

A person wearing an orange t-shirt and a climbing harness is seen from behind, climbing a light-colored rock face. The person is holding a yellow rope. The background is a blurred, warm-toned rock wall.

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CHANGE YOUR LIFE | CHANGE YOUR WORLD

## **CLIMBING THE NEW YEAR**

The view from the top  
is thrilling!

## **CROSSROADS**

A message from Jesus

## **RUN THE RACE**

Keep your eyes on the  
prize

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Antipolo City P.O.  
1870 Antipolo City  
Philippines  
E-mail: [activatedPI@activated.org](mailto:activatedPI@activated.org)  
Cel: (0922) 8125326



## PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Another year is behind us, and a brand-new year, brimming with possibilities, lies ahead. How can we make the most of it? According to U.S. fitness pioneer Jack LaLanne, it's simply a matter of setting realistic goals and sticking with them. In reference to a perennial favorite New Year's resolution, getting in better physical shape, LaLanne said in a 2000 AP interview, "The average person means well, [but] they set their goals too high. They do it two or three times and say, 'This is too tough.' And they quit. Staying in shape is a lifestyle. It is not something you do for two weeks or four months to lose 20 pounds. It is something you do for the rest of your life, just like combing your hair." And LaLanne should know. He is still fit, works out daily, keeps a busy schedule of public appearances, and looks two or three decades younger than his 93 years.

The "realistic" and "lifestyle" principles apply to almost any New Year's resolution, of course. Ask yourself, "Is this goal realistic?" and, "Is it important enough for me to adapt my lifestyle accordingly?" If the answer to both questions is yes, determine precisely how you will work the change into your daily or weekly routine, and then do another reality check. What other interest or activity will need to go in order to make room for the new? Are you willing to make that sacrifice? If the answer is again yes, all that remains is for you to stick with it long enough to make it a habit. If it was a wise choice, chances are it won't be long until its benefits outweigh any initial sacrifice.

And of course the best way to ensure success is to include God in the process, step by step. Ask Him to show you what changes will be most beneficial, and ask Him daily to give you the strength, patience, determination, or whatever else you need to succeed that day, and He will.

Keith Phillips  
  
FOR ACTIVATED

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

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# THE CHINA DOLL

BY BONITA HELE

**W**HEN MY OLDER BROTHER WAS 13, he had an unusual hobby. We called it dumpster diving. A nearby apartment complex housed college students from around the country, and at the end of the school year the students would discard everything they didn't want to haul home with them, including quite a few items that still had some value. My brother capitalized on the opportunity.

One day, he brought home a China Doll plant, which he gave to me. My mom, who has a green thumb, said it was a good find. I moved it to my room, and would set it out on the front porch every few days for some sunshine. After I'd had the plant for a few months, its leaves started drooping and then falling off. Within a couple of weeks, there were no

leaves left. When I asked my mom what was wrong, she said it might have gone into hibernation. A plant without leaves held no interest for me, so I put it in the back yard with my mom's other potted plants. It stayed there for quite some time, leafless and forlorn.

One day my mom brought a plant to my room. Yes, it was my China Doll, and there were tiny sprouts at the tips of its branches. Over the next weeks, the sprouts grew into new shoots and leaves, and eventually my plant was in full bloom again. This cycle continued over the years.

I eventually moved away from home and left the China Doll with my mom and her green thumb. In one letter my mom wrote: "I thought your China Doll had finally died. I almost tossed it, but you know

how I hate to throw away a plant. I waited a while and sure enough, it grew back fuller than ever."

The following spring I went to visit my mom. She had more time for gardening now that most of her kids had moved away, and the back yard was beautiful, full of aromatic rose bushes and flower-covered arbors and trellises. There on the porch, transplanted into a bigger pot, sat my China Doll. It was at least four feet tall.

They say that one man's trash is another man's treasure. That China Doll will always hold a special place in my heart, not because I'm sentimental about a plant, but because it taught me to hope.

As I begin the New Year, some things seem to be hibernating—a few dreams and goals—but with the sunshine of God's love, the water of His Word, and a little of His tender loving care, they will blossom in His good time. If He causes a simple plant to begin anew and grow stronger year by year, how much more can we expect Him to do for us, whom He loves dearly and for whom He created all the rest? ●

*BONITA HELE IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN INDIA.*



# CLIMBING THE NEW YEAR

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

**E**VEN THE BEST CLIMBERS NEED GUIDES WHEN THEY CLIMB UNFAMILIAR MOUNTAINS. In fact, only a foolhardy novice would try to go without one—a novice like me.

Years ago I was on vacation in the Alps of Switzerland, and on the last day a friend and I decided to climb a nearby mountain. It was late afternoon by the time we got started, and we hadn't gone far before we passed a rugged shepherd on his way down with his sheep, after a day of grazing them further up the mountain. "Darkness comes early and suddenly in the mountains," he warned us. "Wait until tomorrow and hire a guide." But tomorrow would be too late. By the next afternoon we'd be on a train home, having missed a unique opportunity. Impetuously we trekked on.

As sure as night follows day, we were soon in near total darkness. Because it was overcast, there wasn't even any moonlight or starlight. We could barely make out the rocky trail right at our feet, let alone see the trail ahead. One misstep and we would go tumbling down the mountain. We would have to spend the night on the mountain.

We had one sleeping bag with us, so we decided to take turns sleeping in it.

Then it started to rain heavily. We were not only cold but also drenched, and so was our sleeping bag. We managed to take refuge under an outcropping of rock. After a long ordeal, dawn broke, the rain stopped, and we were able to make our descent.

On our way down the trail, we met the same shepherd we had talked to the previous afternoon. Seeing our sorry condition, he nodded and gave us a look that was a mix of amusement and relief. Had it gotten much colder that night, we could have died of exposure.

Taking on the challenges of the New Year is often likened to climbing a mountain: Although it's a lot of hard work and potentially dangerous, it holds special rewards for those who rise to the challenge and don't quit till they reach the summit.

But sometimes we may become too self-confident and feel that we can go it alone. If we're smart, we'll realize that we need the help of a mountain guide, and of course there's no better guide than Jesus, whom the Bible calls the "Chief Shepherd" of our souls (1 Peter 5:4). He knows where the green pastures are, as well as where the dangers lie. If we stay close to Him, He will help us to reach our goals for the coming year, to conquer the summit and experience the thrill of victory. ●

*CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST.*

# OF MEN AND MOUNTAINS

Short is the little time which remains to thee of life. Live as on a mountain.

—MARCUS AURELIUS (121–180 AD, MEDITATIONS)

The mountains will always be there, the trick is to make sure you are too.

—HERVEY VOGUE, 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOUNTAINEER

You cannot stay on the summit forever; you have to come down again. So why bother in the first place? Just this: What is above knows what is below, but what is below does not know what is above. One climbs, one sees. One descends, one sees no longer, but one has seen. There is an art of conducting oneself in the lower regions by the memory of what one saw higher up. When one can no longer see, one can at least still know.

—RENE DAUMAL (1908–1944), FRENCH WRITER, PHILOSOPHER, AND POET

If the conquest of a great peak brings moments of exultation and bliss, which in the monotonous, materialistic existence of modern times nothing else can approach, it also presents great dangers. It is not the goal of grand alpinism to face peril, but it is one of the tests one must undergo to deserve the joy of rising for an instant above the state of crawling grubs. On this proud and beautiful mountain we have lived hours of fraternal, warm, and exalting nobility. Here for a few days we have ceased to be slaves and have really been men. It is hard to return to servitude.

—LIONEL TERRAY (1921–1965), FRENCH MOUNTAINEER

If you cannot understand that there is something in man which responds to the challenge of this mountain and goes out to meet it, that the struggle is the struggle of life itself upward and forever upward,

then you won't see why we go. What we get from this adventure is just sheer joy. And joy is, after all, the end [goal] of life. We do not live to eat and make money. We eat and make money to be able to enjoy life. That is what life means and what life is for.

—GEORGE LEIGH MALLORY (1886–1924), ENGLISH MOUNTAINEER

On the mountain, people become better. You are closer to God and paradise.

—ULRICH INDERBINEN, SWISS MOUNTAIN GUIDE AT 103 YEARS OLD

If you're going to climb a mountain, you have to have the feeling that it's worth dying for. If you're going to climb any mountain—the mountain of this life, the mountain of accomplishment, the mountain of obstacles, of difficulty—it has to be worth braving wind and cold and storm, symbolic of adversities. But alone on the mountaintop, you feel so close to God. His voice is so loud it's almost like it's thundering. You get a real "high" on top of a mountain. It's a thrill!

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

# CROSS

*A message from Jesus*

## **CROSSROADS ARE A WONDERFUL PLACE TO BE**

because you have so many options. You can go forward, return the way you came, or go in a new direction, either to the right or to the left.

Crossroads aren't always welcome, though, because they force people to make decisions, and that can be an uncomfortable process. Especially in the case of major or potentially life-changing decisions, no one really likes the hard work of thinking and praying the matter through, the soul-searching involved.

I use the crossroads of life to help some people come to terms with mistakes or wrong turns they've made, and to give them a chance to get going in the right direction. For others who haven't been off track, it's a chance to go in a new direction that will make them even happier and get them farther in the long run. For yet others,

it's a time to confirm that they're going in the right direction, so they can continue with the vigor that renewed conviction brings. Whatever the case, whenever someone comes to a crossroads, it's an opportunity, because if they ask Me which way they should go, I'll show them.

You can't fail as long as you're looking to Me and are open to whatever road I have for you. Maybe it will be something you've never done before. It might even be something you're afraid to do. Or it could be the same thing that you've done for years. Whichever road I ask you to take I will also equip you for, even if you don't think you have what it will take right now. As you take a step in the direction I'm leading you, I'll give you what it takes. If you need more faith, I'll give you more faith. If you need more courage, I'll give you more courage. If

you need more love, I'll give you more love. If you need more strength or perseverance, I'll give you those things. Step by step, as you follow Me, I will continue to do that. Whatever you need for your journey, I'll give you that.

So instead of being afraid of those crossroad signs, you can look forward to them with anticipation, knowing that I'm by your side to instruct you and guide you and help you. I know your heart, and I know where you will be happiest and most fulfilled. If you don't know where that is, just ask Me to point you in the right direction and start walking. I am always with you, no matter where you are and what you're doing. I'm right beside you each step of the way. As you learn to hear My voice in your mind, pointing the way, you'll really make progress. I love you, and I'll never fail you. ◉

# ROADS

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

## THE CHAINED

## EAGLE

**M**ANY PEOPLE RESOLVE TO DO THIS OR THAT, CHANGE THIS OR THAT, break a bad habit, or start a new one. Sometimes it works; often it doesn't, because many of us are like the bird in the following story.

A man once owned an eagle, and for many years kept him chained to a stake. Every day the eagle walked around and around that stake, and over time wore a rut in the ground. When the eagle was getting old, his master felt sorry for him and decided to set him free. So he took the metal ring off the eagle's foot, lifted the eagle from the ground, and tossed him into the air. He was free—but he had forgotten how to fly! He flip-flopped to the ground, walked back over to his old rut, and started walking in circles like he had for years. No chain and shackle held him, just the habit!

There is a saying: "The chains of bad habits are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken"—and that would be true if it weren't for the Lord and His power. It's not possible for you to change yourself, but it's possible for God to change you by the miracle-working power of His Spirit. He'll do things you can't do!

You may have to put a great deal of your own will into the transformation process as well, but with God's strength and His intervention, you'll find you have more resolve, determination, and ability to

change than you ever thought possible. He said, "Whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:22).

This is what it means to "become a new creature in Christ Jesus" (2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV). Jesus coming into your life not only renews and purifies and regenerates your spirit, but it also renews your mind, literally breaking old connections and reflexes and gradually rebuilding it and rewiring it into a whole new computer system with a different outlook on life and a new way of looking at the world, with new reactions to nearly everything around you.

But it's impossible for you to make this change yourself. If you want this change, it's necessary for you to ask Jesus to help. Some changes are instantaneous, others take awhile.—But if you ask Him for help and do your part, you'll be changed, because Jesus changes people! ●





# RUN THE RACE

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

A BIBLE STUDY ON HEBREWS 12:1

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Dum-ta-dum-ta-dum!* Out step some others. “Who are they?”

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

*Dum-ta-dum-ta-dum!* “And who are all those people?”

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

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



# ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

## HOW TO GROW SPIRITUALLY IN THE NEW YEAR

**Q:** *Many of my friends are making resolutions for the New Year, most of which involve some physical change such as losing weight or breaking a bad habit. While those are good, I would like to resolve to take the necessary steps to grow in my spiritual life this coming year. Do you have any suggestions as to how I can accomplish that?*

**A:** IT'S ENCOURAGING TO REMEMBER THAT FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE, we're all a work in progress. It's even more encouraging to know that He wants to see us make as much progress as we can and that He will do all He can to make that happen; He will help us as much as we let Him. "I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV). Here are five ways that He helps us grow and mature spiritually:

**1. Involve God in the decision-making process.** From the time we are small children, we learn through parental instruction. Just so, we grow spiritually as we learn to follow God's instruction, as we turn to Him in prayer and apply the spiritual principles in His Word to our decisions.

**2. Exercise faith.** Just as we also learn through experience, through suffering the consequences of wrong decisions and reaping the rewards of right decisions, we grow spiritually as our faith is put to the test and we see that it is the solution to life's problems.

**3. Give of yourself.** As we forget ourselves and focus on meeting the needs of others and making them happy, we become conduits of God's love to those people. And as we pour out, God pours into us. "There is one who scatters, yet increases more. ... The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself" (Proverbs 11:24a-25). "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

**4. Recognize and work on weak areas.** We all have room for improvement. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). That’s a fact of life that’s general enough that it’s not too hard for most people to accept. It gets harder when we get specific about our weaknesses, and it gets harder still when others get involved. It’s humbling to acknowledge our weaknesses, even if only to ourselves and God. But if we can humbly acknowledge them to others and show ourselves open to their help in the form of advice, reminders, and prayers, we find ourselves on the fast track to spiritual progress.

**5. Take on new challenges.** It’s human nature, especially as we grow older, to say, “This is the kind of person I am” or, “I can do this, but not that,” but when we do, we stop growing. When we close ourselves off to new information and ideas, we stop growing intellectually. When we close ourselves off from other people, we stop growing emotionally. But when we close ourselves off to new challenges, we stop growing intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Again, we are each a work in progress, and we only continue to make progress by moving forward, and the way we move forward is by rising to new challenges. ●

## GOODBYE, PAST! HELLO, FUTURE!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

As the year comes to a close, before the New Year comes in, it’s good to sit down and ask yourself, “What have I accomplished this past year? Have I done my best for Jesus, when He has done so much for me?” Has it been a year that you’re thankful for because you’re sure Jesus is pleased with it?

The New Year is also a good time to count your blessings. What from the past year are you most thankful for? What prayer or hope do you have for the New Year? What promise from His Word do you claim for the New Year?

## FEEDING READING

### *Choice and Decision-Making*

FOR CHRISTIANS, DECISION-MAKING SHOULD BE SYNONYMOUS WITH FINDING THE WILL OF GOD.

Psalm 25:4–5,9  
Psalm 143:10

DON’T TRY TO REASON THINGS THROUGH ON YOUR OWN; ASK GOD WHAT’S BEST.

Proverbs 3:5,7a  
Proverbs 19:21  
Isaiah 55:8–9

GOOD DECISIONS ARE BASED ON SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GOALS, RATHER THAN SOLELY ON CIRCUMSTANCES OR PERSONAL DESIRES.

2 Corinthians 4:18  
1 Kings 3:5,9–14

GOD ALWAYS CHOOSES THE BEST FOR US.

Psalm 37:4  
Psalm 84:11  
Jeremiah 29:11  
Romans 8:28

ONE OF THE MAIN PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN REACHING A DECISION: PRAY FOR THE LORD’S GUIDANCE.

Psalm 37:5  
Proverbs 3:6  
Isaiah 30:21  
John 16:13  
James 1:5

SOUND DECISIONS ARE BASED ON GOD’S WORD.

Psalm 119:105  
Psalm 119:133a  
Proverbs 6:22–23  
Matthew 7:24–25

LISTENING TO GODLY COUNSEL FROM OTHERS OFTEN LEADS TO SOUNDER, WISER DECISIONS.

Proverbs 11:14  
Proverbs 12:15  
Proverbs 15:22

THE FINAL TEST: IS IT LOVING?

Romans 13:9b–10  
1 Corinthians 16:14

(This month’s answer is based in part on “Five Steps Toward Spiritual Growth” by Samuel M. Shoemaker, which first appeared in *Faith at Work* magazine and was reprinted in the September 1962 issue of *Guideposts* magazine.)

# ANXIETY AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

BY JOSIE CLARK

**I** GREW UP AROUND CREEKS, LAKES, AND RIVERS, but when I was sixteen I went to Atlantic City, New Jersey, and saw the ocean for the first time. At the boardwalk the night we arrived, I walked out on a wooden pier. As the first thunderous waves crashed beneath my feet, I grabbed the railing, terrified. Since then I have had a cautious fondness for the ocean. I've never been a strong swimmer, but I love the look of the ocean, the feel of sand between my toes, and even the weightless feeling of being lifted from my feet and carried about by gentle

waves—as long as I have something buoyant to hang onto.

So when we spent a summer near the beach and my two teenage sons developed a keen interest in boogie boarding, I could relate. I was happy to see them securely tethered to their boards a hundred yards out in the water, waiting for that perfect wave. But as time went on, they got braver and braver, insisting that the perfect wave was to be found further and further out to sea. I would sit on the shoreline watching the dots that were my sons in the midst of all that blue ocean and try to control my anxiety.

Sometimes a mistake parents make is letting worry be the guideline for deciding what their children are able to do. If something causes the parents to worry, they won't let their children do it. Worry seems almost a necessary

**COURAGE  
IS ANXIETY  
COMMITTED TO  
THE LORD IN  
PRAYER.**

part of parenting. It is a sign of love and concern. It is also a warning signal that it's time to pray. I think worry can actually be a good thing when it causes us to channel our negative, anxious thoughts into a prayer that can help bring about a positive outcome in that situation.

It is our responsibility to train our children and lead them in the right direction, but at a certain point we need to pull back and trust God to keep them from serious harm. As children grow, they need to be able to learn through an ever-broadening range of experiences; they need to learn to take responsibility for themselves, and they need to learn to pray themselves when "out in the deep blue sea."

It gives them a sense of security, though, to know that their parents are "on the shore," still looking after them and still vigilant in prayer—like the time when one of my sons experienced a moment of sheer panic after a wave caught him off guard and knocked him for a loop, and the cord that tethered him to his boogie board slipped off. He thought he was going to drown, but he remembered that I was on the beach praying for him, and he called out to God himself. He knew in that instant he was going to be okay, and he was.

As my kids grow up and move away, I think it's important that they know they have a mother who prays for them. That also reminds them to turn to God in moments of anxiety. I can't be there to hold them up, but He can. I can't meet all their needs or solve all their problems for them, but He can work miracles when they exercise their faith and pray.

An acquaintance once told me about how he had been at the beach with some friends and their kids when one of the girls was caught in a riptide. As she was being pulled out to sea, he realized she was in trouble, dove in, and began swimming out to rescue her. The current was stronger than he expected, and it took him a long time to reach her. By the time he did, she was near drowning.

He tried to help her back, but realized in one desperate moment that he was worn out himself and wasn't going to make it. He called out to God, and the Lord told him to stop struggling and reach down with his foot. He found what he thought was the tip of a sandbar and managed to stay there, holding onto the girl and bobbing with the waves until a U.S. Coast Guard rescue team arrived.

When they were safely on shore, one of his rescuers said, "What I don't understand is how you could be out there for so long, hanging onto that girl and treading water." My friend told him about the sandbar that he could just barely reach with his legs outstretched. "I don't know what you are talking about," the man replied. "We know this area, and where you were the water is many meters deep. There is no sandbar."

Even in the middle of the deep blue sea, God will give us something to plant our feet on, even if He has to create it out of nothing in answer to our earnest prayers. ●

*JOSIE CLARK IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S.*

## NEW YEAR'S WISHES

What shall I wish you?  
Treasures of earth?  
Songs in the springtime?  
Pleasures and mirth?  
Flowers on your pathway,  
Skies ever clear?  
Would this ensure you  
A happy new year?

What shall I wish you?  
What can be found  
Bringing you sunshine  
All the year round?  
Where is the treasure,  
Lasting and dear,  
That shall ensure you  
A happy new year?

Faith that increases,  
Walking in light;  
Hope that's abounding,  
Happy and bright;  
Love that is perfect,  
Casting out fear;  
These shall ensure you  
A happy new year.

Peace in the Savior,  
Rest at His feet,  
Smile of His countenance  
Radiant and sweet.  
Joy in His presence!  
Christ ever near!  
This will ensure you  
A happy new year!  
—FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL  
(1836-79), ADAPTED

# DEFY THE IMPOSSIBLE

BY ARIANA KEATING

**H**AVE YOU EVER READ SOMETHING AND HAD IT GET STUCK IN YOUR HEAD? That happened to me recently with a magazine article titled “Murder of the Impossible.” As soon as my eyes fell on it, I was intrigued. (The word “murder” does have a way of capturing your attention!) I quickly skimmed the text. It told of a man who had climbed most of the highest mountains in the world. In fact, he had dedicated his entire life to his dream of becoming one of the most skilled and accomplished mountain climbers ever. His passion was not without its price, though. Taking on the elements often cost him his health, and on one such occasion frostbite claimed seven of his toes. Undeterred, he continued to search for new ways to defy the impossible.

After I put the magazine down, I reflected on what it means to defy the impossible. First of all, what *is* impossible? From the most innocent child to the wisest elder,

we all encounter things that at first seem impossible to us. But unlike those who have been persuaded by experience that it doesn’t pay to try to tackle the “impossible,” babies *expect* to overcome. That’s because they have a quality that the doubters lost as they grew up—childlike faith and trust. They have faith in their parents and trust them to be there to catch them if they fall. And their faith pays off; they learn to overcome an amazing assortment of obstacles, one step at a time.

That, I was reminded in my moment of reflection, is the key to vanquishing the impossible—faith in God. As we take God’s hand, He can help us overcome any impossibility. Throughout history great men and women have confronted the impossible and have come out victorious, and that is why they are still remembered. The road to victory was long and treacherous, but they went the distance, one step at a time. They defeated the impossible because they held on, and when that victory was theirs they looked ahead to the next challenge and moved on.

When the impossibilities of life loom large, take God’s hand and take it one step at a time. He makes the impossible possible. ●

ARIANA KEATING IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THAILAND.



## WALK BY FAITH

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

MAN SAYS, “TIE UP IN PORT. Don’t attempt the impossible—you’ll sink!” God says, “Launch out into the deep! Cast forth your nets and I’ll give you such a catch of fish there will not be room enough to hold it” (Luke 5:4–9). Man says, “Look at the waves! Look at the condition of your vessel! You can’t do it!” God says, “Look at Me. With man it is impossible, but with God *nothing* is impossible, and all things are possible to those who believe” (Matthew 14:29–31; Luke 1:37; 18:27). If we take that step of faith and it’s God’s will, He will do the humanly impossible!

# ONE WHO KNOWS HIM

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

**A FRIEND AND I HAPPENED TO WALK PAST A CINEMA JUST AS SEVERAL MOVIES ENDED** and hundreds of people flooded onto the sidewalk. One man stood out in the crowd—literally—and he was walking straight toward us. He must have been seven feet tall and had the athletic build of a basketball player. As I turned to tell Abi what I was thinking, she ran up to him.

“Francisco, let me shake your hand!” she said excitedly. “No, let me *hug* you! You are doing such a good job! I think your team will win the championship!”

Abi’s enthusiastic reaction also stood out in the crowd. She was animated and excited. Everyone else seemed to ignore him. Some noticed but didn’t respond. Some may even have recognized him. Many, however, didn’t even see the seven-foot man in their midst. They were lost in their own worlds. Out of hundreds, only Abi ran to him, greeted him by name, knew his accomplishments, and praised



him for the good basketball season that he and the San Antonio Spurs were having. Being the avid sports fan she is, Abi laughed and talked about it all the way home. That moment had made her day, and she couldn’t wait to tell her husband and children. She also seemed to have made Francisco’s day.

Reflecting on that experience the next morning, I was struck by a surprising thought. How many of us recognize Jesus

as the hero He is? Do we recognize Him in others or His handiwork in the world around us? Do we excitedly run to Him, proclaim His goodness, and tell others whenever we catch a glimpse of Him?

Those of us who know Jesus can see Him walking among us. We are thrilled by His presence and are changed. He may not appear as a seven-foot-tall basketball player. He may appear as a baby whose smile turns your day around. He may appear as a friend who knows the perfect word to say. He may appear as a doctor who deftly mends your broken body. He may come to you as a friendly stranger who tells you that Jesus loves you and wants to come into your heart.

Those of us who know Him love Him. We can’t contain our excitement whenever we see Him, and we want others to know Him, too. ●

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

Have you met the Man? You can! All it takes is one prayer to open your heart to Jesus and receive Him as your Savior—one prayer like this:

*Dear Jesus, thank You for coming and dying for me so I can be forgiven my sins, experience Your love here and now, and have the promise of eternal life in Heaven. I open my heart and invite You in. Amen.*



## FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

*Happy new you!*

In this coming year, I can help you become more like you want to be. In fact, I can do better than that! I can help you become more like *I* want you to be. As I do, I think you'll find that your plans for yourself and My plans for you really aren't that different. They may start out that way, but if you'll trust that I know best and go My way, you'll soon find that I was right. You'll know that by the love and happiness and fulfillment you'll experience, which will be much greater than anything you might have found on your own.

Yes, it will take some effort on your part; it will take a daily yielding. For Me to live and move in you and work through you in greater measure, there must be yielding. You must ask Me to help you change, and you must be willing to work at overcoming any habits that are holding you back from becoming all you could be. Make some resolutions, with My guidance, and then review them daily and put them into practice until they become second nature to you. You may not be able to do all of these things every day, especially not at first, but with practice, as you apply yourself and learn to avail yourself of My help, I will override your old habits and nature.

Don't expect to be totally changed overnight, for this is not the way I work. Be patient, be consistent, and I will bring about the desired changes. If you will do your part, I will bring you along step by step, because I love you.

