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CHANGE YOUR LIFE | CHANGE YOUR WORLD

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

11 tips to put you over the top

THE GOD FACTOR

Real help for real problems

HOW I CLEARED MY INBOX BY NOT DOING IT

From inundated to inspired



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Activated Ministries

PO Box 462805
Escondido, CA 92046–2805
USA
Toll-free: (1–877) 862–3228
E-mail: info@actmin.org

Activated Europe

Bramingham Pk. Business Ctr.
Enterprise Way
Luton, Beds. LU3 4BU
United Kingdom
+44 (0) 845 838 1384
E-mail: activatedEurope@activated.org

Activated Africa

P.O. Box 2150
Westville 3630
South Africa
+27 (83) 556 8213
E-mail: activatedAfrica@activated.org

Activated India

P.O. Box 5215
G.P.O.
Bangalore – 560 001
India
E-mail: activatedIndia@activated.org

Activated Philippines

P.O. Box 1147
Antipolo City P.O.
1870 Antipolo City
Philippines
E-mail: activatedPI@activated.org
Cel: (0922) 8125326

Activated Australia

Email: info@activated.org.au
+61 2 8011 4345
www.activated.org.au



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

People may define success differently, but who doesn't want to be successful? And rightly so. Both our desire for comfort and security and our yearning for meaning and fulfillment in life—our basic physical and spiritual needs, in other words—are inborn and universal. Why then do so many people seem to settle for so little? Why don't they pursue their dreams more actively? There are several reasons, but I think this excerpt from an article I came across recently exposes one of the most common:

“Both success and failure involve future consequences, namely inevitable rewards or unavoidable regrets. If this is true, why don't more people take time to ponder the future? The answer is simple: They are so caught up in the current moment that it doesn't seem to matter. The problems and the rewards of today are so absorbing to some human beings that they never pause long enough to think about tomorrow.”

If that sounds like you, this issue could help get you started on a new future-focused and more successful path. *The God Factor* (pg. 4) explains how to tap into God's infinite reservoir of spiritual and material blessings. *Strategies for Success* (pg. 8) provides practical advice. *Getting God's Input* (pg. 10) tells how you can make sure you're on the right track moment by moment and step by step. *Appreciation in the Workplace* (pg. 5) offers advice on how to succeed as a team. *Work with Me*, a message from Jesus to you (back page), will help you to see your work, the challenges you face, and your future in a new light. Put it all together, and there will be no stopping you.

So dust off those dreams, get God's promises and power behind you, and gear up for an exciting, successful future.

Keith Phillips

Keith Phillips
For Activated

'Jim Rohn, *The Five Major Pieces to the Life Puzzle* (Southlake, Tx.: Jim Rohn International, 1991)

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EDITOR Keith Phillips

ILLUSTRATION David Komik

DESIGN Gisele Lefavre
Doug Calder

PRODUCTION Jessie Richards

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FALLING TOGETHER



BY HEIDI DANSHOLM

“EVERYTHING IS FALLING APART!” My outburst came one day after a visit to the Kurasini Orphanage in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where for the past two years our team of volunteers from the Family International has been working with the staff to raise the children’s living standard. We had begun by improving sanitation in the kitchen and dormitories, and some progress had been made. But it seemed that there were always more things that needed to get done. As the to-do list grew, so did the list of needed materials and supplies. There was also the matter of funding. How would we find enough sponsors to help meet all of these needs?

We had been discussing the project over dinner when my mind flashed back to the state of the nursery, and I felt overwhelmed with frustration once again—hence my “Everything is falling apart!” outburst.

One of my colleagues chuckled and reminded me of the dismal condition the orphanage had been in the first time we saw it. Then he listed the many changes that we *had* been able to make.

How foolish I felt! Yes, there was still much to do, but taking a few minutes to consider and appreciate how far we had come helped put things in perspective. Instead of feeling overwhelmed, I was overjoyed that so many changes had come to pass. Slowly but steadily, progress was being made.

Then I heard God’s voice in my mind. “Who is ultimately in control?—I am! Who sees the situation more clearly and knows better how to fix it, you or Me?—I do! Who has come through for you every time you faced an ‘impossible’ situation in the past?—I have! The best thing you can do is to keep doing what you can day by day and keep praying. Trust Me, things will fall into place in My time!”

That was all I needed to hear. I felt a surge of energy and renewed determination. We would move forward with the things we could, taking one thing at a time and leaving the rest in God’s hands. With God behind us, we could do this!

All of life is like that, of course. Many times the odds seem stacked against us, but if we’ll stop and step back for a moment, we’ll see once again that God is there to help. In His hands, things don’t fall apart, they fall together.

HEIDI DANSHOLM IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN TANZANIA. ●

God doesn’t have to have anything to begin on. He made the world out of *nothing*. Pretty good old world, isn’t it? He hung it on *nothing*. Hangs pretty good, doesn’t it? And He can make something out of nothing—even you—if you will listen for His instructions, do what you can do, and trust Him to do the rest.—*David Brandt Berg*

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

THE GOD FACTOR

GOD IS IN THE HEAVENLY REALM, but He works in the real world. He deals not just in spiritual blessings and rewards, but in tangible, black-and-white, dollars-and-cents material blessings and rewards as well. He's the God of Heaven, and also the God of this present world. He transcends both, rules in both, lives in both, dominates both, creates in both, and has the power to pay us in both currencies.

We need to learn to trust Him for the material things that we need—not just our spiritual needs like happiness, purpose, and peace of mind. He's just as powerful, just as capable, and just as willing to give us the tangible, practical blessings we need. He has no problem or qualm about pulling cold, hard cash out of His pocket for us, if we'll only have the faith to receive it. We need to not limit God in our minds, but realize that His influence is all encompassing and that He is capable of performing miracles in both the spiritual and physical realms. He can and will give us both spiritual and material blessings, and we all need a whole lot of both.

God has given us some amazing promises in His Word. These promises are for real. They have been given to us by our truthful God who never lies. He doesn't exaggerate. He doesn't pump up His promises to lift Himself up or to make us feel good. He gives us His promises because He wants us to believe and claim them as our own, so He can give us all of the great things He has in store for us.

They're not fake promises, but each one is conditional. "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of



your heart.”¹ “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”² “Give and it will be given to you.”³ “No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.”⁴ They're each dependent on us fulfilling our part of the bargain, which nearly always comes down to keeping His two great commandments: Love God, and love our neighbors as we do ourselves.⁵ But if we do our part, they are guaranteed to come to pass—not necessarily in the way we want or think they will, but in God's time and way. Like a wise and loving parent, He always knows what's best for us and is happy to give it to us. That's the God factor. ●

¹Psalm 37:4

²Matthew 6:33

³Luke 6:38

⁴Psalm 84:11

⁵Matthew 22:37-39

APPRECIATION

APPRECIATION IN THE WORKPLACE

BY MARIA FONTAINE

APPRECIATION IS A HUMAN NEED. It's not just something that's nice to have when possible, but something that each person needs in order to be happy and to thrive. That's true in every setting, but it's perhaps nowhere more evident than in the workplace. When people feel genuinely appreciated by those they work for and with, they're much more likely to be excellent contributors and "team players."

We *all* need appreciation, even if some of us don't like to admit it. You need it, I need it, and everyone else needs it! But how are others going to feel fulfilled in this way unless we regularly express our appreciation for who they are and what they contribute to the team?

When there's lots of appreciation flowing between team members, this significantly boosts the chances of that team becoming a winning team. Appreciation

has the power to bring out the best in people. It makes them want to do more, stretch more, contribute more, feel like they're capable of more, and be content in the role they play. If everyone on the team appreciates one another, respects one another, and shows faith in one another, this multiplies the overall productivity and happiness of the team.

It's definitely to your advantage to take the time to appreciate those you work with. It will make you happier, because appreciation is a form of love, and love has a way of returning to those who bestow it. It will make the recipients of the appreciation happier, because it will brighten their lives. And if everyone's appreciating everyone, then the workplace will be a happier, more positive place, everyone will work harder and better, more will be accomplished, and both the material and spiritual rewards will be greater.

Thinking positive thoughts about one another is good, it's a start, but if we don't *express* those thoughts, if we don't take the time or make the effort to verbalize them, they won't do anyone else any good. We can't expect people to read our minds. We have to put those thoughts into words or actions. We have to be *active* in our appreciation.

There's so much that we can appreciate others for, but it takes effort on our part. We have to get closer to people and talk to them more and on a deeper level. We need to try to expand our "appreciation horizons" and not only appreciate others for the things that benefit us in the most obvious, direct ways. It means so much to people when someone takes an interest in them, notices unique and special things about them, and takes appreciation to a deeper level.

No matter what may have held you back from dishing out sincere and regular appreciation in the past, you can begin today to bring out the best in others by pointing it out. Appreciate always. ●



When Mr. Simpkin from Head Office introduced the company's new 'No Frills' efficiency measures, productivity quickly increased, but Edward lamented the loss of the warm and cozy office atmosphere that he and his colleagues had previously enjoyed.



Persistence

BY JESSICA ROBERTS

I'VE WORKED WITH YOUNG CHILDREN FOR YEARS, and I never cease to be amazed at their hunger for life, joy of discovery, and perseverance. Yes, perseverance. That may come as a new thought, considering small children's notoriously short attention spans. (Any mother who has tried to get her toddler to sit still long enough to finish a meal can tell you about that.) There are moments in every young child's life, though, when the inborn urge for development drives the child to learn a new skill, such as picking up a small object with chubby little fingers, or crawling, or walking. These new skills require a huge amount of concentration and effort on the part of the child and a great deal of time compared to his or her short life up to that point. They also put physical demands on muscles that are just beginning to learn coordination and are barely strong enough to sustain the child's weight.

When I recently moved to a new country, I went through a difficult time of adjustment. My friends and co-workers in my former situation had become like family. It hurt to leave them, and I especially missed teaching and helping to care for their kids. I tried my hand at new aspects of our volunteer work, but felt I wasn't good at any of them. At one point, for example, I channeled my energy into a toy-and-book drive for needy children, but when it was slow taking off, I grew discouraged and felt like giving up.

One day I was caring for a co-worker's baby, Rafael. For as long as I had known him, Rafael had been trying to crawl. He would start by pushing himself up on shaky arms and eventually get up on all fours, but then he would get stuck. This went on for weeks. He would push himself up and rock back and forth on his pudgy hands and knees, but not make any forward progress. If a toy was just out of his reach, no matter how much he rocked on all fours or wiggled on his belly, he wouldn't get any closer. He sometimes managed to scoot himself backwards, but that only moved him further from his goal. This day, after trying his hardest, he looked at me with "Pick me up!" written in frustration on his little features.

I could sympathize, as I felt just as frustrated in my new situation. I knew, though, that all that struggling was strengthening his muscles and teaching him about his body. So I picked him up and cuddled and encouraged him a bit, but then put him back on the floor to try again. He would have to learn to crawl on his own; I couldn't do it for him. Eventually he would grow stronger and get the hang of it.

Suddenly I realized how much like Rafael I was. I'd been struggling, trying to learn new jobs, a new language, and about a new culture, and my natural reaction had been to look up to Jesus and say "Pick me up! Save me from this!" But He knows that this time of learning, difficult as it may be, will make me stronger. So even though His love is always there to cheer me on, I have to do the work. I have to persevere.

That gave me a new outlook on my situation. If Rafael can keep it up, then I will too! And when I grow weary of trying or get frustrated from seemingly futile effort, I'll go to Jesus for love, encouragement, and the strength to keep learning the lessons life brings my way.

Rafael is now happily crawling and starting to pull himself up to stand. I'm also taking baby steps in learning new skills and broadening my horizons. I know we'll both be up and running before long, if we just keep trying.

JESSICA ROBERTS IS A VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN ARGENTINA. ●



Results and *Roses*

BY EDGAR GUEST

The man who wants a garden fair,
Or small or very big,
With flowers growing here and there,
Must bend his back and dig.

The things are mighty few on earth
That wishes can attain.
Whate'er we want of any worth
We've got to work to gain.

It matters not what goal you seek
Its secret here reposes:
You've got to dig from week to week
To get results or roses.

POINTS TO PONDER

The Path of Most Persistence

There will always be those who will tell you it can't be done, but throughout history, progress has always come from those who said it *could* be done.—*Mottos for Success (MFS)*¹

The people who accomplish the most do so not because they never run into problems, but because they believe there is a solution for every one.—*MFS*

The great men and women of history are remembered not because they never failed, but because they didn't let their failures stop them. They kept on until they succeeded.—*MFS*

A single stroke of an axe won't bring down an oak, but many will.—*Spanish proverb*

Success is like buried treasure: Only the most believing and persevering find it.—*MFS*

Here is the great secret of success: Work with all your might, but never trust in your work. Pray with all your might for the blessing in God, but work at the same time with all diligence, with all patience, with all perseverance. Pray and work. Work and pray.
—*George Müller (1805–1898)*

Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.—*St. Paul, Galatians 6:9* ●

¹*Mottos for Success* is published by Aurora Production and is available from any of the addresses on page 2.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

FACED WITH A MAJOR PROJECT OR CHALLENGE? You probably have a general idea of where you want to go, but you'll need a strategy, a plan of steps to take in order to reach that objective.

Planning is an investment. To plan wisely and well takes time, effort, patience, good research, and counsel—and for those of us who include a spiritual dimension, time in prayer. But a well-formed plan will pay for itself many times over.

There are many ways to create a strategy, but here are a few tried-and-proven principles that you might want to try.

1 Define your long-term objectives. What exactly do you hope to achieve? Spell each one out on paper in concrete, concise terms. For the greatest chance of success, narrow your focus to one or two primary objectives. You can take on more or diversify later, as resources permit.

2 Set short-term goals to reach your long-term objectives. In order to reach your long-term objectives, you will need steppingstones along the way. These should be smaller goals that together will get you to the final destination of your long-term objectives. They should be detailed and specific, concrete and measurable. If a goal isn't something that you'll be able to tick off as done, if it can't be quantified, then it's not specific enough. Breaking down your goals into bite-sized pieces is crucial. The simpler and easier your goals are to reach, the better, because you'll see more immediate progress. It's easy to overestimate and shoot too high when setting your goals. It's also wise to realize that reaching big objectives takes time. Having a number of smaller goals will help keep the motivation level high, because you'll see more tangible progress. And every time you tick off one of your smaller goals, you're that much closer to your long-term objective.

3 Identify any obstacles. Once you have determined your long-term objectives and your short-term goals, you should take a look at any obstacles, or cons, or things that might stand in the way of achieving the results you're after. If you are alerted to potential problems, you can head them off by proactively praying for potential solutions.

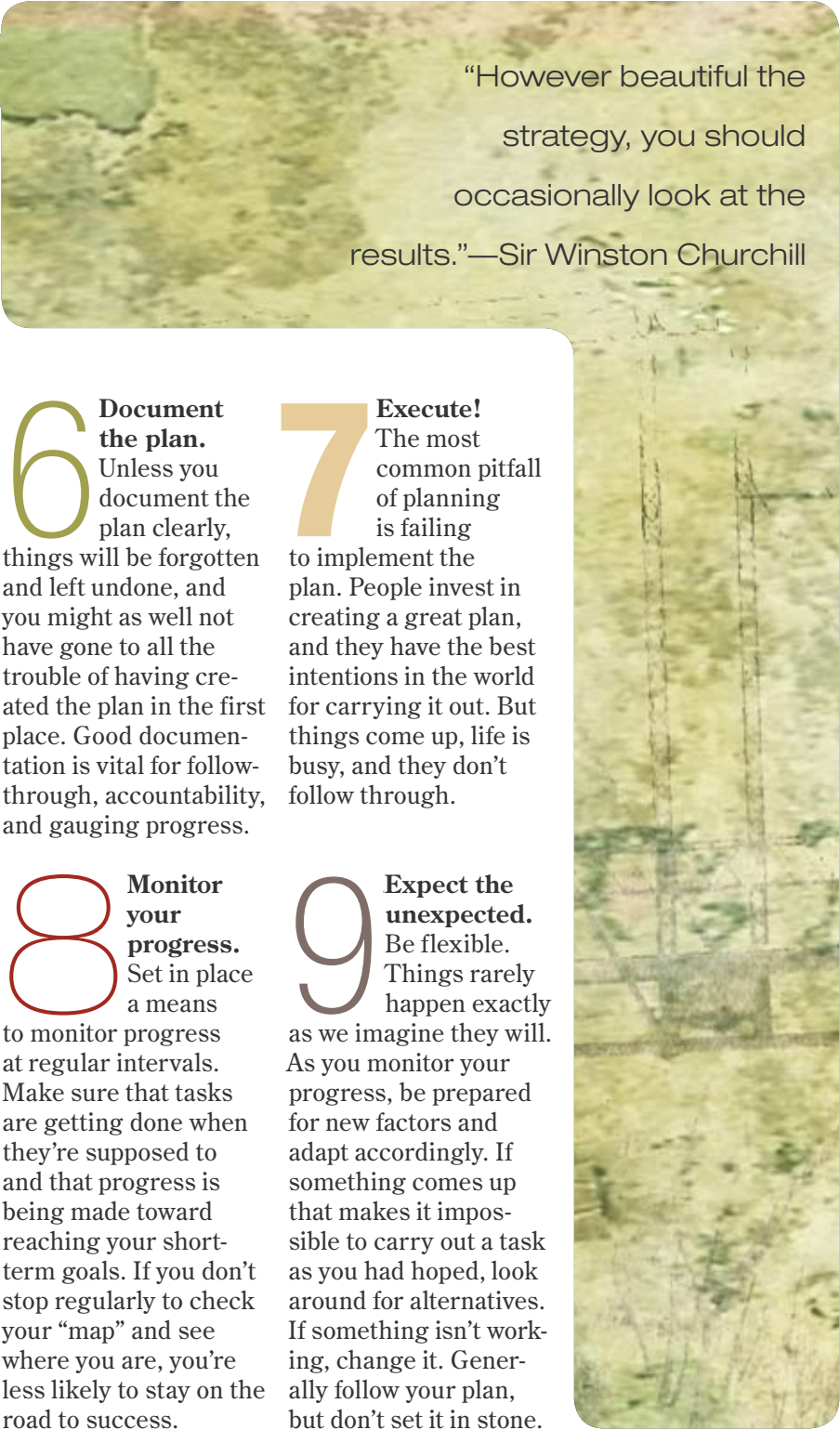
4 Formulate a strategy. Once you have determined your long-term objectives and the short-term goals, you need a plan that includes specific tasks that will help you reach each of your short-term goals. Your plan must be realistic. A lofty plan may look impressive, but if it's too complicated or difficult to implement, it will never get off the ground and therefore be ineffective.

Assign the specific tasks that will be involved. Determine who will be responsible for each step, when they should have it done by, and if it's possible to know at this stage, how it should be done. Accountability is vital to success, as otherwise there will be no follow-through and no progress.

5 Ask God for guidance. Once you've taken the preceding steps, ask God in prayer to confirm that you're going in the right direction, that you have chosen the right priorities, that you haven't overlooked anything crucial, and that your long-term objectives and your short-term goals are realistic. "A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."¹ "Lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."²

¹Proverbs 16:9

²Proverbs 3:5-6



“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.”—Sir Winston Churchill

6 Document the plan. Unless you document the plan clearly, things will be forgotten and left undone, and you might as well not have gone to all the trouble of having created the plan in the first place. Good documentation is vital for follow-through, accountability, and gauging progress.

8 Monitor your progress. Set in place a means to monitor progress at regular intervals. Make sure that tasks are getting done when they’re supposed to and that progress is being made toward reaching your short-term goals. If you don’t stop regularly to check your “map” and see where you are, you’re less likely to stay on the road to success.

7 Execute! The most common pitfall of planning is failing to implement the plan. People invest in creating a great plan, and they have the best intentions in the world for carrying it out. But things come up, life is busy, and they don’t follow through.

9 Expect the unexpected. Be flexible. Things rarely happen exactly as we imagine they will. As you monitor your progress, be prepared for new factors and adapt accordingly. If something comes up that makes it impossible to carry out a task as you had hoped, look around for alternatives. If something isn’t working, change it. Generally follow your plan, but don’t set it in stone.

10 Keep it simple. Guard against additions or complications that would overload the time and resources you’ve allocated to reaching a particular goal. When you first plan something, it often looks simple enough. But as you go along, the project grows—either because you keep adding new ideas, or because things are just more complicated than you thought—and usually some of both. Recognize when your plan is becoming overloaded, and determine what is necessary and what is not. Be willing to cut the frills and scale back on aspects that are just too costly in terms of resources.

11 Celebrate your successes, the milestones along the way. Don’t wait till you reach your long-term objectives. Celebrating the completion of short-term goals generates satisfaction and excitement. ●

Getting God's Input

BY RAFAEL HOLDING

IS GOD PERSONALLY CONCERNED ABOUT YOU? Does He want to provide solutions to your problems, bless your endeavors, help you get the most out of life, and make you the best person you can possibly be? If so, is He able to tell you how? Yes, yes, and yes!

He knows that you have questions and problems, and He wants to give you answers and solutions. To that end, He created a means of two-way communication, a channel between Him and you, so that you can talk to Him in prayer and in return receive messages that He speaks directly to and specially for you.

Even if you don't consider yourself very spiritual or close to God, you'll be happy to know that God will speak to anyone who has even only a little childlike faith—and He wants to speak to *you*, to lead you into a closer relationship with Him and to improve your life in the process.

The first step is believing that God wants to communicate with you from the spiritual realm. The second is being willing to put aside what your natural senses tell you (and sometimes even what common sense tells you), in favor of what God wants to tell you. Once you take those first two steps, you're ready to begin in earnest.

Start by finding a quiet place and taking a few minutes to talk to God, just like you would talk to a close friend. If you have a specific question, go ahead and ask. Or perhaps you don't have anything in particular on your mind, but want to hear whatever He might have to say

to you. Either way, once you've told Him that you want to hear from Him, do your best to concentrate and listen with your spirit for His answer.

Sometimes God may speak by bringing to mind a familiar verse or passage from the Bible, which when applied to the particular situation you're asking Him about, can be the clear and simple answer that you need.

At other times, God may speak a new message—words that He's never spoken exactly that way to anyone else. The wording style may range from formal to casual, everyday language. God can express Himself any way He likes on any subject, but He usually speaks to us each in a way that will be easy for us to receive and relate to.

It's easy to dismiss this little inner voice as being your own thoughts, especially when you are first starting to hear from God, but it's important that you accept that this is Him speaking to you. When you've sincerely asked God to speak, He will. "Ask and it will be given to you."¹ He fills the spiritually hungry with good things.²

Try not to analyze, scrutinize, or judge the message as it is coming, as that will interrupt the flow. You should study it later, though, so unless His message is very short you will probably want to type or write it down as it comes, before you forget any of the details.

You may feel any one of a number of emotions while receiving a message from God. Some people feel a surge of excitement or joy, some feel nervous, some break down and cry—but many, perhaps even most, feel nothing unusual at all. Some may feel some-

¹Matthew 7:7

²Luke 1:53

As you get in the habit of hearing from God, it will become easier

thing sometimes and nothing at other times. Whether you feel something or not doesn't make the message you receive more or less valid. "We walk by faith, and not by sight"¹—and certainly not by feelings!

Don't be disappointed if at first you don't receive long, eloquent messages from God, although that can happen. Usually with time and experience, as you exercise your gift of hearing from God, the messages you receive will become more detailed and more complete. Don't give up! Practice makes perfect.

Remember also that a message from Heaven doesn't have to be lengthy to be exactly what He wants to tell you at that moment. Sometimes God may give you the answer you need in one sentence or less. Of course, it's good to wait long enough to make sure He doesn't have any more to say before going about your business, but once you feel that He has finished talking, then thank Him for speaking and trust that the message He gave you contains the answer you were asking Him for.

There will probably be times when you ask Him to speak but are too distracted by other thoughts to hear anything at all. Don't worry. It's tough to concentrate sometimes, and God understands our human weaknesses. If this is new to you, the simple fact that you're trying is a sign of progress. Keep it up!

Try to take a few minutes each day to pray and thank God for His goodness. Follow this

with your "question of the day" and a few moments of listening for His answer or whatever else He may want to say to you. As you get in the habit of hearing from God, it will become easier. As you continue to strengthen your faith by reading God's written Word, and if you continue to earnestly desire this gift of His Spirit, God won't fail you. He has promised to speak to you, and He will!

("GETTING GOD'S INPUT" WAS EXCERPTED FROM *HEARING FROM HEAVEN*, A BOOKLET IN AURORA PRODUCTION'S *GET ACTIVATED!* SERIES. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE GIFT OF PROPHECY, ORDER YOUR COPY FROM ONE OF THE ADDRESSES ON PAGE 2.) ●



¹2 Corinthians 5:7

HOW I CLEARED MY INBOX BY NOT DOING IT

BY JESSIE RICHARDS

OKAY, IT'S NOT QUITE CLEARED AS IN "0 ITEMS," and I don't ever expect that. In the past month, though, I've gone from a rather long-standing position of always having between 100 and 150 items in my inbox to having only between 7 and 30 at any given time—except, of course, when I open my mailbox for the first time each day and the mail floods in.

For as long as I've used email (I'm an administrator, and much of my work is now carried out by email), I've read advice by efficiency experts telling me not to live in my inbox. "Have set times of the day to check your email," or "Don't stop what you're doing to read and attend to each new email as it comes in," for example. I always thought that sounded great. Not trying to take care of everything as it comes in would free up more time for my actual priorities and to get bigger projects done, and I'd be less stressed ... but what about my *inbox*? Surely messages would pile up even worse, I would bottleneck other people's work, and they would get annoyed at me. Think of all the time, manpower, and money that could be lost if I didn't reply or attend to problems immediately. All kinds of horrible things could happen!

The fact is, a lot of my work, including some priorities, *does* center on my inbox. I do have to read, consider, and answer a lot of matters daily, so keeping it closed for all but a couple of hours a day just doesn't work. And sometimes I do need to attend to things pretty soon after they come in. I have tried different time-saving and focus techniques with some success, but the pile-up problem persisted. Recently, however, I made a discovery that took it all a step further.

I took a couple of weeks away from the office for quiet work in a quiet place. That's when I got the idea—credit where credit is due, Jesus gave it to me—to start off my workdays not by opening my inbox, but by doing the top priority or two on my to-do list. *Gasp!* Start my workday outside my inbox?! Not get into it till 11 or noon?! Seriously?!

Over those two weeks, I did that every day. There were also a couple of days when I wasn't able to connect to the Internet all day to pick up my email. That was tough on my nerves, but Jesus said to me—and I quote—"The world doesn't stop when you do." Ouch! It was the truth, of course, and it set me free.

During those days, a principle that I'd heard many times came to life: that through prayer we can get more done than through our own efforts. It did no good to fret over emails about timely questions that I wasn't getting and so couldn't answer. Instead, I just prayed for all the projects in the works and the people carrying them out. That gave me peace of mind, as well as a full day for uninterrupted work.

What happened to my inbox through all this? Over those two weeks the number of messages stayed about the same as before. Despite my "neglect" in not giving it nearly my full time, it wasn't growing.

Then, a couple of days before the end of my time away, I had an epiphany: Why wouldn't this work on an everyday basis in my normal work situation? I resolved to try.

When I sat down to work on my first day back, instead of opening my email, I spent 15 minutes praying for the various projects in the works and my coworkers who would be carrying them out. Next I went to my to-do list, and started with the top item—a letter that I have been putting off far too long—then took care of the next few items. Around 11 AM I opened my email and began taking care of the most urgent business.

After about 10 days of this new modus operandi, I saw the magic working. Two

notable things had occurred: I had worked my way through a substantial to-do list that included many items that had been on it too long, and the number of items in my inbox had shrunk from an already fairly tidy 70 or so to a far tidier 10 or so. I had cleared my inbox by not doing it.

I would say that a miracle had taken place, except that I don't think that was actually the case. I think it can better be attributed to listening to people who know what they're talking about—the time management experts and, of course, Jesus. I've started doing things the way I've known for a long time I should, but hadn't because it was so different and "not me," and I'm feeling all nice and flexible and rejuvenated. I'm approaching the six-week mark, which is said to be how long it takes to solidify a new habit. By God's grace, I think it may stick.

At this moment I can say with conviction that my inbox is my servant, not my master. My inbox is no longer my to-do list, but a tool to help me complete my to-do list. And I actually have time to write about it!

(Disclaimer: This approach may not work for everyone, because people and situations vary. If it doesn't work for you, I am sure Jesus can help you find a solution that does.)

JESSIE RICHARDS IS DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION FOR *ACTIVATED* AND SEVERAL OTHER FAMILY INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS. ●



An audience with Jesus

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

Jesus said, “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life!”¹ God’s Word, the Bible as well as Bible-based devotional and inspirational material like this *Activated* magazine, nourishes our spirit and keeps us alive and healthy spiritually. Just like we have to eat in order to have physical strength, we have to feed from the Word to have spiritual strength.

The challenge that many of us face when we sit down to read is that we’re too easily distracted by the thoughts of the day. Sometimes the answer lies in simply putting forth a little more effort. This spiritual exercise may help.

Next time you sit down to read God’s Word, imagine that Jesus is sitting next to you. Instead of merely reading the words on the page, imagine that Jesus is personally telling you these things face to face, in a personal audience with you. He *is* always with you in spirit,² but if He were with you in bodily form, if you could see Him, you would surely be hanging on His every word.

That’s how you should look at your time reading God’s Word, as a personal audience with Jesus, the King of all kings, during which He is presenting you with special words of wisdom, instruction, guidance, inspiration, and encouragement.

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“Your [God’s] words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.”—*Jeremiah 15:16*

¹John 6:63

²Hebrews 13:5

START YOUR DAY OFF RIGHT

—HEAR FROM JESUS!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

You ought to try a little prayer time every day, early in the morning before beginning your day’s work, asking Jesus to help you. When you first wake up, before you do anything, talk to Jesus. Get your orders from Him for the day, and you’ll be amazed at how He’ll solve or prevent a lot of your problems before the day even starts.

But if you go plunging into all your problems and troubles and your day’s work without stopping to talk to Jesus and get your directions from Him, you’ll be like a musician who decided to have his concert first, and then tune his instrument. Begin the day with the Word of God and prayer, and first of all get in harmony with Him.

Don’t ever think that it’s too hard to pray or that you don’t have time to pray. The busier your day, the more reason you have to pray and the longer you ought to pray. If you’ll spend a little more time praying, you will find that you’ll spend a lot less time working to get things done later. If your day is hemmed with prayer, it is less likely to unravel. It’s that simple!

JESUS, THE GREAT PROBLEM SOLVER

A PRAYER BY MARIA FONTAINE

THANK YOU, DEAR JESUS, that You're the greatest problem solver. You came to solve mankind's biggest problem—our need for salvation, to be freed from having to pay the price for our sins. But You didn't stop there. During Your earthly life You solved so many other problems. When there was no wine at the wedding, You created more wine.¹ When people came to You with their health problems, even ones they'd had for many years, You healed them.² When there was no food for the multitudes You were teaching and everyone was hungry, You multiplied the loaves and fishes.³ When the adulterous woman was about to be stoned, You had a big problem on Your hands, but with great wisdom, humility, and love You put the hypocrites in their place and not only saved but changed the woman's life.⁴

And every day You make Yourself available to help me solve my problems. Thank You for that! I know that I'm a mess. I'm only human. I make mistakes. I say and do the wrong things at times. Sometimes I hurt others without meaning to. That's why I need Your help so much.

Please help me to see problems as challenges, not as dead ends or disasters, knowing that You're there to help and that no problem is too big for You. Thank You for how You manage to turn every problem and difficulty I face into a steppingstone to greater progress. I know You have the power to solve the problems I face today, so I call on that power now. Amen. ●

¹John 2:1-11

³Matthew 14:15-21

²Matthew 12:15; Luke 4:40

⁴John 8:3-11



FEEDING READING

Getting Things Done God's Way

Set realistic goals.

Luke 14:28-32

Look to God for guidance.

Proverbs 2:6

Proverbs 3:5-6

Proverbs 16:3

Proverbs 19:21

Jeremiah 33:3

James 1:5

Don't try to go it alone; counsel and work with others.

Proverbs 8:33

Proverbs 11:14

Proverbs 15:22

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Ask for God's help.

1 Chronicles 16:11

Psalm 37:5

Psalm 121:2

Isaiah 50:7

Persist in the face of difficulties.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Galatians 6:9

Enjoy the rewards of your labors.

Proverbs 12:11a

Proverbs 12:14b

Proverbs 13:19a

Ecclesiastes 3:13

A LITTLE HELP FROM JESUS

A young boy was trying very hard to lift a heavy object when his father came into the room and asked, "Are you using all your strength?"

"Yes, of course I am!" the boy impatiently exclaimed.

"No, you're not," his father answered. "You haven't asked me to help you!"

So it is with Jesus and us. Often, a little help from Jesus is all the help we need.

Work with Me

When you work with Me as your partner on the job, you're working with the most multitalented, multitasking partner in the universe. I truly can do anything and everything!

Look at Me not only as a spiritual guide and counselor, but as someone who can actually get in there, roll up His sleeves, and help you do the work. I can save you hours and hours of work time by taking care of the behind-the-scenes side of things. I will even take care of situations before you have to get involved.

Tell Me specifically what you want to see done, and leave it with Me. Don't worry or fret about it, and don't keep checking up on Me to see if I'm on the job. Of course I'm on the job! Have faith, and your faith will bring out an entirely new dynamic in our relationship.

This is the key to your success: Let Me carry a good chunk of the load, which is exactly what I want to do. Commit things to Me in prayer. Depend on Me, and let Me do the "heavy lifting." I can easily remove obstacles that look insurmountable to you and help things to fall into place as they should. Give Me a chance to help you out, to do some of the work.

