

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# activated

Vol 10 • Issue 2

## Renewing your mind

The way to a more positive you

## Answers from God

He has one for everything

## The New York cabby miracle

Two lost people find their way





## PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Optimist or pessimist? Is your glass half full or half empty? According to staffers at the renowned Mayo Clinic, your answer to the second question not only answers the first, but it also reflects your attitudes toward yourself and life in general, each of which plays an important part in how well you live and possibly even how long you live.<sup>1</sup> It almost goes without saying that positive thinkers are far more likely to reach their goals than negative thinkers. If your thought patterns have that much bearing on your happiness and well-being, it makes sense to stop from time to time to examine the way you think and to work at making positive thinking a habit.

In explaining their approach to this subject, the Mayo team writes in terms of self-talk—the endless stream of thoughts that run through your head every day. Self-talk can be positive or negative, and so can its outcome. Positive self-talk promotes positive action and progress, while negative self-talk triggers discouragement and defeat.

Some self-talk is based on fact, and some on fallacy. The first step to becoming a more positive thinker is to learn to distinguish between the two, and to reject the false. It is not true, for example, that you can never do anything right. Rejecting such outright lies eliminates a lot of the negative. Other negative self-talk has an element of truth, like “I probably won’t be able to do this because I’ve never done it before.” That can be countered with affirmative statements, like “Here’s a chance to learn something new.”

But what about the negative self-talk that stems from hard truths, like a serious accident or illness or the loss of a loved one? How can we think positively about those? There are good answers to that, too, but I’m not going to give them away here. You’ll find them on the following pages.

Keith Phillips  
For *Activated*

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/positive-thinking/SR00009>



# Just sing!



BY MILA GOVORUKHA

I WAS awakened early by a choir of birds. Singing, chirping, chanting, chiming, and conversing, their melodies were loud, joyful, and everywhere—nature's own surround sound. Some friends and I were camping in a wooded area near Mostar, the 600-year-old city that was often in the news during the Yugoslav Wars of the early 1990s.

The birds' notes rose in pitch and volume, then swung to a whisper, then reached a crescendo again, victorious, full of inspiration and joy. The difficulties facing this ethnically divided country were clearly the furthest thing from their little minds. Nearly 15 years after the official end of the war, Croatian Catholics, Bosnian Muslims, and Serb Orthodox are still learning how to live in the same cities, how to work together, and how to forgive.

I went for a walk along the narrow river and took in the

scene—the potholed asphalt road lined with bench frames with no seats, the bridge that had been all but destroyed, the small café without doors or glass in the windows, the flowerbeds overrun with weeds. *Don't step onto the grass*, I reminded myself. *There could be mines!* For a few moments I forgot about the birds. Why did this happen? Who was responsible for this mess?

As I neared the teetering remains of the bridge, I saw a bird on one of the rails. Could she remember? Could she have seen someone die here, or have heard the shooting?

Then the bird began to sing, and I forgot about all those questions. Her tiny body quaked as her song burst forth. The music seemed to come from all of her. The sounds poured out with such force and conviction that I wanted to sing too. She seemed to be singing about the rising sun, about a new morning, about the blue sky, about a new day full of hope, about beautiful flowers and

the gentle forest, about cool, flowing, sparkling waters that wash the old away. She wasn't thinking about how she looked or her performance. She was just singing with all of her being.

I don't know how long I sat there watching her, but I forgot about everything else. I listened and sang along. I sang about the feeling of freedom I felt rising in me, about new possibilities, about new ways of looking at life, about a new day full of hope, about the beauty of creation and its gentle Creator, about a great love that washes away mistakes of the past. It felt good, it felt great, and it felt liberating.

Forget about ethnic differences. Forget about broken relationships. Forget about the other guy's mistake that never ended in an apology. Learn from the birds. With all your being, with all your strength, just sing!

MILA GOVORUKHA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA. ✨



# RENEWING YOUR MIND

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

I once talked with a woman who said she tried very hard to think only positive thoughts, but she was never able to keep it up for long. Even when she managed to appear optimistic, inwardly she was often in turmoil. Her self-help approach to positive thinking excluded God, so when things went wrong, she didn't have anything solid to hold on to.

That may seem paradoxical—faith in God being something substantial—but it's true. "Faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."<sup>1</sup> In the face of difficulty and disappointment, faith is far more effective than mere mental exercise because it is backed by promises that God has made in His Word—promises that bring about tangible results when believed and applied to real-life situations.

These promises not only have the power to change problem situations; they also have the power to change us. The Bible tells us to "be transformed by the renewing of the mind."<sup>2</sup> It is through those "exceedingly great and precious promises" that we "may be partakers of the divine nature."<sup>3</sup>

We can, by an act of our will, take our mind off of negative thoughts. Unless we fill that void, however, the negative thoughts will rush back in. What should we replace those negative thoughts with? What is more positive or more powerful than the living Word of the living God? When coupled with prayer, the uplifting, transforming Word of God can give you victory over every ugly, negative thought and its consequences.

As you make a consistent effort to replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts from God's Word, it will become a habit; you will learn to—as the Bible puts it—"bring your thoughts into captivity."<sup>4</sup>

This is very difficult to accomplish in the tumult of the world. We don't find the mind of God on the streets of social life or in the hobby shop. To connect with Him, find a place where there are no distractions. "When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."<sup>5</sup>

There is no place where the mind can be as fully renewed as in the secret place of prayer, alone with God. When we come aside from the temporal things that distract and harass us, and there in the presence of God we put our mind on the things of God, the transforming power of God then begins to work in us, and we are changed, renewed. ✨

<sup>1</sup>Hebrews 11:1

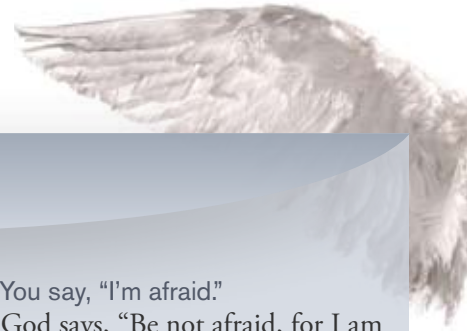
<sup>2</sup>Romans 12:2

<sup>3</sup>2 Peter 1:4

<sup>4</sup>2 Corinthians 10:5

<sup>5</sup>Matthew 6:6

# ANSWERS FROM GOD



For all the negative things we say to ourselves, God has given us His positive responses in the Bible.

You say, "It's impossible."  
God says, "All things are possible with Me" (Matthew 19:26).

You say, "I'm so tired."  
God says, "I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28–30).

You say, "Nobody really loves me."  
God says, "I love you" (John 3:16 and 13:34).

You say, "I can't go on."  
God says, "My grace is sufficient and I will always be there to help you" (2 Corinthians 12:9 and Psalm 91:15).

You say, "I can't figure things out."  
God says, "I will direct your steps" (Proverbs 3:5–6).

You say, "I can't do this."  
God says, "You don't have to do it.—I will" (2 Chronicles 20:17).

You say, "It's not worth it."  
God says, "It will be worth it" (Romans 8:18).

You say, "I can't forgive myself."  
God says, "I forgive you" (1 John 1:9 and Romans 8:1).

You say, "I can't manage."  
God says, "I will supply all your needs" (Philippians 4:19).

You say, "I'm not able."  
God says, "You can do it with My help" (Philippians 4:13 and 2 Corinthians 3:5).

You say, "I'm afraid."  
God says, "Be not afraid, for I am with you" (Jeremiah 42:11).

You say, "I'm always worried and frustrated."  
God says, "Give your cares to Me" (1 Peter 5:7).

You say, "I don't have enough faith."  
God says, "I've given everyone a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3b).

You say, "I'm not smart enough."  
God says, "I give you wisdom" (James 1:5 and 1 Corinthians 1:30).

You say, "I feel all alone."  
God says, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

## Negativity—the source and the solution

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

THE BIBLE calls the Devil "the accuser of the saints."<sup>1</sup> He picks at all the lacks and shortcomings and weaknesses and little failures. If you start listening to him, you're beaten, because there will always be something more you could have done or something you wish you hadn't done. There will always be something that the Devil can pick on if he wants to, and he sure wants to!

But thank God for Jesus! He's the antidote. Jesus always points out the *good* things. He never loses faith in us and He never stops loving us, even when we do make mistakes. So when the Devil

descends on you with his dark thoughts about yourself or others, don't listen to him. Listen to Jesus instead. Think positive thoughts. Remind yourself constantly of the good. When you think positively about yourself and others, it chases away the doubts and the fears and nagging accusations from the Devil. Fill your mind and heart and mouth with positive things. Count your blessings and put the Devil on the run! Let the light in, and the darkness will flee. ✠

<sup>1</sup>Revelation 12:9–10



# GREATER ENDS

BY ALEX PETERSON

In *The Horse and His Boy*, one of the seven novels in C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, a boy named Shasta dreams of traveling to the unknown north, which turns out to include the magical land of Narnia. One night Shasta overhears the fisherman he has been led to believe is his father sell him to a noble from a neighboring kingdom. (We find out much later that Shasta had been shipwrecked as a baby and was found by the fisherman.) As Shasta awaits his new master in the stable, he is surprised to find out that the noble's stallion, Bree, is a talking horse from Narnia. Bree explains that he was kidnapped as a foal and sold as a warhorse, and suggests that they escape together. Their journey north is long and perilous, and they have several encounters with lions along the way.

During the first, Shasta and Bree meet two others who are trying to escape to Narnia—Aravis, a young aristocrat who is being pressured into marrying an unsavory character, and her talking mare, Hwin, who was also kidnapped from Narnia. The four decide to travel together.

When Shasta is separated from the others, he arrives first at their prearranged meeting place and must spend the night alone at the spooky ancient tombs. He is awakened by a rustling in the brush, but it is only a cat, who settles in at Shasta's side. When Shasta is awakened again by

the cry of jackals, followed by the terrifying roar of a lion, he opens his eyes and is relieved to find only the cat.

After meeting up and learning of a plot by evildoers to invade Archenland, a small kingdom that borders Narnia, and then conquer Narnia itself, the four are off to warn Archenland's King Lune when another lion comes upon them. This causes the horses to run even faster, but the lion overtakes them and attacks Aravis. Shasta drives the lion away. The horses are exhausted, so Shasta leaves them and Aravis in the care of a kindly hermit and runs on foot to warn the king.

Shasta meets up with King Lune and his hunting party, delivers the message, and heads off with them on a borrowed horse, but gets separated in the fog. Lost and downcast, Shasta senses a presence walking beside him in the darkness. Eventually the two get into a conversation, and Shasta recounts what he sees as his many misfortunes, including his recent encounters with lions. The presence turns out to be Aslan, the "Great Lion" from the other *Narnia* books, who reveals that he was the single lion Shasta has encountered on his journey:

"I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis," Aslan tells Shasta. "I was the cat who comforted you among the tombs. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept. I





was the lion who gave the horses the new strength of fear for the last mile so that you should reach King Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed the [lifeboat] in which you lay, a child near death, so it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you.”

A golden light breaks through the fog, and Shasta turns to see “pacing beside him, taller than the horse, a Lion. It was from the Lion that the light came. No one ever saw anything more terrible or beautiful.”

Aslan vanishes, Shasta finds his way to Archenland, and King Lune then recognizes him as his own son Cor, the long lost elder twin of Prince Corin and therefore heir to the throne. Cor and Aravis eventually marry. “And after King Lune’s death they made a good King and Queen of Archenland.”



**God uses our external problems and our inner torments; He uses our failures and our successes, our trials and our temptations to achieve His purposes for our lives. If we are His, we are held by Him in a love that will never let us go. We need never fear the circumstances around us.—Coty Pinckney**

This children’s fantasy contains some timeless truths: The difficulties we face in life are not left to chance. God allows each one for a specific purpose, all can ultimately work out for our good, and none are too great for us to overcome with God’s help. The “lions” that we fear are actually our salvation, because without them we wouldn’t reach our destination; we’d never become the people God wants us to be.

From our vantage point, troubles hardly seem like good things, but God knows what He’s doing. He knows where we should be in every sphere of our lives, and He will help us get there if we will do our part, which begins with trusting Him that whatever troubles we encounter on the way are within His benevolent control.

God often lets us get to a point where our own resources aren’t enough, but He never brings us to a point where our only choice is to give up. We always have the choice to turn to Him and draw on His resources to get us through, to depend more on Him. When we choose that, He never fails to come through for us one way or another. ✂



# Feeling the Squeeze

## ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

**Q:** If God loves me, why does He let bad things happen to me?

**A:** ONE advantage of passing through trying times is that we are drawn closer to God by being drawn closer to Jesus, our Savior and Friend. We seek safety and security in His arms, and we find that and more. He loves us with a love that is everlasting and never changes. He has so much to give us, and He desires to help us in so many ways. He wants to spend time with us, and He longs to have us close to Him, always by His side, to teach us, and to make us more like Himself.

Unfortunately it's just part of human nature that when everything goes right, we don't feel such a pressing need for God and His help and strength in our lives. When everything is going our way, we often get the very wrong idea that we're strong and sufficient in ourselves, that we don't need Him. We're living happy,

successful lives, so we don't need any help—or interference.

We don't see what we're missing, but He does. He knows that we truly do need Him, and He knows how much more He has to offer if we depend on Him.

He wants to teach us to lean on Him and avail ourselves of His strength, which is infinitely greater than ours. But how can that happen if we ignore Him or shut Him out of our lives?

If we didn't have troubles and tribulations, we wouldn't feel the need for or find refuge in His arms, and we wouldn't learn to find strength and comfort in communion with Him and study of His Word.

This may not sound like good news to you, but it is: God not only allows hardships, but He often sends them. He fashions them specifically for us, and He

does so for the express purpose of bringing us closer to Him. He puts the squeeze on so we will call out to Him for help. He does this not to hurt or punish us, but to strengthen us. He knows that in depending on Him, our spiritual strength and resilience to life's difficulties will grow, and that as we draw closer to Him and become more like Him, we will be much happier and more fulfilled in the long run.

If we will turn to Jesus in our times of trouble, He will prove to us in those trying moments how much He loves us. The problem may not go away instantly, but He will give us “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,” and help us appreciate the good that He is working in our lives.<sup>1</sup> ✠

<sup>1</sup>Philippians 4:6–7



# Rainy day remedy

BY VICTORIA OLIVETTA

AS FAR back as I can remember, I didn't like cloudy days, especially in wintertime. They seemed endless and without hope, chilling both body and soul.

Still, they are a part of life, so I decided to *learn* to like them.

Over the past few years I've managed to enjoy them more. Now they don't seem so dreary. My secret? Actually I have several.

Sometimes I take advantage of those days to bake a cake, cookies, or something else special to enjoy with coffee. The entire house smells of freshly brewed coffee and homemade goodies, and that creates a warm, satisfied feeling.

I've also learned that I can help brighten the day by what I wear, like a favorite brightly colored sweater or a little extra jewelry.

Most of all I've learned to thank God for those days. I'm still not crazy about them, but I'm healthy, in a house without leaks, and I have a nice warm bed, food on the table, and somebody to enjoy my blessings with.

Not too long ago, I was out on one of those days. Although it was overcast, I didn't expect it to actually rain. Mid-morning, 25 blocks from home, I was caught in a downpour. I found some partial shelter and waited there for an hour for the rain to stop. When it didn't, I decided to make my

way home. Better to be home and wet than stuck there and wet, I reasoned. By the time I got home I was sure I had more water in my clothes and hair than was left in the clouds. One hot shower and lunch put it all behind me. I felt wonderful.

When I had been caught in the cold and rain, I had prayed for all the people who are the victims of disaster. Not disasters like burning the chicken or having their hair color turn out all wrong—I mean *real* disasters. Disasters like being left homeless by a tornado, with no hot shower, dry clothes, or warm meal to set things right. Or just as bad, people having everything they thought would make them happy, but still feeling empty, lonely, fragile.

When bad weather or some other circumstance has you down, praying for someone else who has it worse puts things in perspective and does the soul good, like a hot shower warms the body after getting caught in the rain. Praying for someone who is suffering, alone, or powerless to change some other unfortunate circumstance not only sends divine help their way, it also lifts the spirit, like the smell of freshly brewed coffee and homemade cookies.

VICTORIA OLIVETTA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN ARGENTINA. ☘

There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative.  
—W. Clement Stone



# THE NEW YORK CABBY MIRACLE

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

IT HAD been a rough few months. I desperately wanted a baby, to have a little one to hold in my arms, to call my own. Twice I had miscarried. I held these hurts up before God, shaking them in His face and saying, “See what You did when I trusted You to answer my prayer and give me a baby?” I just couldn’t move on.

But this day I *was* moving on, at least physically. My husband and I were moving to New York to work at a mission on the lower East Side. I needed the change. Dan had gone ahead to his parents’ apartment in Manhattan, while I had made a detour through Boston to return a child we had been caring for to his parents. During the long bus ride, I curled against the window and wept.

My doctor thought that my last pregnancy had been what they call a hysterical pregnancy—all of the symptoms had been in my head. That had been a humiliating blow, insult to injury. I had been so sure!

Now I wasn’t sure what I wanted. As I tried to get comfortable on the bus, I doubted everything I had always believed and encouraged others to believe. What business did I have doing missionary work? How could I tell others to trust in God when my own faith was

at an all-time low? My life was spinning out of control.

After what seemed like forever, we arrived at the bus terminal in New York City. I had been to New York a few times to visit Dan’s parents, but always felt overwhelmed. The city was too big, too busy, too impersonal. I usually walked around like a tourist, looking up. I wasn’t looking at the skyscrapers, though; I was searching for a patch of blue sky.

I found my way to a pay phone and called my in-laws’ number, desperate to hear Dan’s voice. Some of what little money I had with me was eaten by broken payphones, but I wasn’t worried yet. Dan would pick me up soon.

When I finally found a phone that worked and got through to the number, there was no answer. I bought a cup of coffee and tried again. Still no answer.

I stepped out on the street by a taxi stand, and realized it was getting dark. City lights blurred the tears that once more filled my eyes.


I went back inside and tried again. Still no answer. I wasn’t prepared for this. I hadn’t been clear with Dan about my arrival time, and I didn’t have his parents’ address or know how to get there. Besides, no one was

home. All I had was the address of the mission on the Lower East Side where we would be working, in an area known as Hell’s Kitchen.

Fear began to set in as I stepped outside once more and hailed a taxi. When I gave the cabby the address of the mission, he asked gruffly, “Really?” He flicked on his meter and pulled away from the curb.

The meter seemed to turn over faster than the tires as we inched our way through traffic. I pulled out my wallet and





counted the bills again. The amount on the meter was rapidly approaching the amount of cash I had with me. I had thought when I jumped into the taxi that if I didn't have enough money, I could run into the mission and get the rest, but now I was having misgivings.

I leaned over to get a better look at the driver in the glow of passing street lights. His face had the hard, deep lines of an ex-con or a gang member. I recalled his gruff tone when he questioned the address I had

given him. Then a very large scar caught my attention. It went halfway around his neck. This was not a man I could easily relate to or make small talk with.

As I leaned back in the seat, the total on the meter raced past the amount in my purse. I should have been more patient. I should have waited at the bus station and kept calling. I flashed back to every creepy headline I had ever read about cab drivers kidnapping and molesting female passengers. I had made a horrible mistake!

Then I did something I should have done earlier. I forgot my

grievances against God and prayed. "Lord, I'm in a predicament! Please show me what to do. Should I ask him to stop and get stranded in the middle of New York City, I know not where? He doesn't look like the kind of person who would understand or be sympathetic. Please forgive me for my foolishness and my bad attitude toward You. Protect me, and show me if there's anything I can do to help You get me safely to my destination."

The answer came forcefully to my mind. "Tell this man about Me, like everything depends on it." Before I could reason my way out of it, I took a deep breath and began.



“I need to make a confession. This taxi ride is costing a lot more than I expected, and I don’t have enough money with me to pay for it. I should have said something sooner. I am on my way to a mission, where my husband and I will be working. I am not very familiar with New York, and I didn’t realize how long it would take. I am so sorry. When we get there I will have to run inside and get some more money. My husband and I try to live like Jesus did, preaching the Gospel to everyone we meet, and we trust Him to supply our needs day by day.”

As I continued, Jesus gave me the words to say, “You know, so many people need to feel Jesus’ loving, healing touch. He has all the answers they need, whatever their need. He can heal every hurt, every heartache. His answers are just a prayer away. Have you ever asked Jesus into your heart?”

There was a long, heavy silence, then a cough, then sobbing. I leaned forward and saw a tear roll down the cabby’s cheek.

“My grandma used to take me to church when I was a little kid,” he began in a deep voice filled with emotion. “She would talk to me about Jesus. I even prayed with her. But then she died and nobody has talked to me about Jesus since. You are right. There are so many people who need to be healed. I need to be healed. I have led a horrible life. My grandma would be so ashamed of me for all the bad things I have done. I don’t think Jesus would forgive me now.”

It was my turn to choke back tears. “Jesus hung on the cross between two criminals. One of them asked for His forgiveness, and Jesus said, ‘This day you will be with Me in Paradise.’ Jesus said once that He didn’t come to

**We come to the point where we realize that we need to trust Him with every part of our lives.**

preach to the good people or the people who thought they didn’t need His help. He preached to the drunks and the prostitutes, the people who knew they needed Him. He will be there for you, too. All you have to do is ask Him to forgive you, and He will. He will forgive *anything*.”

My own recent past flashed through my mind—my doubts and failure to keep trusting the Lord when things seemed to go so terribly wrong. “He can even forgive us for doubting Him,” I said, my voice breaking. “When we come to the point where we realize that we need to trust Him with every part of our lives, when we accept the fact that He knows exactly what we need and will answer our prayers in His perfect time, that’s when He is able to do His greatest miracles.”

“Don’t worry about the money,” the cabby said. “I’ll take you wherever you need to go, and pay

for it myself. What you are doing is really important. Hell’s Kitchen is full of people who need to hear about Heaven. I’ll pray more now, and I will try to be a better person. God sent you to me.”

We arrived at the mission, and he got out and helped me with my bags. I hugged him and told him Jesus would never fail him. He waited until someone came out to greet me, and then he smiled and waved as he drove off.

So that is how I arrived safely at the mission. I got through to my husband, who apologized for not staying by the phone. He had expected me to arrive on a later bus.

The folks I told about the cabby were shocked. New York cabbies are notoriously some of the hardest people in the world, they said. They never give free rides to anybody. That was a miracle.

But I knew that the real miracle had not been the free taxi ride. The miracle had been that two people who both needed to be closer to God had felt His loving touch. It took the tears running down the face of this seemingly hardhearted cabby to make me see that. The words God gave me for him were just what I needed to hear. God had sent him to me.

P.S. It wasn’t long before I began to feel changes in my body, as well. Something was growing inside of me. It was the new life I’d been praying for.

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

# *the Valentine Treasure*

BY NYX MARTINEZ



**H**ISTORY books tell us that during the Feast of Lupercalia—an event that is said to be the origin of the modern celebration known as Valentine’s Day—it was the custom for Roman youths to cast lots for a girl to bestow gifts on and court the following year. Today such a random way of selecting a sweetheart has been abandoned. Instead, on February 14th, lovers in many countries give cards and gifts to express their love to the ones they have romantic feelings for.

When I think of Valentine’s Day, one love story in particular comes to mind. It began a few years ago. . . .

*The gift is highly unusual,* Ericka thought with a smile. Neither Chris nor Ericka was particularly religious, so she didn’t quite know what had led her to this gift idea. But as she held the pen to inscribe a dedication inside the front cover of the book, she somehow knew in her heart that this Bible would

be the very best gift she could give the person she truly loved.

*Not your ordinary Valentine gift, but it’s sealed and given with love,* she wrote.

Chris was somewhat taken aback by Ericka’s gift. After all, he was a man who had hardly set foot inside a church and regarded Christianity as just another religion.

A couple of years passed. The Bible sat unused on a shelf, while the couple’s relationship went from shaky to crumbling to seemingly hopeless.

But it was during this crisis that the book somehow caught Chris’s attention. Opening it and reading random passages, he discovered the missing link in his relationship with Ericka. Why had he not seen it before? There it was, so simple, so clear, so profound. “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Verse after verse and day after day Chris studied the Bible, until at last he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Friend and Savior.

Ericka was surprised when Chris seemed to become addicted to this book. Together, they discovered more hidden treasures that had been there all along. Jesus’ love was binding them closer to each other, helping them to overcome their past mistakes, and teaching them to open their hearts to each other as never before.

That Bible has since been Chris and Ericka’s source of strength and love, and whenever their relationship seems to thin out again, Chris remembers that day when God gave him a sign through that gift of love.

The reason this story comes to my mind is because Valentine’s Day is almost here again. A couple of years ago on Valentine’s Day, my two friends, Chris and Ericka, gave each other another very special gift. They got married.

NYX MARTINEZ IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE PHILIPPINES. ✿



## WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED

BY ANNIE JOHNSON FLINT

God has not promised  
Skies always blue,  
Flower-strewn pathways,  
All our lives through.  
God has not promised  
Sun without rain,  
Joy without sorrow,  
Peace without pain.

God has not promised  
That we shall not know  
Toil and temptation,  
Trouble and woe;  
He has not told us  
We shall not bear  
Many a burden,  
Many a care.

God has not promised  
Smooth roads and wide,  
Swift, easy travel,  
Needing no guide;  
Never a mountain,  
Rocky and steep,  
Never a river  
Turbid and deep:

But God has promised  
Strength for the day,  
Rest for the labor,  
Light for the way,  
Grace for the trials,  
Help from above,  
Unfailing sympathy,  
Undying love.

# positively!

An optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity; a pessimist sees a calamity in every opportunity.—*Sir Winston Churchill*

When we know that everything has two sides, let us look at the bright side only.—*Mahatma Gandhi*

There are always flowers for those who want to see them.—*Henri Matisse*

It is always possible to be thankful for what is given rather than to complain about what is not given. One or the other becomes a habit of life.—*Elisabeth Elliot*

If you don't get everything you want, think of the things you don't get that you don't want.—*Oscar Wilde*

It is no use to grumble and complain;  
It's just as cheap and easy to rejoice;  
When God sorts out the weather  
and sends rain—  
Why, rain's my choice.  
—*James Whitcomb Riley*

The door to happiness swings outward.—*Søren Kierkegaard*

If I had my life to live over, I would try to make more mistakes. I would relax. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would pick more daisies. I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones.—*Don Herold*

Obstacles cannot crush me. Every obstacle yields to stern resolve. He who is fixed to a star does not change his mind.—*Leonardo da Vinci*

This is the true joy of life, the being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clot of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.—*George Bernard Shaw*

Happiness is what we make it. Some people are unbelievably cheerful in the midst of difficulty or obstacles; others bemoan the slightest inconvenience. Those who look for the upside of any trouble are the ones who come out ahead in quality of life. And the radiance of their positive attitude sheds light on the paths of others.—*Chloe West*





'Tis easy enough to be  
pleasant,  
When life flows along like  
a song,  
But the man worthwhile  
Is the one who will smile  
When everything goes  
dead wrong.  
—Ella Wheeler Wilcox

# Thank God for the good



## A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

RECALL a discouraging or adverse situation that you were involved in recently, and then think about the good things that came out of your misfortune, or may yet. Try to think of at least three things. (Don't give up too soon. If you can think of even one good result, more will probably follow.) Then thank God for the good.

For example, let's say you were driving on a deserted road when your car broke down in the middle of nowhere, and when you tried to phone for help, you discovered that the battery in your cell phone was dead. Your thanks to God might go something like this:

"Thank You for putting me in that situation because it reminded me that no matter how helpless I feel, I'm never truly helpless because I always have You. Thank You that even when I was stranded out there with no help in sight and no phone to summon help, I was still able to contact You through prayer, and You came through for me. You sent a friendly stranger to help me, and even though it took awhile for him to get there, I made a new friend that I wouldn't have otherwise, and he got Your blessing for stopping to help, which he would have missed if the opportunity hadn't been there. Thank You for being, like the Bible says, 'a very present help in trouble.'"<sup>1</sup>

Practice this exercise each evening for the next week, and it will improve the way you react to troubles when they happen. Casting past troubles in a positive light will prepare you to approach future ones positively, and that is often half the battle won. ✂

If you haven't yet received Jesus and all that He has to offer, you can right now by praying the following prayer.

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

<sup>1</sup>Psalm 46:1

## FEEDING READING

How to be more positive

*Count your blessings.*

Psalm 40:5  
Psalm 68:19  
Psalm 126:3  
Psalm 139:17

*Think positive thoughts.*

Psalm 27:13  
Psalm 94:19  
Philippians 4:4  
Philippians 4:8  
1 Thessalonians 5:18

*Fill your heart and mind with God's Word.*

Joshua 1:8  
Psalm 1:2  
1 Timothy 4:15

*Take a positive approach to difficulties by seeing the Lord's hand in them.*

Romans 8:28  
1 Thessalonians 5:18  
James 1:2-4  
1 Peter 4:12-13

*Cultivate positive attitudes towards others.*

Romans 12:10  
Ephesians 4:32  
Colossians 3:12  
1 Peter 4:8

# Positive perks

When life gets to be too much, when everything around you seems to be falling apart, when you feel that nothing you do helps, what should you do?—Think about Me. Think about how much I love you. Think about My power. Think about all your blessings, and thank Me.

You can praise your way right out of a bad mood! If you thank Me for all the good things in your life, the negative feelings will dissipate.

You may sometimes find yourself in situations where there doesn't seem to be anything at all good to thank Me for. Well, then thank Me for the good that will

eventually come out of the bad, because if you love Me, sooner or later it will. That's explained in the Bible, in Romans 8:28: "All things work together for good to those who love God." For those who love Me, I can bring good out of anything.

Let Me change your difficult day into a happy one. You can always find something to thank Me for. Praise Me for one thing, and you'll usually be reminded of another, and another. Happiness will find you as you focus on Me and on the positive.



From Jesus with Love