

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 11 • Issue 3



FAITH NOW AND FOREVER

Perfect security, perfect peace

Strokes of God

Why believe in miracles?

Squirrel Power

Take the leap



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Have you ever noticed how some people can stay afloat when engulfed in troubles and hardships, while others sink to the bottom? What sets the swimmers apart from the sinkers?

From what I've seen, the biggest factor seems to be faith in God's love. When those who

understand how much God loves them find themselves in over their heads, they know He won't let them drown. So, unlike those who don't have such faith, they don't wear themselves out struggling just to keep their heads above water—or worse, panic and go down all the quicker. Buoyed by their faith, the swimmers can concentrate their energy on getting to solid ground.

If you feel more like a sinker than a swimmer, you can get ready for the next sink-or-swim situation by strengthening your faith in God's love. The scope and depth of that love are beyond our comprehension, but the Bible likens it to the love of a father for his children. "He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence him."¹ God doesn't enjoy seeing you in trouble. He isn't trying to make life hard for you. He is on your side and wants nothing more than to see you happy and fulfilled. That doesn't mean He will never let you have problems, but when you find yourself in over your head, you can be sure He will be there for you. In fact, there is a verse in the Bible in which He promises that very thing: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you."²

The first step in learning to swim is learning to float, and that starts with learning to relax and not fight the water. Put yourself in God's hands, lie back, relax, and let Him support you. Practice in the shallows, and you will be ready for whatever the future may hold.

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

1. Psalm 103:13 TLB
2. Isaiah 43:2

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SQUIRREL POWER

BY JO DIAS

“MISERABLE!” THAT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO DESCRIBE HOW I WAS FEELING THAT DAY. MY HUSBAND HAD HAD TO TRAVEL—AGAIN!—AND THERE I WAS ALONE WITH OUR FOUR CHILDREN.

Finances were low, my health was bad, and my teenage daughter was going through a crisis. I prayed—oh, how I prayed!—that Jesus would make things a little easier to bear.

Looking out my window at a grove of trees swaying in the gentle breeze, I recalled other times when Jesus had encouraged me to hold on until He could work things out.

That’s when I noticed a little squirrel, squeaking away as he climbed up and down the trees, seemingly without a care in the world. I envied the little fellow.

My squirrel chose that moment to change tactics. Instead of

running up and down the trees, he started hopping from one tree to the next. He jumped over to the last tree in the cluster, and then looked at one more tree that stood apart from the others. He seemed to be deliberating.

I mentally measured the distance between the squirrel and that tree, and it seemed two or three times as far as he had been jumping. Here was a massive challenge.

“You can’t be serious, little fellow!” I muttered.

But he wasn’t looking for my advice. He ran the length of the branch a few times, squealing frantically. Then he stopped and eyed the distance once more, crouched, and leaped. I wanted to turn my eyes away. Surely this was going to end badly!

But no! He flew across that immense span and landed in the other tree with the grace and

glory that come from knowing one is meant to perform such feats. He chattered in victory and scampered farther up the tree, as if to his reward.

I knew then what had been missing. I had been so busy looking at my problems—measuring the distance between the trees—that I was afraid to let go and sail to the other side. I had lost my faith in my maker, my Savior, my best friend.

As I watched the squirrel, now merrily chattering away in the treetop, I knew that Jesus had answered my prayer—not through a spectacular miracle, but rather the example of a happy little squirrel. The same God who took care of him was going to take care of me.

JO DIAS IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN ENGLAND. ✂

FAITH now

and forever

BY MARIA FONTAINE



THE WAY JESUS WORKS IN OUR LIVES AND THE WAY HE CHOOSES TO DO THINGS IS OFTEN PAST OUR COMPREHENSION. IT'S MYSTERIOUS AND USUALLY TAKES FAITH AND PATIENCE, BECAUSE HIS TIMETABLE IS OFTEN DIFFERENT FROM OURS. Living the Christian life requires faith and trust, because we're not the ones in control—Jesus is. We have to remind ourselves constantly that He knows best, that He does all things well, and that His priorities are often different and much more long-term and “big picture” than ours.

Even with all of His awesome promises—promises like, “Whatever you ask the Father in My name He [will] give you,”¹ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you,”² and “If you have faith, nothing will be impossible for you”³—we have to remember that we can do our part, but we're not the ones calling the shots. We're not the ones with the bird's-eye view of the past, present, future, and master plan for eternity. We can put Jesus on the spot and we can harness all the spiritual power He has put at our fingertips, but ultimately it is His will that must be done. Jesus is in control, and He knows best.

It's so important to keep an attitude of simple trust in Him, as otherwise we can struggle with so many questions when things don't turn out the way we were hoping or the way we prayed they would.

There is so much in the Bible on this topic, as well as throughout the writings

of men and women of faith from the past 2,000 years—and of course Jesus can also still speak to our hearts today. Every now and then it's good to stop and reflect on the various reasons why Jesus works the way He does, why things don't always turn out the way we'd like, why every prayer isn't answered in the manner we had hoped, and why life is sometimes harder than we think it should be.

If you don't strengthen your faith, life can seem pretty hard for no good reason. When that happens, you can start to feel that it's your fault, that you must be doing something wrong, that Jesus must be displeased with you because He isn't answering your every prayer as you want Him to, or that maybe the promises He's given don't actually work "as advertised."

The devil is always trying to tear down your faith. His job is to try to get you to doubt God's Word. I'd say that's his number-one mission—and it started way back with Adam and Eve in the Garden, when he asked them, "Has God indeed said?"⁴ He wanted to get them to doubt God, and in that case his charms and half-truths worked.

In addition to the devil's constant attempts to hurt your faith, you've also got human nature working against your faith, because faith defies logic by requiring you to believe in

something that is unseen, for which you have no tangible proof at the time.

But the more you study God's Word,⁵ the more your faith will grow.⁵

In time you will find many wonderful promises and explanations that answer age-old questions such as why it seems like God doesn't always answer prayer. But the fact is that life, with all the difficulties and trials and times when prayers seemingly go unanswered, will continue to be a test of faith. It will always be so until we get to heaven.

Whenever things are rough, whenever you feel that they're not turning out the way you'd hoped, when you feel your prayers aren't being answered, when the trials of life are a little too much to bear, when the battle seems too long, when your faith is under attack, when you're feeling weary and aren't sure if you can take much more, climb up onto the rock-solid foundation God has provided for your faith through His many promises and encouraging words, and rest in that safe haven.

Don't try to answer all of the devil's lies and accusations yourself; let the Word answer for you. Take comfort, also, in the fact that this battle isn't uniquely yours. It's one that every Christian of all time has had to reckon with, and the answer is the same today as it

has ever been—trust in God and His wonderful ways. You can't figure it all out. Instead, encourage yourself in the Word and relax in the comfort of knowing that Jesus has everything in His hands. Rest in Jesus' arms, let Him shield you and support you, and in God's time the storm will pass.

MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND SPIRITUAL OVERSEERS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ✝

JESUS-IN-YOU FAITH

One aspect of faith that we all need is full, unlimited confidence in Jesus' ability to work through us. We must dare to try, which means allowing Him to try through us. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."⁶

—Maria Fontaine

*If studying the Bible and Bible-based publications is new to you, the booklet *Understanding God's Word*, available from any of the addresses on page 2, will get you started.

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1. John 15:16
 2. Matthew 7:7
 3. Matthew 17:20
 4. Genesis 3:1
 5. Romans 10:17
 6. 2 Corinthians 4:7



THE REWARD



OF FAITH

BY MISTY KAY

“OH, MY LORD, WHAT SHALL WE DO?”
ELISHA’S SERVANT ASKED.

The king of Aram (present-day Syria) was at war with ancient Israel and had sent an entire army to the city of Dothan to capture the prophet Elisha. They came by night, so when Elisha’s servant woke and went out early in the morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city.

“Don’t be afraid,” the prophet said. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.”

Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (These events are recorded in the Bible, 2 Kings 6:8–17. Read the rest of the chapter to find the amazing outcome!)

In this story, the angelic army was already there, but Elisha’s servant was afraid because he hadn’t yet seen them. Why must we always see with our own eyes in order to believe? We have the Bible promise, “[God] shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”¹ Is it not enough to believe because God’s Word says so?

Seeing is the reward of believing, not the other way around.

Why does it have to be this way? Why does God make it so hard for us? Why do we have to take everything by faith? The answer lies in that last little word—“faith.” It wouldn’t be faith if we could see. Jesus said to Thomas, “Because you have seen Me you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”²

This principle of faith is something on which God places a great deal of importance. It’s also something that He gives us credit for³ because it is a sign of our love and trust in Him, that we believe Him and His spiritual power and the principles He lays out for us in His Word.

We walk life’s hot, hard, dusty roads battle-weary and scarred, but we arrive in heaven triumphant. The angels blow their trumpets to herald our victory. We held on when it seemed the whole world was against us. We didn’t sink when the storms of life rocked our ships. Satan attacked us on every side. He threw his worst at us, but we survived. We held on. We did our best. We believed! We won the war of faith. Henceforth is laid up for us a crown of righteousness.⁴

Several years ago when I was very ill, recovering from a bout with cancer, Jesus told me that He had given me an “angel of comfort” to be with me during those difficult times. I never saw her face, but through many long days and lonely nights, when the pain was at its worst, I could feel her presence, like a tender mother’s, as though my head lay in her lap while she held me close and stroked my head. It was such a blessed feeling of peace, like a soft, warm aura that enveloped me. In spite of the pain, I found my heart filled with wonder and thankfulness for that special touch from heaven.

I am now certain of one thing: angels are not far from us, floating around on clouds in heaven. They are here, all around us, standing ready night and day to serve, aid, comfort, and protect us. I may not be able to see them, but I know they are near.

When I receive my heavenly crown someday, I will know that I didn't earn it by myself; I was aided in my fight of faith by a "great cloud of witnesses,"⁵ the invisible armies of heaven. On that glorious day I will want to meet my angel of comfort and the other dear ones who walked with me and lifted me up when I was weary. On that day, I will thank them face to face.

MISTY KAY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN TAIWAN. ☞



PERFECT PEACE

By David Brandt Berg

When you truly trust God, you can have peace in the midst of storm and calm in the eye of the hurricane. It reminds me of an art contest that was held in which the artists were asked to illustrate peace. Most of the contestants handed in paintings of quiet, calm scenes of the countryside—absolute tranquility. Well, that's a form of peace. But the hardest kind of peace to have was illustrated in the picture that won the award. It depicted the roaring, raging, foaming rapids of a storm-swollen waterfall, and on a little tree branch overhanging the torrent was a nest where a tiny bird sat peacefully singing in spite of the raging river. That's when your faith gets tested, in the midst of turmoil. Quietness is a sign of faith.



"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."⁶

1. Psalm 91:11
2. John 20:29
3. Hebrews 11:6
4. 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7-8
5. Hebrews 12:1
6. Philippians 4:6-7





FINDING FAITH

By TOMOKO MATSUOKA

ONE DAY, WHILE BROWSING IN A BOOKSHOP, I CAME ACROSS AN ENCYCLOPEDIA WITH A SECTION OF BIBLE-RELATED ARTICLES. I was curious to see how a secular scholar might depict the great men and women of the Bible, so I began to read some of the short biographies—the prophets Daniel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah; King David; Samson; the apostles Matthew, Peter, and Paul. ...

One after another, things I had accepted as fact were brought into question: Three people may have written the book of Isaiah; the apostle Matthew may not have written the Gospel of Matthew; Paul may not have written some of the epistles that have been attributed to him. On and on it went. With phrases like “mythological symbolism,” “legendary accreditations,” and “obscure visions,” the author went on to explain in great detail how every book in the Bible was flawed or shouldn’t be taken literally. Adam and

Eve should be thought of as “symbolic prototypes of mankind.” The book of Genesis was merely “a way for certain authors to express their theories on the origins of human life and cultural identity.”

I had only skimmed a few pages when a hollow feeling settled in my stomach. Part of me wanted to close the book, but another part kept flipping the pages, looking for some statement that reaffirmed my faith in the Bible. Then my eyes fell on the closing sentence of the entry on Jesus Christ. “In all the inevitable questioning over the biblical account of the resurrection of Jesus, one fact seems beyond dispute: Jesus’ disciples were prepared to stake their lives on its veracity.” And so have countless others down through the ages, I might add. The author, in his scholarly attempt to debunk God’s Word, couldn’t explain away its power.

I felt vindicated, then ashamed at how little faith I had shown just moments earlier. That closing

sentence had driven out and slammed the door on the doubts that had entered and tried to take hold of my mind.

I realized then why so many people still have faith in the Bible, even after reading books like this encyclopedia, which undermine faith through their skeptical and narrow views. It’s because through the Bible they have come to know its true Author, God, and His Son, Jesus Christ.

God is alive and well; Jesus not only rose from the dead, but He now lives in every heart that invites Him in; and the words found in the Bible are alive and powerful. How do I know these three things to be true? Because I have experienced them for myself. I believe the Bible because I have seen its effect in my life.

TOMOKO MATSUOKA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL AND AN *ACTIVATED* STAFF WRITER. ✎

HOW FAITH WORKS

FROM THE WRITINGS OF DAVID BRANDT BERG

God loves to precipitate a crisis. He sometimes lets things happen to make us pray and believe Him for the answer. He wants us to take a definite step of faith by making specific requests and expecting specific answers.



Faith in God, trust in God, gives a feeling of rest of body, peace of mind, contentment of heart, and spiritual well-being. When we know that God loves us, we know everything is going to be okay.



We're supposed to believe God's Word simply because He said so. It's like a child who has to trust his parents even though he doesn't always understand why he must do or not do this or that. He just has to "do it because Daddy says so." Because the child trusts his parents and feels secure in their love, he takes their word for it. That's the way we should be with God. We should say to Him, "Yes sir!" and believe it and do it simply because He says we should. That's one way of showing our love and confidence in Him.



Take the first
step in faith.
You don't have
to see the whole
staircase, just
take the first
step.—Martin
Luther King, Jr.

How do you get faith? It's a gift of God and available to anyone who wants it. The problem is, a lot of people don't want it until they need it, and then they suddenly find they don't have the faith they need because they have no background of faith in God's Word. As no good building is without a good foundation, there is no solid basis for faith without the Word; faith in God is built on His Word. So if you feel like you're weak in faith, there's a simple cure: God's Word will increase your faith.

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"¹—meaning it comes through reading God's Word or learning from someone who is teaching about God's Word. The more you fill your heart and mind with the words of God, the more faith and the less worry, fear, and stress you will have.

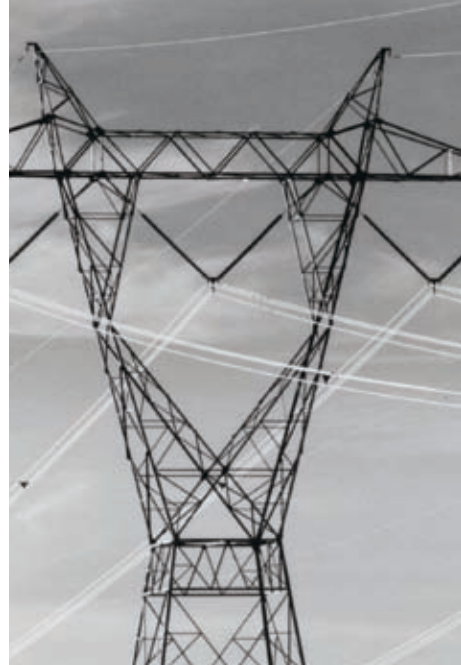


When you pray, expect an answer. God is bound by His Word, so remind Him of His promises. Never doubt for a moment that God is going to answer, and He will. He has to. He wants to. Trust Him and thank Him for the answer, even if you don't see it immediately. ✂

1. Romans 10:17

STROKES OF GOD

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER



EVERY SO OFTEN WE READ OR HEAR ABOUT SOME HAPPENING THAT SO COMPLETELY DEFIES EXPLANATION THAT THE PEOPLE INVOLVED ARE CONVINCED THEY HAVE BEEN PART OF A MIRACLE.

For the rest of us, it takes faith to believe those accounts—faith that miracles are possible, as well as faith in those giving the accounts. But faith has its rewards. If we can believe that “impossible” things have happened to others, then perhaps we can believe that they can happen to us too. The French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) called miracles the “lightning strokes of God.” There’s no “perhaps” about a lightning strike, especially to one who is standing on the spot where it hits! Lightning is powerful, and it happens often—about 100 times per second in as many locations around the world. I’m sure that if

every miracle were recorded they would far outnumber lightning strikes. What makes me so sure? I’ve yet to be struck by actual lightning, but I’ve experienced many “strokes of God.”

One such miracle that comes to mind happened when I was living in Uganda, East Africa, and it ties in with another one that happened to someone else there.

My son had been visiting from Japan, and his flight home left early the next morning. I lived quite some distance from the airport, which meant he needed to leave the house at 4 AM.

Realizing that it wasn’t going to be easy to find a taxi at that hour, we prayed for God to supply one and went to the main road, hoping to flag down a taxi driver who would agree to pick up my son the next morning and take him to the airport.

As we were standing by the side of the road, a jeep pulled up. “Can I help you?” the driver asked.

“Thank you, but I don’t think so,” I said. Then, without meaning to, I explained our situation.

“I’ll do it,” the man said.

He’s just trying to make some money on the side, I thought. Entering into a deal with a freelance taxi driver can be dicey, so I said, “Thank you, but we are looking for a regular taxi.”

“I’m not a taxi driver. My name is George, and I’ll drive you for free.”

George seemed sincere, but why anyone would stop and offer to help in such a big way was curious. We invited him for coffee at our home to get to know him better. It was there that he told us his own miracle story.

Years earlier he had been working as an electrician for the city’s main power station. Huge amounts of electricity flowed through the lines he worked on, so one small mistake could be fatal. One day that “small” mistake happened. Someone else

had failed to flip a certain switch, and thousands of volts of electricity coursed through George's body. He should have been killed instantly, but for some inexplicable reason he wasn't. Everyone said it had been a miracle.

This brush with death changed George's priorities and perspective on life. "Since that accident," he said, "I try not to make a move unless I hear from God. I was sitting in my room tonight, watching TV, when that inner voice that I've come to recognize as God's spoke to me. Get up, get in your car, and drive. You'll meet someone who needs your help. When I saw you by the side of the road, I knew you must be the

ones He was sending me to."

Now convinced of his sincerity, we thanked George profusely for his willingness to drive my son to the airport so early.

"God also told me to fill my gas tank," he said. Full tanks are almost unheard of in Uganda because thieves routinely siphon gas from parked cars, but this time it made sense; no gas stations would be open at 4 AM, and we were far from the airport.

The next morning George arrived right on time and drove my son to the airport. He did not ask for money, but rather gave my son a generous donation for his volunteer work, which came as another answer to prayer.

The amount happened to be exactly what my son needed for his next project.

Few people would question that God saved George's life by a miracle, but what about our meeting him the way we did? Ours wasn't a life-and-death situation, but does that make God's intervention in answer to prayer any less miraculous? I believe that every time we have a need, it's an opportunity for God to work on our behalf. Ask for, look for, and expect miracles, and you will get them!

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN INDIA. ✠



Faith has its rewards. If we can believe that "impossible" things have happened to others, then perhaps we can believe that they can happen to us too.

BURDEN OR BLESSING?

BY SHANNON SHAYLER

MANY THINGS THAT SEEM TO US TO BE CURSES ARE IN FACT GIFTS FROM GOD, ODDLY PACKAGED.

The story is told of a woman who loved Jesus very much and wanted nothing more than to please Him. “I’ll gladly do whatever You ask,” she promised, hoping secretly for some noble and noticed place of service.

To her dismay He handed her a heavy, rough burlap sack and asked her to carry it as they walked through life together. She was curious about the contents of the sack, but it was tied closed with a strong cord and so many intricate knots that clearly it was not meant to be opened just yet.

As they started on their way, the woman sank down under the weight of her burden. “It’s too heavy!” she protested.

“My strength is made perfect in your weakness, and I will always

be at your side,” Jesus reassured her. “When the way gets steep or you feel faint, lean on Me.”

So they walked on together, and it was just as Jesus had said. Sometimes the woman stopped and told Him that the weight was too much for her to bear, and so they bore it together.

By and by they arrived at their destination. The woman set her bundle down at Jesus’ feet and heaved a sigh of relief. Her burden-bearing days were over.

“Let’s see what’s inside,” Jesus said with a twinkle in His eye. With one stroke of His hand the knots were undone, the sack fell open, and the contents spilled out.

“The riches of heaven!” the woman exclaimed as her eyes feasted on treasures of unearthly beauty.

“This is your eternal reward—My gift in appreciation for all you have been through,” Jesus explained.

Astonishment turned to tears of joy. The woman fell at Jesus’ feet and said, “Oh Lord, forgive me! I misunderstood all these years. If I had only trusted You and not doubted and questioned! If only I had understood what was inside the sack, it would have been a joy to carry. I never should have grumbled or complained!”

You may look around and see others whose burdens appear to be much lighter than your own, and you may wish you could trade places. But if God were to grant you your wish, you would find that their burden would be even heavier and harder for you to carry than your own, for it was not meant for you. Each burden is tailor-made for its bearer, and is fashioned with the greatest of love and care. God knows exactly what’s best for you. Trust Him.

“BURDEN OR BLESSING?” IS EXCERPTED FROM *OBSTACLES ARE FOR OVERCOMING*, A BOOKLET IN THE *GET ACTIVATED* SERIES. ✨

All I have seen teaches me
to trust the Creator for all
I have not seen.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

relax your jaw

BY STEPHANIE KELLY

AS I FIXED BREAKFAST, MY THOUGHTS DRIFTED TO THE DAY AHEAD. There were meetings to attend, projects to complete, emails to send, phone calls to make, and on it went. The next time I printed out my to-do list, it occurred to me, I should use a smaller font so it would fit on two pages. I grabbed my breakfast and some coffee, and dashed off to get ready for the day.

I picked up a devotional publication I had been reading, and it fell open to a section titled “Practical Tips for Resting in Jesus.” One tip was “Make a conscious effort throughout the day to relax your jaw, stop clenching your teeth, unfurl your brow, and let your shoulders drop.” I laughed out loud at the mental picture.

Before I knew it, I was back into rush-and-stress mode. There was just so much to do!

My first task was Bible story and activity time with my co-worker’s two-year-old daughter Aisha, so her mom could get a jump on her day.

As I read the story of Daniel in the lion’s den—always a favorite—and Aisha colored an activity page, making Daniel’s face



green and his clothes blue, I realized how I needed to take a lesson from her. She wasn’t worried about the day ahead or how many things had been left undone the day before.

I tried counting my blessings. The first thing that came to mind was that I didn’t have to worry about being thrown into a lion’s den.

Aisha looked up from her coloring and smiled. “Relax your jaw” flashed through my mind, and I determined to not allow the pressure to get to me that day. I would trust and rest in Jesus, even if I didn’t accomplish anything else.

I dropped off Aisha at her pre-school and launched into my “real” workday. Jobs piled up, but amazingly I didn’t feel stressed. At the end of the day I collapsed on my bed, tired and ready to sleep, but I wasn’t down, I wasn’t worried about all the work that awaited me the next morning, and I didn’t have my usual I-need-to-get-away-from-it-all thoughts. I felt happy, loved, and at peace.

I’ve decided that I like this new way of life, trusting the Lord and enjoying life and work and all the challenges that come with it. I don’t always get it right, of course, but I’m determined to keep at it. And I relax my jaw a lot more.

STEPHANIE KELLY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SOUTH AFRICA

“PRECIOUS PROMISES” SAMPLER



HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF GOD'S PROMISES TO YOU. THERE ARE HUNDREDS MORE THAT YOU CAN HOLD HIM TO WHEN FACED WITH ANY PROBLEM.

God's promises are contracts. Most have conditions attached. Take a moment to think about each one in terms of God's part and your part.

(In the following list, only the most pertinent parts of some verses are given in order to highlight the promise.)

God's love

Romans 8:38–39: I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

James 4:8: Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

1 John 4:8: God is love.

Answers to prayer

Jeremiah 33:3: Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

John 15:7: If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

1 John 5:14–15: This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

Material supply

Psalm 84:11: No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Matthew 6:33: Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Philippians 4:19: My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

1 John 3:22: Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we

keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Protection and help in time of trouble

Psalm 34:7: The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.

Psalm 46:1: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Isaiah 43:2: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.

Comfort

Psalm 34:18: The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.

Psalm 119:50: This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has given me life.

John 14:18 KJV: I [Jesus] will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. ☞



ONLY HIM

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

THE STORY IS TOLD OF AN ELDERLY WOMAN WHOSE MEMORY WAS STARTING TO FAIL HER. Over the years she had read and studied the Bible so much that she knew many passages by heart. One of her favorites was from Paul's second letter to Timothy, which included the verse, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him."¹ As long as she held onto Jesus, He would not fail her.

As time went by, she found that she could no longer remember the whole verse—only the phrase "what I have committed to Him," which she quietly repeated to herself.

Then at last, as she hovered between this world and the next, the attending doctor noticed her lips moving and bent down to see if she needed anything. She was repeating over and over the one word of the text she remembered. "Him. ... Him. ... Him."

She had lost the whole Bible except that one word, but in that one word she had the whole Bible and her faith intact.

There is a wonderful place of peace that we too can reach if we can concentrate solely on Jesus. Find a quiet, comfortable spot and try this spiritual exercise:

Close your eyes. Imagine Jesus bending over you like the doctor in the story above. He is listening to your faintest whispers. Now say His name. Slowly repeat it several times. He is there with you, and He is all you care about. This is not the time for a lengthy prayer listing your problems and needs and describing them in detail. It's a time of simple trust, as you focus your attention on Jesus and Him alone. In these moments you can discover the truth of the Bible promise, "You [Jesus] will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."² ✝

If you haven't met the friend who will love you through thick and thin, the One who holds the keys to overcoming and happiness and joy and eternal life, you can right now by sincerely praying a prayer like the following:

Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so that all my mistakes and wrongs can be forgiven. I open the door of my heart and invite You in. Give me Your gift of eternal life, and be my nearest, dearest, truest friend. Amen.

1. 2 Timothy 1:12

2. Isaiah 26:3

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

when “reality” is not reality

Sometimes, because you see yourself or situations a certain way, you put limits on what I am able to do in answer to your prayers. You have to let go of your preconceived ideas before you can believe that I will intercede, or that change is even possible. Sometimes your desire to want to be realistic and not get your hopes too high becomes a lack of faith. It's good to be a realist to some degree, to not have unrealistic expectations of yourself or life in general, but too much realism can lead to discouragement and a defeatist attitude.

Introspection and dwelling on your weaknesses could lead you to “realistically” conclude that you're a hopeless wreck. “Realistically” evaluating your abilities could lead you

to conclude that you'll never be a success. “Realistically” looking at your personal history and situation, you could conclude that it's better not to expect to ever find a soul mate, because then you won't be disappointed. But being so “realistic” can dry up the soul. Put your hope and faith in Me. That's the one and only way you can be sure to not be disappointed.

There are times when the reality you see is *not* reality. But whether the challenge is in your mind or a real obstacle or circumstance, I can see you through it. I'm even able to defy the laws of nature in answer to your prayers, because *all* things are possible for Me. *That's* reality!