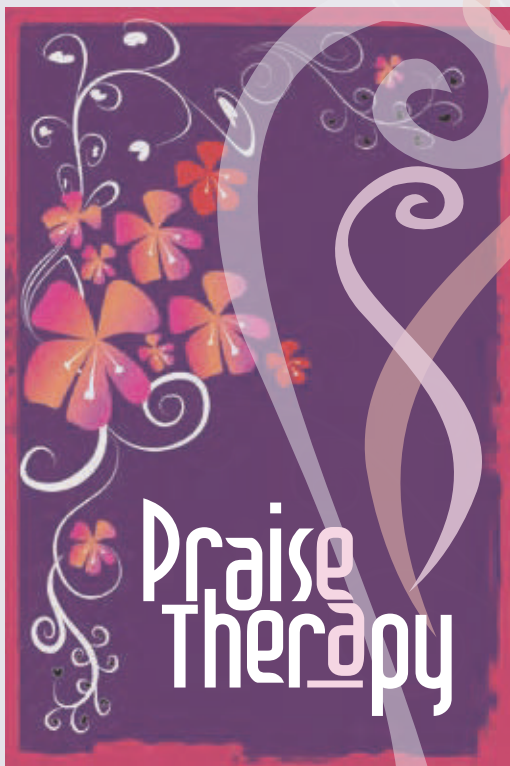
"It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice. I can spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or I can get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do. Each day is a gift, and as long as my eyes open I'll focus on the new day and all the happy memories I've stored away."

Attitude is everything, and as Maurine demonstrates, our attitudes don't have to be dictated by circumstances. We each have a choice. May your daily choices bring you great happiness and fulfillment, and may the way you live help others find the same! With God's help, it's easier than you may think.

Keith Phillips

Keith Phillips
FOR THE ACTIVATED FAMILY

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BY MIRA PILLAR

THE WINTER OF 2004 HAD BEEN AN EXCEPTIONALLY LONG ONE IN THE BALKAN PENINSULA. How we had been waiting for spring to come! The beautiful flowers sprang up. Trees budded and then burst forth with new life. Birds sang their praises that winter had ended once again. Everyone, I think, looks forward to this time of year when God's beautiful creation can be enjoyed to the full—everyone, that is, except severe hay fever sufferers. For many of those unfortunate souls, spring can be a time to dread. Happy expectation is replaced by worry and anxious anticipation. Pollen, one of the marvels of God's creation and the sower of life, becomes their number-one enemy. Long walks in the forest, bike rides, strolls through meadows in search of wildflowers, and even bouquets of flowers at home are all out of the question.

I suffered from such allergies for many years. Each spring I would start sneezing, my nose would run constantly, and my eyes would water to the point that they would develop a yellow film and I could hardly see. When a child from the neighborhood would bring me a bouquet of wildflowers as a thoughtful little gift, I would smile politely while holding my breath and quickly hand the flowers to my husband to discreetly discard. But this spring, I was determined to fight my hay fever—with “praise therapy.”

Every time I would begin to have a sneezing fit or my eyes would begin to itch and run, I made a conscious effort to praise the Lord. After one such episode, as I was praising the Lord and praying, He told me that He was going to heal me. From that minute on, I thanked Him for that promise every time I felt my allergies coming on, and from that minute on I was being healed. The process began slowly, but after only a few weeks my allergies were totally gone.

I confess I had hoped for and expected a more immediate answer to my praises, but the Lord wanted me to get in the habit of praising Him even in difficult times, and He also wanted to teach me patience along the way.

So this spring things were pleasantly different for me. I enjoyed long bike rides with my husband, strolling through the fields, and even smelling the flowers. Praise works wonders!

MIRA PILLAR IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SERBIA. ♦

THOUGHTS

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

“JUST CANNOT OVERCOME MY BAD THOUGHTS,” a woman wrote me, asking for advice. “As you may remember, I wrote you before about someone near to me who is very spiteful and says such unkind things, and I told you that I had overcome my urge to say anything back. I *have* been able to control my tongue, but I haven’t changed my thinking any. I may have self-control outwardly, but I’m seething on the inside.”

That letter reminded me of a story about a little boy named Jimmy who was punished for doing something that his mother had told him again and again not to do. At last she said, “You sit in the corner until I tell you that you may get up.” Jimmy sat there, but he was very angry and willful about the whole thing. After a while his mother asked, “Jimmy, are you ready now to obey?” And

Jimmy said, “Well, I’m sitting down, but I’m still standing up on the inside!”

Often it’s that inward struggle of the mind that’s the hardest to win. That’s why God’s Word makes it so plain that we’re supposed to take control of our thoughts: “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 KJV).

I once heard someone say that he believed the greatest power God has

given us is the power to think. Our thoughts are a vital part of us, and they accompany us wherever we go. We can no more get away from our thoughts than we can get away from our shadow. When our thoughts are positive and principled, they become the best of traveling companions, but when they aren't, they dog our steps and rob us of happiness and peace of mind.

It's the old foundation principle that our desires, which are what motivate us, are the direct result of our thinking. We exhaust our energies dealing with those results, while failing to deal with the source, which is the mind; we fail to "think on these things."

All high and holy aspirations come from high and holy thinking. When we stop to consider the miracle of life, the world God created for us, and the marvel of His love, we realize that we're surrounded with so much that's beautiful and wonderful. It's an awful shame when our thoughts go wandering among weeds and brambles, when they turn to ungodly and ugly things.

We get so busy that we don't take time to think properly, to meditate. It reminds me of another story about a mother who went to visit her son in the big city. He was so busy rushing here and there that all he had time for was, "Hello, Mother!" and "Goodbye, Mother!" One day she said to him, "Son, when do you do your thinking?"

Many of us are like that. We get too busy to stop and think, to turn our thoughts toward God and the life-giving truth of His Word, to "set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2).

The battles of life are first fought on the battleground of the mind, and the issues of life are determined there. Murder is first committed within the precincts of the mind, before the shot is

fired. The thief puts out his hand and steals the watch, but first he has stolen it within the precincts of his mind. We teach our children that they shouldn't do this and they shouldn't do that because it's wrong, but do we teach them to think? Do we teach them to center their thoughts on things that are "true, honest, just, pure, lovely, virtuous, and praiseworthy"?

Thinking seems to be a lost art these days. People don't take the time to think things through. If they did, God would show them a plan; He would show them how to get the thing done or how to unravel the problem situation if they would just stop, look to Him, and give Him a chance.

Getting back to that woman's letter, it seems almost unpardonable to allow our minds to linger on thoughts of hate and criticism and resentment. But how do we overcome such thoughts?

The only way to get rid of impure thoughts is to overthrow them with thoughts that are "pure and lovely." The way to get rid of malicious thoughts is to overthrow them with loving, positive thoughts. The only way to reap a proper harvest from the fertile garden of the mind is to carefully sow good seed and carefully tend the crop. As my father taught

me when I was a little girl, "Sow a thought and you reap an action. Sow an action and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap character. Sow character and you reap a destiny." God's Word says that as we think in our heart, so are we (Proverbs 23:7).

Thoughts may seem to be the most insignificant of things, known only by ourselves, but psychologists tell us that each thought influences the total of our consciousness. If a thought is repeated enough times, it becomes a thought pattern. Those who train their minds to think kind, gentle, loving thoughts will grow to be kind, gentle, and loving. But those who habitually think negative thoughts will develop ugly temperaments and be ruled by feelings of resentfulness, bitterness, and anger. Their life will shape itself, not in a way that is beautiful, but in one that is debasing. They will find their soul bending downward in a sort of a permanent moral curvature, while those who "set their minds on things above" grow straight and tall and true.

Ask God to help you "set your mind on things above," and as you continue to look to Him, He will transform you through the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). That's the secret to overcoming bad thoughts! ♦



Beverly's WONDERFUL DAY

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

IF THE PURPOSE OF THIS LIFE IS TO LEARN TO LOVE GOD AND OTHERS, surely Beverly graduated with honors. I lost a great friend when Beverly passed away several years ago, but I learned a lot about positiveness and priorities from the way she lived.

It wasn't unusual for Beverly to phone around dinnertime to tell me about the wonderful things the Lord had done for her that day, but one phone call stands out.

"Hello. ... Oh, Beverly, how are you?"

"I'm just great! I had the most wonderful day!"

"Tell me about it."

"Well, I was on my way to a job interview when I had an accident."

"That doesn't sound so wonderful! Are you okay?"

"I'm in a neck brace and on painkillers, but I'm okay. I only got a whiplash injury, thank the Lord. It could have been much worse."

"Beverly, I'm so sorry! Dan and the kids and I will pray for you when we get together for dinner. Is there anything else we can do?"

"Thanks for praying. That's great! I'm sure the Lord allowed the accident for a good reason, even though my car was totaled—a complete wreck."

"Oh no! I hope your insurance will cover it."

"Actually it was my fault and my insurance policy has a \$500 deductible, so I guess I will be taking the bus for a while, starting with more job interviews. I didn't make it to the one today due to the accident, so I'll need to keep looking."

"That really doesn't sound like a wonderful day to me!"

"Well, I got to talk to the tow truck driver about Jesus and he really listened. So did the nurse at the hospital, and she's interested in Bible classes. But the best came last, when I went to see the mechanic who told me my car was totaled, and our conversation came around to God and His goodness. He's been having plenty of problems of his own, but he was so happy to learn that Jesus is concerned about him personally and wants to help. He broke down and wept when he prayed with me to invite Jesus into his heart and life. So you see,

in spite of the accident and everything that it entailed, I met three great people I probably never would have met otherwise, and one of them received Jesus. It really was a wonderful day!"

What could I say?

Without even trying, Beverly had put my own problems into perspective and reminded me that the surest way to be happy is to stay busy trying to bring happiness to others.

P.S.: Beverly's neck healed well. She saw the tow truck driver and the nurse again, and they both prayed with her to receive Jesus as their Savior. A few days after her accident she met a man who was so impressed by her faith and positiveness that he gave her a used car that was better than the one she had lost.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S. ♦



A POSITIVE PRAISE POST

BY BRIAN WHYTE

I WAS INSPIRED THE OTHER DAY when I read some personal accounts on a friend's blog on the subject of praising God for His goodness in spite of daily problems and annoyances. It made me stop to think. (That's always good!)

Generally, I am a thankful person. I post inspirational stories on my blog or send them to friends and family by email to share with them the good things that happen in my life. Still, after all these years, I wasn't in the habit of praising God for even the "bad" things—"giving thanks *always* for *all* things to God" (Ephesians 5:20). I also wasn't in the habit of looking for the good in everything.

But after I read my friend's post I was reminded that the little daily things—a sandwich, a shower, a sunset, an encouraging word from a friend, a walk—are all events that are worthy of praise and thanksgiving. And what's more, these things have the ability to catapult me into sheer, overjoyous (I made up that word) bliss. That's quite a thought!

Previously I'd always waited for a "biggie" before I would become ecstatic—like the first time I flew on an airplane as a child, or when I attend a gathering with tons of friends, or the day I will meet my future wife or become a father or find buried treasure on a

South Sea island. But that's a lot of waiting and a lot of missed chances to be ecstatic when I could and should be truly happy and thankful to God, even if I'm just eating breakfast in the morning or receiving an email from my mom.

That's easier said than done, you might say—and you'd be totally right. But the cool thing about reading my friend's post was that it clicked with me that I could indeed be grateful for the same things that she was and instantly adopt the same "gratitude attitude." See, once you start, it becomes automatic.

So let me remember my own words when I'm stuck in downtown traffic tomorrow, or when the rain is coming down in torrents and the roads, the sidewalks, and my driveway are all flooded. Those annoyances won't matter. I can still rejoice and be glad in those times, too, when I determine to see beauty in everything that comes my way and, as an old song says, "Praise the Lord for another day of life."

BRIAN WHYTE IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN NIGERIA. ♦

THANK GOD FOR THE GOOD

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

You're a very special creation of God's love, so don't worry about a few blemishes. Imagine how self-righteous and proud we would be if God had made us all perfect! Instead, He gave us all a few blemishes. God doesn't want us to look at the blemishes; He wants us to look at the *good*.

Every time you're tempted to think negatively about yourself, thank God for something He blessed you with instead—good health, a sound mind, or some quality or talent that others admire in you. There are so many things you could thank God for! Think how much worse off you could be—and think of others who are. Pray for someone who is battling a long-term illness or coping daily with a debilitating handicap. Job was delivered from his problems when he prayed for his friends (Job 42:10).

Take a positive approach and pretty soon the instigator of your negative thoughts, the old Devil himself or one of his henchmen, will give up. When your spiritual enemy sees that your praises and prayers are defeating him every time, he'll think twice before tempting you with negative thinking—and you can be thankful for that! ♦

BLESSINGS FROM BATTLES

BY MARIA FONTAINE

Because “many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psalm 34:19), it's certainly comforting to know that “*all* things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). In fact, in order to come through our many trials, difficulties, battles, and temptations victoriously, it is imperative that we make this promise in Romans 8:28 a vital part of our life.

We need to get this principle so deeply ingrained within us that it becomes impossible for us to forget, neglect or overlook it. Romans 8:28 is something that should be as much a part of our conscious and even subconscious thoughts and way of looking at things as the necessity of prayer, the importance of the Word, the inevitability of tests and trials, and the certainty of God's love.



“WHAT’S YOUR PROBLEM?”

BY KEITH PHILLIPS



If we fail to send the events of our daily lives through the filter of Romans 8:28, if we fail to constantly view our disappointments, hurts, problems, illnesses, etc., through the perspective that Romans 8:28 gives us, we will tragically miss many of the valuable lessons the Lord is trying to teach us and we will rob ourselves of the peace that comes from absolute trust in this precious promise and principle.

If you learn the simple equation “trials equal good,” your life will be richer, life’s lessons profounder, and your mind more tranquil. You will also more easily recognize the Lord’s hand in the events of your life. It makes all the difference in the world whether you look at a flood of problems, trials and tribulations just waiting to see the worst happen, or if you look at them with the excitement and challenge that comes from waiting to discover all the good you know the Lord will bring out of them. ♦

“Contentment isn’t getting what you want, but wanting what you’ve got,” says David Ring, a motivational speaker who talks to more than 200 audiences and 100,000 people each year. What makes the quote and his busy schedule truly remarkable is the fact that David Ring has had cerebral palsy since birth. He can hardly walk. He can hardly talk. Yet he speaks with such positiveness, humor (“God never says ‘Oops!’”), and depth that audiences flock to hear him and go away changed.

After a friend gave me a recording of one of David Ring’s talks, like hundreds of thousands of others, I was convicted by his challenge: “I’ve got cerebral palsy. What’s your problem?” His message is simple and clear. Refuse to give in to despair or self-pity. Don’t gripe or become bitter over bad things that happen, but embrace life, trust that God knows what He’s doing, and let Him get on with it.

“If you don’t like the way I am,” Ring tells his audiences, “hang in there. I’m still in the oven. God’s still working on me, and when God gets finished cooking me, He’s going to pull me out of the oven and say, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant!’”—a pun on Matthew 25:21.

Another spiritual principle that is borne out in Ring’s life is that if we can be genuinely thankful for even the seemingly bad things, God will bless us with more good things. Ring is not only successful and in high demand as a motivational speaker (his 200 audiences per year are chosen from over 700 invitations), but he is happily married and the father of four beautiful, healthy children.

David Ring leads a truly victorious life, and so can you. As he says, “Don’t whine, but shine!” ♦



a MOST UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

IN ALL OF HISTORY, THIS HAD TO BE ONE OF THE MOST UNCONVENTIONAL WAYS to try to defend a country under siege. Who ever heard of an army being led by a group of singers and musicians? But sing and play they did! Here is the true account from the Bible's book of 2 Chronicles, chapter 20.

Word was rushed to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, announcing the swift approach of a vast army from Ammon, Moab, and Seir, three kingdoms that had formed an alliance against Judah. Jehoshaphat, knowing that his own army was no match for the invaders, turned to God for help. He proclaimed a time of prayer and fasting, and people from throughout the land poured into the capital to take part.

Then, in the midst of all the people, Jehoshaphat prayed. "O Lord, God of our fathers, are You not God in Heaven? You rule over kingdoms and nations, and power and might are in Your hand. None can withstand You." As the king continued, people's spirits were strengthened. "We know that in the time of calamity, what-

ever peril it may be, if we stand in Your presence and cry out to You in our distress, You will hear and save us. We have no power against this great army that comes against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You!"

Then a young priest named Jahaziel prophesied with a loud voice, "Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's!'" God had heard and come to answer their prayers.

"You will not need to fight in this battle," God's message through Jahaziel continued. "Position yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you!"

King Jehoshaphat bowed to the ground in worship. The crowd followed the king's lead, while the priests raised their voices to praise the Lord.

The next morning as the troops made preparations for battle, King Jehoshaphat encouraged them. "Believe in the Lord your God, and so shall you be established. Have faith in His prophets, and so shall you have good success."

The king consulted with the people, and it was decided that singers should lead the troops into

battle. That daring step of faith showed that they believed God would fight for them.

“Praise the Lord for the beauty of His holiness,” Jehoshaphat instructed the singers as they took their position. “Give thanks to the Lord, for His mercy endures forever.” They were thanking God in advance for the victory He had promised the day before.

No sooner had they begun to sing and praise than God “set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.”

The Bible doesn’t specify what those “ambushes” were, but it does explain that the men of those three invading kingdoms began to fight among themselves. First the men of Ammon and Moab rose up against those of Seir, and when they had destroyed them, the two armies destroyed each other.

When the army of Judah came to a promontory overlooking the battlefield, they saw only dead bodies on the ground. No one had escaped.

Jehoshaphat and his men gathered so many valuables from the bodies that it took them three days to collect them all.

On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berachah, which means “the Valley of Praise,” and there they blessed God. Then they returned home with joy, for the Lord had triumphed over their enemies.

The fear of God came on all the neighboring kingdoms when they heard how He had interceded for Judah, and “the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.”

What an amazing testimony to the power of faith, prayer, and praise—and that same power is available to us today. Whenever we face a problem that is too big for us, if we pray with our whole hearts and believe the promises God has given us in His Word, we can then go on the attack against whatever it is that threatens to undo us, praising the Lord and thanking Him by faith for the victory, and He will intercede for us.

Praise is the voice of faith. If you really believe God has heard your prayers, you will start praising Him for the answer, even *before* you see it. When you’re tempted to get down and discouraged, remember the power of praise and look to God. ♦

FEEDING READING

POSITIVE THINKING

ASK GOD TO WASH YOUR HEART AND RENEW YOUR MIND SO THAT YOU WILL THINK ONLY HIS POSITIVE, GOOD THOUGHTS.

Psalms 51:10

Romans 12:2

Ephesians 4:22-24

THINK ON THE GOOD THINGS.

Psalms 94:19

Philippians 4:8

KEEP YOUR HEART AND MIND FILLED WITH GOD’S WORD.

Joshua 1:8

Psalms 1:2

Psalms 37:31

THINK ABOUT JESUS.

Matthew 22:37

Psalms 104:34

Isaiah 26:3

Hebrews 12:2-3

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS AND RECOUNT ALL THE WONDERFUL THINGS THE LORD HAS DONE FOR YOU.

Psalms 40:5

Psalms 103:2

Ephesians 5:20

TAKE A POSITIVE APPROACH TO TESTS AND TRIALS BY SEEING THE LORD’S HAND IN ALL HE SENDS YOUR WAY.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

1 Thessalonians 5:18

1 Peter 4:12-13

Romans 8:28

James 1:2-3



ENDTIME INSIGHTS

BY SCOTT MACGREGOR

SEALS AND SIGNS

I'VE READ BOTH MATTHEW 24 AND REVELATION 6 MANY TIMES, but it wasn't until the other day that I was struck by how the events foretold in those two chapters of the New Testament run in parallel.

[Jesus' disciples asked,] "What will be the sign of Your coming [return], and of the end of the age?"

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against

kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:3–14)

In Revelation chapters 4 and 5 the apostle John recounts how he had been transported in the spirit to God's throne room, where Jesus, represented as the Lamb of God, had been given a scroll sealed with seven seals. In chapter 6 these seals are opened.

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals. ... And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to Him, and He went out conquering and to conquer. (Revelation 6:1–2)

We believe this horseman to be none other than Jesus. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and gave them what has come to be known as the Great Commission: "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere" (Mark 16:15 TLB). They and millions of Christians since have taken that Good News into all nations and led hundreds of millions, if not billions, to God. So through His followers, Jesus has

fulfilled and continues to fulfill this part of the prophetic vision. “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world” (Matthew 24:14).

Then the second seal is broken.

Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. (Revelation 6:4)

This red horse is clearly a war horse. The rider’s great sword represents armaments, and the horse’s red color is indicative of the blood shed through the centuries by the warmongers who have ridden it. In Matthew 24, Jesus tells His followers that these wars of man, as horrible and destructive as they are, do not signal the end of the world as we know it.

The third seal is broken.

I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice ... saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.” (Revelation 6:5–6)

Traditionally scales have been associated with two things: justice and commerce. Here they represent the latter. A denarius was a silver coin of the ancient Roman Empire and typically a laborer’s daily wage. However, historical records show that a denarius should have bought 15 to 20 times more wheat than the amount mentioned in the verse. Barley was regarded as an inferior grain and therefore considerably cheaper. That these staples were so expensive is indicative of scarcity—perhaps the famine of Matthew 24. Olive oil and wine were also

common commodities in John’s day, but why the voice said not to “harm” these is unclear.

The fourth seal is broken:

And behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. (Revelation 6:8)

Here we see death in several of its many forms, including war and famine again. In the second sentence of this verse, some translations render “death” as “plague” or “disease.” The souls of the dead pass into the unseen spiritual realm, which the ancient Greeks and Romans called Hades. “Famines and pestilences in various places” (Matthew 24:7).

Then the fifth seal was broken:

I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest

a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed (Revelation 6:9–11).

Certainly this goes along with Jesus' statement: "They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake" (Matthew 24:9). Christians have suffered persecution and martyrdom from the beginning, just as Jesus Himself did, and just as He said would happen to His followers: "'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake. (Revelation 6:12)

Like war, famine, and pestilence, there have been earthquakes both before and after Jesus' Endtime discourse in Matthew 24 and the vision He showed John in the book of Revelation. However, that this particular earthquake is represented by one of the seven seals would seem to indicate that it is special—perhaps the earthquake of all earthquakes that is described in Revelation chapters 11 and 16, which levels one tenth of Jerusalem and many other places in the time of God's wrath on the Antichrist and his forces, right before Armageddon.

When Jesus described these things in Matthew 24, He explained that these are only the "beginning of sorrows." The Greek word translated as "sorrows" here is more precisely translated as "a pang or throe, especially of childbirth." Labor pains continue to intensify right up to the time of delivery, so we can expect things to get even worse before they get better. But they will get better.



It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains. ... He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:2,4)

The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked. ... The whole earth is at rest and quiet. (Isaiah 14:5,7)

At the end of this age, which isn't far off, Jesus will return to set things right and usher in a new age, the thousand-year period known as the Millennium, during which love and peace will reign supreme. ♦

If you haven't yet met the Prince of Peace, Jesus, you can right now by praying the following prayer:

Jesus, I want to know You personally, so I invite You to come into my heart. Thank You for dying for me, so I could be forgiven for my sins, find peace of heart and mind here and now, and receive God's gift of eternal life. Amen.

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

GETTING ANSWERS TO PRAYER

A: WHEN YOU PRAY FOR SOMEONE OR SOME SITUATION, THE FIRST REQUIREMENT IS FAITH. “Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:24). “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). There are also a few other basic principles to prayer.

It may seem to go without saying that you need to ask, but you’d be surprised how many people get stuck in “worry” or “wish” mode; they continue to “have not because they ask not” (James 4:2).

Sometimes “when you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives” (James 4:3 NIV). You need to make sure that your aims are right, and you need to trust that God knows what’s best for you and be willing to accept His answer, even when He doesn’t answer your prayer in the way you wanted or expected Him to.

God is all-powerful, and He truly does want to give us the very best. If you can grasp and believe those two points, you will find great cause to thank and praise Him even before He answers, and that praise will push your prayers to a whole new level.

It’s not just a matter of including words of praise in your prayer, though; it’s the *attitude* in which those prayers are prayed. When you praise and really mean it, that shows you’re putting your confidence in

God. Prayers prayed with full faith in God’s power, when coupled with thankfulness for all He has already done and all He will yet do, are prayers full of praise. They are positive declarations of faith, as opposed to a frantic beseeching. Do you see the difference?

Another key is to make prayer a habit. The more you pray, even for seemingly small or routine things, the more natural prayer will become and the more you will learn to recognize God’s answers. Prayer and praise go hand in hand, and using them together is a wonderful way to bring God more into your daily life and thoughts. Whenever things are going well, praise Him for that. Whenever you run into a problem or things *aren’t* going well, thank Him that things aren’t always like that, show confidence that He will work things out for good in some way, and pray for His solution. When you have that praiseful, trusting attitude, it pleases Him and it’s *His* pleasure to answer your prayers. “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4). ♦

Q: I believe in prayer and I've heard about lots of other people who get answers to their prayers, but mine never seem to go anywhere. I must be doing something wrong, but what? How can I get better results?

MULTIPLIED

DOWN

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Many people, when faced with a negative situation, feel justified in complaining and dwelling on the negative. Others have discovered the power of positive thinking and use it, but they don't understand that the good results of positive thinking are part of the spiritual principle of praise, that praising Me for My goodness brings down My blessings. The power of positive thinking is multiplied when turned into praise, but because many don't know they should bring Me into their positive thinking, they're only scratching the surface.

Your bodies are built to respond vibrantly to positive thinking, and praise is the ultimate form of positive thinking. When you praise Me even in the midst of seemingly dark circumstances, you're initiating a reaction that will actually make you feel good physically and will give you extra strength to persevere. But that's just the beginning, because at the same time, in the spirit, you're pleasing Me by telling Me that you appreciate My blessings in spite of the negative; that you have faith that I'll work it out and continue to take care of you. That results in My increased blessings in your life.