

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

aCTIVATED

Vol 10 • Issue 1

PERSPECTIVES

Look beyond today

Resolutions

How to make yours realities

The princess and the dragon

An allegory of things to come



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Ask those who have achieved greatness in any field for the secrets of their success, and somewhere near the top of most lists will be a visualization of their goal. Throughout years of rigorous training, the Olympic champion pictured himself on the podium, receiving his gold medal. The prima ballerina saw herself doing grand jetés on the world's finest stages. The Nobel-winning scientist imagined his eureka moment. The star saleswoman mentally packed her bags 365 times for that prize spa vacation. It took hard work to be sure, but they got where they did in part by picturing themselves already there. When it finally happened, many will tell you, it was exactly as they had seen it in their mind's eye.

Read the Bible's "Faith Hall of Fame" chapter, Hebrews 11, and you'll see that this visualization technique is nothing new. It says of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others who did extraordinary things, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them."¹ Like the Olympian, the ballerina, the Nobel laureate, and the saleswoman, they each focused on the prize, but with one important difference. The things for which these Bible greats are most remembered were merely steppingstones to the ultimate prize they strove for—God's eternal reward for a life that was pleasing to Him.

So if you want to succeed in this coming year and beyond, "keep your eye on the prize"—whatever it is that you want to get out of life. And for the ultimate in success, find out what God wants you to *contribute* in this life. Only He knows that, but He will tell you if you ask. Set your sights on that, and God will not only give you the extra umph you need, He will heap on blessings all along the way.² And when this life is over, you'll hear Him say, "Well done!"³ What could be better than that?

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

¹Hebrews 11:13

²Psalms 37:4; 84:11; Matthew 6:33

³Matthew 25:14-21

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DON'T QUIT!

Sometimes the challenge God sets before you may seem insurmountable, but there are no impossibilities to men and women of faith. So what are you waiting for? Start climbing! It may be a rugged climb, but the view from the summit is worth it—every rocky step of it! Look forward and up to the heights you're soon to attain and views you're soon to thrill to if you keep fighting, climbing, winning, and don't quit.

—David Brandt Berg

No limits



BY ABI F. MAY

I CAN'T remember ever seeing a flea circus—the classic sideshow event in which fleas are the performers—but I came across a fascinating article about how the fleas are trained.

Fleas can jump extraordinarily high, relative to their tiny size. Training fleas involves putting them into a small box or jar. Without a lid, the fleas could easily jump out, so the flea trainer puts a lid in place and waits.

Inside the container, the fleas jump up in order to escape. They hit the lid and fall back down. Again and again, the fleas will jump, hit the lid, and fall back. Then, after some time, the fleas don't jump so high. They jump up almost as high as the lid, but not quite.

Eventually, the trainer will remove the lid. The fleas could easily escape now, but they don't even try. They've become accustomed to only jumping to a certain height. They have more or less decided that's their limit; they are going as high as they can go, and they don't attempt

anything further. Freedom is just a jump away, but it's a jump they don't make. "Stupid fleas," we say. "So void of intelligence that they don't realize the lid has been removed."

But come to think of it, we too sometimes allow ourselves to be limited by barriers that exist only in our minds. We tried and failed at something, and our confidence was shaken. The next time around, when an opportunity arose to try something new or bigger, we didn't rise to the challenge because we didn't think we were capable of doing it.

Life is full of new beginnings and fresh possibilities. As we start a new year, the lesson of the fleas should not be lost on us. We don't have to let the setbacks or mistakes of the past hold us down, like the nonexistent lid on the fleas' jar. No imaginary limits for us! With God's help, we can rise to new heights.

ABI F. MAY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN ENGLAND. ✨



PERSPECTIVES

ADAPTED FROM DAVID BRANDT BERG

TWO types of clocks make a good illustration of the way people tend to see things versus the way God sees things. The digital clock tells the hour, minute, and sometimes the second or even fraction of a second in easy-to-read digital format. That's like the way people often see things in terms of the present only. A clock with hands—what is now commonly called the analog clock—shows the full time cycle, similar to how God sees the whole scope of eternity.

The digital clock is like seeing one tree, whereas the analog clock is like seeing the whole forest. On the digital clock you can't see the forest for the tree; past and future are obscured by the present. But on the analog clock you can see that tree in relation to all the others; you can see at a glance how long it's been since any moment in the past, as well as how long it will be till you're at any moment in the future.

Relying on a digital clock is like driving on a winding road or on a dark road at night; all you can see is what is immediately in front of you. What you have passed is only a memory, and you can't see the future beyond the next

moment. You don't really see where you're going. Relying on an analog clock, on the other hand, is like driving with the aid of a map. At any given point, you can not only see where you are, but you can also see your progress, how far you've come and how much farther you have to go.

The Bible can be compared to an analog clock. Just as the analog clock gives you a better picture of where your day stands by putting the moment in perspective with time spent and time remaining, the Bible gives you a better perspective on your life by putting it in perspective with the big picture—Creation to eternity.

The analog clock is more complicated than the digital, but it's also more comprehensive. It takes more time and effort to learn to read an analog than it does to learn to read a digital, but it's a good investment because the analog tells you so much more. It takes study to understand the Bible. That takes a certain commitment and requires more effort than simply taking each moment as it comes, but it's a much wiser approach to life. ☞

The apostle Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."¹ In other words, we have to look beyond the problems that we're going through today to the long-term goal, the happiness and heavenly rewards that are promised us if we make the right choices and live our lives as God would have us live them.

—*Maria Fontaine*

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:19, KJV

A Pilgrim's Journey

BY UDAY KUMAR

MY favorite railway in the world is Australia's Indian Pacific. The line runs between Sydney on the east coast to Perth on the west coast, traversing a whole continent and connecting two oceans, the Pacific and the Indian. It spans a distance of 4,352 km (2,704 miles) and crosses three time zones—farther than London to Istanbul.

For most of the 65-hour journey, the train travels through some of the most rugged and barren landscapes in the world. One section crosses the Nullarbor Plain, which is an arid, treeless plain with a moon-like landscape the color of cayenne pepper. The word “Nullarbor” is derived from the Latin *nullus arbor*, meaning “no trees.” Nothing but parched, infertile limestone soil surrounds the track and stretches endlessly into the horizon. For one stretch of 478 km (297 miles) there are no bends at all in the line; it is the longest stretch of straight railway track in the world.

The train is the only moving object in the desolate landscape. Even though there is only desert outside, the comfort, amenities, and relaxed atmosphere on board make the journey enjoyable.

After a seemingly endless journey, the train reaches its final destination—the city of Perth. It feels like arriving in another world altogether. The wealth of the city, beautiful streets, glittering buildings, parks and open spaces, a beautiful river flowing into the sea—it is hard to believe that just a little while before we only saw dust and

scrub all around us. We have arrived at a shining new city, but only after huge, vast emptiness.

What an analogy of the Christian's journey! As a pilgrim passing through this transitory world, the most efficient way he can travel is by walking the path God has ordained for him, just as that train travels across the straight track laid out for it. Aided by God's Spirit, we can pass through the desert of this world in the peace and comfort He gives. Even when it seems like Hell around us, our spirits can experience a foretaste of Heaven.

A shining new city also awaits us at the end of our journey—a city not built by the hands of men, but by God the Creator Himself. As Revelation 21 describes, it is a city unlike any here on earth, prepared for His own dear children who love Him and abide in His love; a city in which, unlike the cities of men, goodness dwells and evil shall not enter; a city where we shall leave the heat, dust, and scrub of this world behind us. “The former troubles are forgotten ... and shall not be remembered or come to mind.”¹

So let us travel the path God has laid out for us, enjoying the journey and knowing that He is with us through it all and will get us to our heavenly destination safe and sound.

UDAY KUMAR IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN INDIA. ✍

¹Isaiah 65:16-17



The New Year is already here and I am still contemplating what my resolution should be. I am not overweight and I get enough exercise, so those won't do for me.

I was actually thinking more along the lines of a spiritual goal or some personality traits that I could try to strengthen, some way to become a better person. In something I read once, someone made an interesting point: When trying to tackle a problem you face, or grow in some way in your spiritual life, ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?" and go from there.

I was curious to find out more about this now widely used phrase and its origins, so I did a search on the Internet and found that the phrase "What would Jesus do?" and its initialism, WWJD, have been used by Christians for over 100 years as a reference point to follow Christ's example in their daily lives.

So that's my New Year's resolution for 2009. I will try to get in the habit of asking myself "What would Jesus do?" I'm not thinking about walking on water or raising the dead. I'm not quite in that league. But there are some things that I can do to follow His example on a day-to-day basis.

Be like the Master


BY MARTIN MCTEG

This "What would Jesus do?" looks like a pretty tall order for me. But I am going to give it a try. And I think it is going to turn out quite well, as I have memorized a verse from the Bible that tells me that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."¹

And the more I think about it, the more challenged I am to put it into practice. I hope that with time it will become automatic for me to ask myself "What would Jesus do?" and respond accordingly.

MARTIN MCTEG IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S. ✠

¹Philippians 4:13



✠ I can do my best to conform to God's plan for my life, as Jesus did.

✠ I can humble myself, as Jesus did.

✠ I can be a peacemaker, as Jesus was.

✠ I can love without discrimination, as Jesus did.

✠ I can try to handle difficult situations wisely, as Jesus did.

✠ I can make time each day for prayer, as Jesus did.

✠ I can serve others, as Jesus did.

✠ I can make time for children, even if I'm busy, as Jesus did.

FEEDING READING

Jesus practiced what
He preached—and so
can we

*Make a time and place for
prayer.*

Matthew 6:6

Mark 1:35

Mark 6:46

Luke 5:16

*Love without
discrimination.*

Matthew 5:43–48

Matthew 9:9–13

Matthew 14:14

Mark 10:17–21

Luke 23:39–43

John 8:1–11

Take time for children.

Luke 18:15–17

*Handle difficult situations
wisely and prayerfully.*

Matthew 5:25–26

Luke 20:19–26

John 8:3–9

Be humble.

Matthew 11:29

John 13:3–15

Serve others.

Luke 22:25–27

Philippians 2:5–8

Be a peacemaker.

Matthew 5:9

Matthew 26:48–52

Conform to God's plan.

Matthew 6:33

Luke 22:42

John 4:34

John 14:31

Life and onions

BY ANJALI MILES

My friends and I decided to do something different to celebrate New Year's Eve. Everyone would bring or do something that represented the past year. One person made a collage of photos—experiences, new friends, family, and so on. Another sang a song she had written. Two others sang songs that held special meaning for them.

When it was my turn, I brought out two onions, one whole and one chopped. Earlier that day, when I had prayed about what I should do for my presentation, Jesus told me to take onions.

“Why onions?” I asked. “What do they represent?”

Jesus explained that like an onion can be peeled back layer by layer, He had been peeling away at me for the past year. Slowly but surely He had pulled back the layers I'd built around myself—my self-image of being in control, or the way I acted tough, as though no one could hurt me, for example. As the year had progressed, more layers had been peeled back.

But Jesus didn't stop there. He let me go through difficulties that left me feeling like an onion that had been chopped up. These experiences brought some tears, as chopping an onion does, but like the chopping releases the onion's flavor, I know that Jesus has a good purpose for everything He does or allows to happen. Through it all, I believe, He was reshaping me for bigger and better things to come.

An onion isn't something that most people like to eat on its own, but it can enhance many other foods. I think I'm a bit like an onion in that regard too. Outspoken and sometimes a little sharp, I'm best in group and team situations, where personalities and talents blend to make a “tasty dish.”

So that's been my year in a nutshell—or an onion skin. I never thought I would be compared to an onion, but Jesus did—and it makes sense.

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You can be anything

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

GOD doesn't go very much for bigness after the manner of this world. In fact, He specializes in using people who seem most likely not to succeed; yet by the miraculous power and grace of God they become shining lights to others. God only makes great people out of little people, to show His greatness.¹

Dare to trust Him in spite of yourself, and give Him all the credit when He does the miracle—what you couldn't do. If you can believe in God, everything is possible, because He makes everything out of nothing. We're all nothing and can do nothing good of ourselves.² God is like the circle around the nothing that makes it something. With God all around you, even your nothing can be something. In fact, you can be almost anything! ✨

¹1 Corinthians 1:26–29

²Galatians 6:3; John 15:5

THE Princess and the Dragon

THE fair young princess was deeply in love. Though she'd never met her beloved face to face, the loving words he had written her from afar had won her heart and filled her life with song. She had already accepted His proposal of marriage, and in her heart she knew that she belonged to him and that one day she and the Prince of Light would live happily ever after in the wonderful place he was preparing.

But while she waited for him to come for her, the prince's arch-rival, the Ruler of Darkness, tried everything he could imagine to win the princess away from her lover. He offered her riches, fortune, and fame, but she could not be bought. To the princess, nothing could ever compare to the love she had received from her prince.

In a final desperate attempt, the Ruler of Darkness devised his most cunning scheme. He would disguise himself as the Prince of Light and make a sudden appearance, declaring that at last her lover had returned. Thus he hoped to win her hand, take over

her realm, and steal the place of the Prince of Light.

When the deceiver rode majestically into the princess's realm, many were convinced that at last the great Prince of Light had returned, and it wasn't long before he had won the hearts of the people by bringing a new era of peace and prosperity to the realm.

At first he showed a great deal of patience in courting the princess, but she sensed

This man who claims to be the Prince of Light is an impostor!

that something was wrong and refused to give herself to him. She searched the many love letters the Prince of Light had sent her, looking for a clue, and found something that made it all clear. "The day of my return

will not come until my enemy, the Ruler of Darkness, shall come in my name and deceive many. But do not fear, my love, because shortly thereafter I will return for you."

The princess sent out a warning: "This man who claims to be the Prince of Light is an impostor! He's our mortal foe, the Ruler of Darkness! Have nothing to do with him!" A great uproar followed, and there was a division in the realm between those who believed the princess's warning and those who remained deceived.

When news of the princess's denunciation reached the Ruler of Darkness, he could not contain his rage. He dropped his mask and was revealed to be the monster he had been all along—a horrible, serpent-like red dragon. No longer would he try to win the princess. He would destroy her!

The dragon went on a rampage after the fleeing princess, but just when he was about to catch her, she was miraculously given wings like those of a great eagle and escaped into the wilderness.

AN ALLEGORY OF COMING EVENTS

BY MICHAEL ROY

This so infuriated the dragon that he demanded that everyone in the realm pledge allegiance to him or be killed.

After searching for many months, the dragon and his forces caught up with the princess. “At last I’ve got you!” he roared.

He opened wide his foul mouth, bared his fangs, and was about to devour her, when suddenly a blinding flash of light and the thunderous blast of great trumpets from the heavens froze him in his tracks. His beady eyes shot skyward and registered his horror. There in the clouds the Prince of Light was returning to save the day! With a mighty shout he called his love, his bride for whom he had come, and he swept her up to his palace in the sky. At last the princess was safe in the arms of her true love!

The prince and the princess were wed amid the grandest celebration ever held, while the dragon’s forces were destroyed and he was cast alive into a bottomless pit.



This plotline is not taken from a book of legends or fables, but from the Bible. According to the Bible, Jesus is the “Prince of Peace” and “Light of the World,”¹ and those who believe in and receive Him are His bride.² Although He is not with us physically now, we can know Him very well through His words, which are like love letters.³

The Ruler of Darkness is Satan, the great deceiver, who seeks to turn Jesus’ bride away from Him.⁴ Satan, whom the Bible likens to both a great serpent and an infanticidal dragon,⁵ will soon possess a man known as the Antichrist, who will then become a powerful world leader and rule for seven years. For the first three and a half years he will deceive many into believing that he is their savior. But during the second three and a half years, he will demand that all the world worship him and him alone or be killed.⁶ This last half of his reign is known as the Great Tribulation because of the persecution he will bring against the people of all faiths.⁷ But God

has promised to protect, provide for, and empower those who stay true to Him during this time.

At the end of the Antichrist’s reign of terror, Jesus Christ will return “in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory”⁸ to rescue His bride.⁹ The saved from all ages will be whisked away to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb,¹⁰ where Jesus will bestow on His bride eternal “crowns of life.”¹¹ This party will be held in the heavenly, clear-as-crystal, golden city of God.¹² ✠

¹Isaiah 9:6; John 9:5

²Romans 7:4

³John 6:63

⁴John 8:44; 14:30; Ephesians 6:12

⁵Revelation 12:9,4

⁶Revelation chapters 12–13

⁷Matthew 24:21

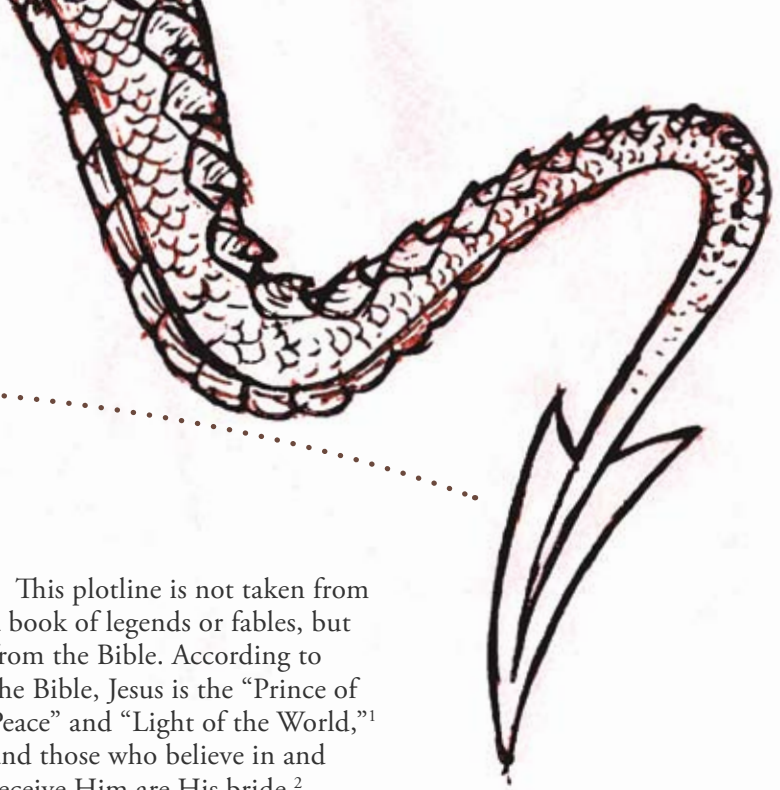
⁸Matthew 24:29–31

⁹1 Thessalonians 4:16–17

¹⁰Revelation 19:6–9

¹¹Revelation 2:10

¹²Revelation chapters 21–22



Resolutions



ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Q: I make resolutions that I feel will help me get more out of life, but no matter how well I start off, I can't seem to keep up the momentum. What can I do to stick with my resolutions and get the results I want?

A: You're not alone. It's difficult when we feel we're not making progress in the areas we know we need to improve in. As much as we try and as many resolutions as we make, we sometimes can't seem to break bad habits or form new good ones. That can become so frustrating and disappointing that we eventually lose faith that we can change. Because we've tried before and failed, we feel we might as well give up.

Though you may sometimes feel that way, the change you desire *is* possible. You are God's creation, and like the loving Father He is, He's very interested in every aspect of your life. He's ready, willing, and able to give you what you need to be truly happy, make progress, and live up to your full potential. So if you're willing to let God help you, then you'll get the results you're looking for. All He needs is your cooperation and for you to put forth effort in the right direction. If you'll do what you can do, then He will do the rest.

Here are some simple tried and proven techniques for solid progress:

1 Be fully persuaded that the change is needed.

Make a list of reasons for making the change. Start with your own reasons, then study God's Word on the subject and add *His* reasons. Your own reasons may be good, but Word-based reasons will reinforce your conviction and give you something solid to stand on when you're tempted to not live up to your resolution.¹

2 Ask for and claim God's help.

If you're convinced that a certain change is what God wants for you (and this should be one of the main reasons for wanting to make any change in the first place), you can ask for and expect His help. It *is* possible for you to change in any area you and God agree needs to be changed, because even the things that are impossible for you are possible for God.² He is always there to help you. Regularly remind Him of His promises in His Word to answer your prayers. Such reminders are a sign of your faith in Him, which pleases Him.³

3 Set realistic goals.

Unrealistic goals are demoralizing and counter-productive. Don't attempt to break the world record in the high jump on your first try. You'll only become discouraged and quit far short of your potential. Start with the bar at a height you know you can clear with a little work, then raise it a notch at a time.

4 Don't try to improve in too many areas at once.

Determine what your priorities are, and stick to those. Once you're making consistent progress in the big areas, add the others one or two at a time.

5 Program the change into your daily or weekly schedule.

Unless you set aside specific times to take positive action to enact the change—to get more exercise, for example—it will probably get lost in the press

of everything else you have to do, like it always has. Begin and end those times with prayer.

6 Confide in someone.

Few things encourage and strengthen resolve like sharing your desire to change with somebody who respects you, understands your reasons, and will cheer you on. This is why support groups such as those offered by Alcoholics Anonymous are so successful.

7 Be open to help from others.

It takes humility to ask your spouse, a close friend, or a coworker for their honest opinion about how you're progressing toward your goal, but they can provide insight as well as encouragement. Nearly everyone in the record books and history books had a coach, trainer, mentor, or supportive family member.

8 Make a pact.

Work together with someone who shares the same goal. Challenge each other. Spur each other on. Help one another up when one stumbles. Victories are sweetest when they're shared.

9 Be patient.

Progress usually comes one step at a time, and sometimes that one step is the result of two steps forward and one step back. As long as you're making some forward progress, you're on your way toward reaching your goal. Consistency is the key. It takes six weeks to two months to build a new habit.

10 Don't quit.

If you slip back into your old habits, don't condemn yourself and don't give up. Review your list of reasons for wanting to change. Reevaluate your means for making that change. Fix whatever went wrong. Pray and claim appropriate promises from God's Word. Then get up and try again. Every setback that you don't let stop you actually strengthens you. ✨

¹Matthew 24:35

²Luke 18:27

³Hebrews 11:6



Forgetting the past

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

*A*S WE stand before the portal of the New Year, we don't know what it's going to bring, and I'm glad for that. I'm glad we can't pull aside the curtain of time and see what the future has in store.

But there is one thing we do know, and that is we can leave the past behind, with all of its worries and cares, pains and heartaches, mistakes and blunders. Isn't that wonderful? All of that is forever in the past, beyond our recall. We can't undo one single act or unsay a single careless word, but we can make a fresh start in the coming year.

If you've received Jesus as your Savior, you don't have to bear the burden of guilt or regret; all of the mistakes, regrets, and sorrows of the past year are in God's almighty hand, covered by His love.

God can give you in this next year "a crown of beauty instead of

ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair."¹ He can bring honey out of the rock and sweet waters out of the bitter desert of the past, no matter what it was.² All of this is promised you in His Word, if you are His. "All things work together for good to those who love God."³ He can make it all work out for your good!

Many people say they believe in God's mercy and forgiveness, yet they worry about the stains on the pages of their past. They never fully rejoice in the fact that God has blotted them out.⁴ Who wants to live in the past when the future holds such wonderful promises? "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize

of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."⁵

Regardless of your past, Jesus can make your future so bright that you'll want it to never end—and it won't! Heavenly happiness here and now and for all eternity is just a short prayer away. If you haven't yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can right now by sincerely praying the following:

Dear Jesus, I want to know You. Thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for all the wrongs I have done. I now open the door of my heart and I ask You to come in. Give me Your gift of eternal life and fill me with Your love. Amen. ✠

¹Isaiah 61:3 NIV

²Deuteronomy 32:13; Isaiah 41:18

³Romans 8:28

⁴Isaiah 43:25

⁵Philippians 3:13–14, KJV



THE DAILY PAUSE

A Spiritual Exercise

SOMETIMES we get so busy rushing through life that we fail to take time to reflect and get in touch and in tune with our Maker. As a result, we can miss the point of it all. Life is about the journey, what we learn and experience along the way. The journey is also where we find Jesus and learn about Him.

Make the most of your journey this year by making a resolution to spend at least 10 or 15 minutes daily in prayer and reflection, alone with Jesus. Try to establish a regular time each day. Find what works best for you. Some people like to take their quiet time first thing, while others find it helpful to step back from their work at midday for spiritual refreshing, and others find it easiest in the evening.

Vary the activities you use to fill this time. You may want to keep a little diary of what you do, writing down the different spiritual activities and lessons you learn. Here are some ideas to get you started. There will be more suggestions in forthcoming *Activated* issues.

— **Meditate on the Word:** Read a passage of Scripture or some other inspired material, then pause and think about how it applies to you.

— **Praise:** Thank Jesus for His goodness and the blessings He bestows on you and those dear to you. Be specific.

— **Connect:** Make a heart-to-heart connection with Jesus; receive His love and give Him yours.

— **Listen:** Get quiet and see what Jesus has to say to you personally at that moment.

— **Pray:** Ask Jesus to intercede and change situations for the better.¹ Pray for yourself, your loved ones, others whom you know are in need, world situations, etc. ✞

PSALM 23

What's in it for you?

The Lord is my shepherd.—That's relationship.

I shall not want.—That's supply.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures.—That's rest.

He leads me beside the still waters.—That's refreshment.

He restores my soul.—That's spiritual healing.

He leads me in the paths of righteousness... —That's guidance.

... for His name's sake.—That's purpose.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death... —That's tribulation.

... I will fear no evil... —That's protection.

... for You are with me.—That's faithfulness.

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.—That's discipline.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.—That's hope.

You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over.—That's abundance.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.—That's blessing.

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord...—That's security.

... forever.—That's eternity.

—DAVID THE PSALMIST, WITH COMMENTS BY AN UNKNOWN AUTHOR

A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

Dear Lord, keep me from having my life so full of good things that I don't have time for the best. Help me not to be so pressured that I put off my time with You. Help me to bask in Your spiritual sunshine, rest in Your arms, drink deeply of Your Word, and inhale of Your Spirit. Help me to seek You most of all—more than any of the other things I enjoy. Help me to remember how You said that without You, I can do nothing,¹ so that I won't have misplaced priorities, but I will have You, Your love, and Your values in the right place—first!

¹John 15:5

¹Romans 8:34; John 16:23



Don't let mistakes of the past blur your vision for the future. Focus on the good to come.—*Mottos for Success (MFS)*¹

A story is told of an elderly woman who slipped and fell on a busy street. Several people quickly went to assist her, but she was already struggling to hoist herself up. "I'm all right," she assured them. "I always fall forwards, never backwards."

When we've "taken a fall," instead of dwelling on the mistake or hurt, we need to make it a fall forward by learning from it and looking to the future.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on ... forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.—*St. Paul, Philippians 3:12-13*

I am willing to go anywhere, anywhere, anywhere—so long as it's forward.—*David Livingstone (1813-1873)*

People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them.—*George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)*

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

FORWARD, ALWAYS FORWARD!

Thoughts to start
the New Year

SELECTIONS BY ABI F. MAY

Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.—*William Carey (1761-1834)*

“When you pass through the waters ... they shall not overflow you.”¹ God doesn’t open paths for us in advance of our coming. He doesn’t promise help before help is needed. He doesn’t remove obstacles out of our way before we reach them. Yet when we are on the edge of our need, God’s hand is stretched out. Many people forget this and are forever worrying about difficulties which they foresee in the future. They expect that God is going to make the way plain and open before them miles and miles ahead, whereas He has promised to do it only step by step as they may need. You must get to the floodwaters before you can claim the promise.

I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, “Fear not, I will help you.”—*Isaiah 41:13*

Faith gives us courage to face the present with confidence and the future with expectancy.—*MFS*

A teacher took her primary school students to the assembly hall for a lesson with a difference. Standing at the foot of the steps leading up to the stage, she asked, “Is anybody good at jumping?”

Quite a few young hands shot up.

“Well,” she continued, “could any of you jump from the floor here up onto the stage?”

No hands went up this time.

“I can,” said the teacher, “and I’ll show you how.” Beginning at the foot of the steps leading up to the stage, she hopped onto the first step. From there she hopped onto the second, and so on until she reached the top.

Many things can only be accomplished little by little, step by step. When a task looks daunting or the way ahead too steep, just take it one step at a time.

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.—*Hebrews 12:1-2*

Commit your life, your plans, your hopes, your dreams, and your fears to God through prayer every day. In return you will have peace in your life.—*MFS*

Never hesitate to trust the unknown future to a known God.—*MFS*

A family had a few apple trees at the bottom of their garden. The trees yielded more fruit than could be eaten immediately or given to neighbors, so some needed to be stored for the coming months.

One fall, little Tommy was finally big enough to help his mother store the apples. They had been picked and piled up in a basket with care, as bruised apples will spoil. Now it was

time to transfer them to storage racks in the cellar.

Tommy, eager to help, put his arms around a dozen shiny apples and tried to carry them over to the rack. To his dismay, one by one the apples dropped out of his arms until they were all on the floor.

His mother wasn’t too worried. “Here, let me show you,” she said gently as she put his hands around one apple. “Take this one and put it over there, and then come back and get another one.”

Too often we try to put our arms around a year or a month or a week, but God tells us, “Take it a day at a time.”² We aren’t equipped to carry all of our future cares at once, but we can if we face each challenge as it comes.

As your days, so shall your strength be.—*Deuteronomy 33:25*

The New Year is set before us like an unwritten volume, all of its pages blank. Let us write upon each day’s page things that at the end of the year we will look upon with rejoicing rather than regret.—*MFS*

The world is a book and every step turns a new page.—*Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869)*

The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.—*Proverbs 4:18* ☞

¹Isaiah 43:2

²Matthew 6:34

The difference

FROM JESUS

WITH LOVE



Picture a forest—lush, deep, inviting. You enter and look around, expecting that rush of wonder that you've experienced before in nature, but this time the birds are not singing, there is no breeze to rustle the leaves, and the stream is not flowing. Everything is still, frozen in time, lifeless. You are in the forest, but it might as well be a picture hanging on the wall.

Now imagine the same scene, except this time everything you expect is there—the cheerful singing of birds, the babbling of the brook, the rustling of the leaves, the breeze in your hair, the scent of a forest after rain, the cool, lingering mist, the mossy path beneath your feet.

The contrast between these two forests is like the difference between knowing *of* Me and actually *knowing* Me; it's the difference between merely having heard or read about Me and having a direct, personal relationship with Me. One is static; the other is vibrant and brimming with excitement and love. One is empty; the other fills your senses. One may help you be a better person, but the other makes you complete.

I know what our relationship can be like, but I won't force Myself on you. The choice is yours. My love is just waiting for you. Won't you step in and experience all that I have in store for you? I'm only a prayer away. Just open your heart, and I'll be there.

