

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 11 • Issue 5

THE EXTRA ALLOWANCE

Big problems, bigger help

Live Well on Less

How to be up when the economy is down

Who Deserves Love?

The answer could change your life





PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Life is full of problems—sickness, accidents, financial problems, family problems, loss of loved ones, and on and on the list goes. “Hasn’t there been some sort of mistake here?” we ask. “If God truly is love, as the Bible says in 1 John 4:8, and if He truly cares for us like a father, as the Bible says many times, then why all these problems?”

The first thing to understand is that God doesn’t cause these problems; they are the result of people’s bad decisions—others’ or our own. God doesn’t cause our problems, but He does allow them to befall us, and for reasons that are nearly as varied as the problems themselves. Sometimes He uses them to remind us how incapable we are of solving our own problems, so we will turn to Him for help. Sometimes He lets them happen so He can show us how much He loves us by working things out. Sometimes they happen to test and strengthen our faith. Sometimes they happen to make us pray more earnestly. Sometimes they happen to teach us lessons of patience or positiveness in the face of adversity. Sometimes they happen to keep us humble. Sometimes they happen to make us wiser. Sometimes they happen to help us appreciate our other blessings and all the problems we *don’t* have. Sometimes they happen to draw us closer to others who are going through similar things. There are all kinds of reasons for troubles, but whatever the reason, God always wants to turn them for our ultimate good. “All things work together for good to those who love God.”¹

Of course, how quickly and completely God is able to accomplish His good purpose depends in large part on how much cooperation He gets from us. This issue of *Activated* explains how to put your spiritual resources on God’s side and work with Him so He can give you His very best, even when things seem at their worst.

Keith Phillips

For *Activated*

1. Romans 8:28

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RUN THE RACE

BY ABI F. MAY

TWO HOURS, FIVE MINUTES, AND TEN SECONDS: THE TIME IT TOOK KENYA'S SAMUEL WANJIRU TO FINISH FIRST IN THE 26.2-MILE (42 KM 195 M) LONDON MARATHON IN APRIL 2009.

Thirteen days: The time it took Major Phil Packer, a British soldier who became a paraplegic following a spinal injury, to complete the same marathon, finishing last out of 36,000 competitors. This feat of perseverance raised over £600,000 (about US\$1 million) for charity.

Wanjiru made the headlines for his speed. Packer made headlines not for speed, but for his courage and determination. A thousand-strong crowd gathered to welcome him at the end of a race that he had defied odds to enter, let alone complete. Following his injury

a year earlier, he had been told he would never walk again. In fact, he only relearned to walk with crutches a month before the marathon.

While both men are respected for their accomplishments, there was something special about Packer's triumph. He was never alone during the exhausting and painful six hours it took him to walk two miles each day. Well-wishers—both friends and strangers—accompanied him on the course, walking beside him and cheering him on, from the starting gate to the finishing line. Congratulatory messages on his website include a message of admiration from Prince Charles.

The road of life is not always easy, and sometimes we face what appear to be impossible obstacles.

But we don't walk it alone. We also have well-wishers—our family and friends—encouraging us along the way. And we too have a Prince supporting us—not one from this realm, but Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who promises to help us rise above circumstances, persist against the odds, and triumph over difficulty: “My grace is sufficient for you,” He tells us, “for My strength is made perfect in [your] weakness.”¹ So “let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”²

ABI F. MAY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL AND AN ACTIVATED STAFF WRITER. ✨

1. 2 Corinthians 12:9

2. Hebrews 12:1–2

3. Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5



NEVER ALONE

You'll never walk alone if you have Jesus in your heart and your hand in His; you'll always have company and love. No matter where you are, you are in His hands and He'll take care of you. Jesus is the one possession you'll never have to give up, never have to leave behind, never lose. You can give Him away as much as you like, but you'll always have Him. He will always be near.³—*David Brandt Berg*



the extra allowance

By VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN AWAY FROM HOME AND FOUND YOURSELF WITHOUT CASH? I HAD THAT EXPERIENCE WHEN I LEFT HOME TO ATTEND UNIVERSITY, AND I GOT SO DISTRESSED THAT I COULDN'T SLEEP. Suddenly it occurred to me to write my father. I should have budgeted more carefully, of course, but I knew he would understand. What a relief it was when I made that decision! My father had helped me many times before, and I knew he would help me again. I had perfect assurance during the days it took that letter to reach home and the answer to come back. [Editor's note: This took place over 100 years ago, before email and even widespread use of the telephone.] I had needed to ask for an extra allowance, but I knew it would come. And it did.

We've all experienced days when sudden trouble swept down on us and our strength gave way. We looked around, but there was no way out. Then we turned to God and asked Him for an extra allowance.

Perhaps you know what it is like to have His help from day to day, and you depend upon that help and are grateful. But when God tells us, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you,"¹ He is speaking of something beyond that. This is extra help in extraordinary circumstances—extra

Our heavenly Father is always there, only a prayer away, waiting to forgive and give us that extra allowance.



strength when we are especially weak, extra material supply when we have extra needs, extra grace when we're under extra strain, extra wisdom when we need it, and extra love when others need to feel God's love through us. We turn to our heavenly Father, and He gives the extra allowance we need at the time to overcome that particular trouble.

I've heard people say, "God has promised to be *with* us in trouble, but He never promised to free us *from* trouble." Those people need to read that verse more carefully. He may not free them as quickly as they would like or in the way they expect, but He does promise deliverance: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you." He promises *both*.

Surely God was with Daniel in the lion's den, but He also delivered him out of the den.² We know He was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace because King Nebuchadnezzar said he saw four figures in the flames—"and the form of the fourth [was] like the Son of God"³—but God also delivered them out of it.

When we have troubles that God doesn't deliver us from immediately, it's usually because we aren't ready to be delivered; there is something we need to do first, or some lesson we need to learn. Once we have found and

done or learned that, He *does* deliver us.

I've gone through times when I was so discouraged about my failures that I couldn't call on God at that moment. But when I got my eyes off of my faults and weaknesses and onto God's promises, He delivered me; the extra allowance was mine as soon as I asked for it.

There is lots of advice floating around about how to overcome difficulties. "Dance your troubles away." "Just keep smiling." "Look for something pretty every day." "Do something nice for someone else." Well, I certainly believe in being positive and doing nice things for others, and those will get your mind off your troubles, but they won't necessarily get you *out* of deep trouble.

There was a time, before I had a personal relationship with Jesus, when I was a helpless invalid. Someone who had even less faith than I did kept telling me, "Hold on. Just hold on." But that was the trouble—I didn't have anything to hold onto! But thank God, as believers we don't just have *something* to hold onto; we have *someone* to hold onto! "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble."⁴

One day my car stalled on a lonely road. I was alone and quite desperate, when suddenly I remembered that not far away lived a former friend. I say

"former" because although I often thought about this woman, it had been quite awhile since I'd made time to visit or phone her. I knew she would be happy to help, but I couldn't bring myself to walk up to her house and ask because I had neglected her for so long. I sat in the car and tried to get up the courage, but I never did.

It can be like that when we fail to include God in our thoughts and activities day after day, when we fail to ask His advice and help in the little things, or thank Him for His goodness, or make time to draw inspiration and learn from His Word. If we've been neglecting Him, it's pretty hard to call on Him in the day of trouble. It's hard and it's humbling, but it's a whole lot better than continuing to struggle. Our heavenly Father is always there, only a prayer away, waiting to forgive and give us that extra allowance.

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS THE MOTHER OF FAMILY INTERNATIONAL FOUNDER DAVID BRANDT BERG AND A RENOWNED EVANGELIST AND PASTOR. FOR 15 YEARS SHE HOSTED THE GOSPEL RADIO SHOW *MEDITATION MOMENTS*. THIS ARTICLE IS AN EDITED TRANSCRIPT OF ONE OF HER BROADCASTS. ❀

1. Psalm 50:15 3. Daniel 3:24–25
2. Daniel 6:16–23 4. Psalm 46:1

on the rebound

By NYX MARTINEZ

IT HAD BEEN A SATISFYING DAY.

The world was a wonderful place, I thought, as I made my way to the office where my computer sat. Its keyboard beckoned my fingers to make contact.

As soon as the screen lit up, I knew something was terribly wrong. My hard drive had crashed.

It took a moment for the scope of the disaster to register in my slow-computing brain, but then it hit me. No, it slammed into me with the force of a bulldozer on a razing mission. My stomach did a back flip. My vision went hazy. My mind became clouded. The room spun.

The last six months of hard work—articles, graphic design, all that precious mental energy that had been stored on the computer’s hard drive for safekeeping—was gone.

Forever.

My worst fear, like a meteor falling from the sky, came crashing down on me. Frustration, confusion, tragedy, and loss engulfed me.

Why, oh why, hadn’t I copied all that stuff onto a backup device? Now bits and pieces of creativity were lost, floating somewhere in cyberspace, far, far from home. And I couldn’t get them back.

But then I remembered the story of when Thomas Edison met a similar tragedy. His workshop caught fire, and

months, years, even decades of hard work on numerous unfinished inventions went up in smoke.

“There go all my mistakes!” he said with amazing cheerfulness. And then he went right back to work.

I wondered if there was enough positive energy left in me to start again as bravely as Edison had. Contemplating these things somehow eased the pain and melted away that woozy feeling of defeat. I struggled to stand up from where I had fallen to my knees in frustration, and I forced the corners of my mouth into a smile.

Oh, some things in life seem totally unfair! But I refused to let defeat overcome me in that moment or have any bearing on my future efforts. I decided to see this situation not as the tragic end to all the projects that were lost, but rather as a new beginning for each of them in a future that was yet to unfold.

This is the first I’ve written since Demolition Day. “There go all my mistakes,” I’m saying. And I’m not going to quit. I’m on the rebound, back at my computer and ready to start again.

With backup files.

NYX MARTINEZ IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN GERMANY. ✨

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

—Ariana Keating

when problems persist

BY SHANNON SHAYLER

SOME PROBLEMS ARE SHORT TERM, SUCH AS A BOUT OF FLU OR A TEMPORARY FALLING OUT WITH SOMEONE AT WORK. Others may last much longer: a chronic illness, a disability or an addiction, the loss of someone dear, or an ongoing battle to overcome a personal weakness such as anger or moodiness. You may have to struggle with such difficulties for weeks, months, or even years.

Sometimes problems persist even when you feel you've already done all you could: You've been praying, reading and following God's Word, claiming His promises, and trying to trust Him. Still you see no answer, which can be discouraging.

In cases like that, God may be testing you to see whether you will continue to trust and believe and thank Him for all the other good things He sends your way, even when it seems He is not answering your prayers about a certain thing. "We walk by faith, not by sight. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."¹ God loves to see His children's faith manifested, and He promises to greatly reward those who bravely endure the trying of their faith.

If God is working in your life to bring out a special quality, the process may take some time. Lumps of coal aren't turned to diamonds overnight; so it is with our lives.

When you think you've reached the end of your rope, just hold on a little longer. Patience is often the key that opens the door to God's blessings, and sometimes we must be content to wait for His answer. While we may expect God to put an end to

What is defeat? Nothing but education, nothing but the first step to something better.

—Wendell Phillips

our problems right now, He may know that later is a better time. God's timing is impeccable. "He has done all things well."² Trust Him!

Faith is believing. Faith is trusting. Faith doesn't quit. Faith refuses to call anything impossible. Faith refuses to be robbed of its joy and peace by circumstances or battles.

If we refuse to concede defeat, but rather hold on to God no matter what, if we determine to believe His promises, even though we may not see the fulfillment immediately, victory will be ours in the end. Such faith cannot be defeated. God will always come through for us.

SHANNON SHAYLER IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL AND AN ACTIVATED STAFF WRITER 🌿

1. 2 Corinthians 5:7; John 20:29

2. Mark 7:37



Who deserves love?

BY MARIA FONTAINE



PEOPLE DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT IN ORDER TO DESERVE OUR LOVE. They don't have to be flawless or easy to like or get along with. That's a good thing, because none of us are all those things all the time; none of us are perfect. God doesn't expect us to be perfect, but He does expect us to show one another love and understanding. "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"¹

When people live or work closely together, it's easy to get negative or judgmental about one another, and that doesn't make things any better, of course. It becomes a vicious cycle of judging and criticizing and measuring that undermines friendships and working relationships.

But we don't have to fall prey to that. There is an alternative, a strengthening cycle in which

we love each other through our bad days, forgive one another's mistakes, compensate for one another's weak areas, and bring out one another's strengths. Love begets love. It inspires others to give their best, it wins God's blessing, and it makes us happy.

Instead of looking at how much others are giving us or how worthy we think they are of our love and help, we should ask God for more love. God's love is unconditional and strong enough and pure enough to withstand our human faults and mess-ups, which are many. We should ask Him for love that isn't contingent on us clicking with people, love that appreciates them for who they are, love that loves even when they are late or selfish or rude or unkempt or disorganized or just plain in the wrong.

There are many reasons, of course, for a lack of love. Being

judgmental is one. Being self-centered is another; when we focus on our own needs and what we want, we don't see the needs of others. Selfishness is another; we think that giving to others of our time and attention will cost us more than we want to give or stand to gain. Busyness is another; we get so focused on reaching our goals that we don't realize the effect this is having on others. Stress also hinders love, because at the time nothing seems as important as whatever has us stressed. Pride is another, because it takes humility to put love into action or words; our pride tells us to wait for the other person to make the first move. Resentment over past hurts that we haven't forgiven and let go of can hinder our ability to love for a long time.

It's also possible that those we find it hard to love would be pretty difficult for anyone to get

along with. Maybe they don't go about things the right way. Maybe they are full of faults.

We can always come up with some reason not to love, and each seems justified if we're only willing to love when it comes easy. But when we put ourselves in others' shoes, we realize what a big difference a little love could make. Then all those excuses don't hold up.

The apostle Paul wrote that without love, our lives don't really amount to anything. Of our talents and achievements and even our sacrifices he said, "Without love, it is nothing."² Impartial, unconditional love is not a natural human quality. It's supernatural. It's heavenly. But it's not out of our reach. It's a gift of God, and it's ours for the asking. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights."³ "Ask [God], and it will be given you."⁴ It's a gift, but we don't get better at it automatically. Nothing precious comes easy. Like replacing any old habit with a new one, learning to love like God does takes time and thought and prayer and effort. If we want to grow in love, we have to make time for that.

If this rings true, step back and reevaluate things. Look at

your life and goals, and factor in more time to love. Factor in more time for your loved ones. Factor in time for friendships, and not just with people you're already close to or naturally get along with. Factor in time for going-out-of-your-way love. And be sure to factor in time for heart-to-heart communication with Jesus, who the Bible calls "the express image of the invisible God,"⁵ being filled with and transformed by His love, and thanking Him for it.

God wants to give you the love you need to be fulfilled and happy, and He wants to love others through you. He wants to stretch you and make you capable of loving much more than you probably think you're capable of.

Love is a miracle. Ask Him for that miracle. Ask Him for more of His nature, and then act as though you have all the love you need to make the right choices, the unselfish, loving, humble choices, the hard choices. And God won't fail. He'll fill your heart to overflowing.

MARIA FONTAINE AND
HER HUSBAND, PETER
AMSTERDAM, HEAD THE FAMILY
INTERNATIONAL. ✨

Life is born of struggle. To enter this world, a baby must leave the comfort and security of the womb and make a difficult and perilous passage through the narrow birth canal. Before an eagle can soar to the heavens, it must peck and push its way out of the egg. Before a butterfly can delight us with its colors and grace, it must escape from its cocoon.

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1. Galatians 5:14
 2. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3
 3. James 1:17
 4. Matthew 7:7
 5. Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15

LIVE WELL ON LESS

BY SWATI SANKLECHA

THE ADVANTAGES OF LEARNING TO LIVE BY THE LESS-IS-MORE TENET ARE MANY. Contemporary lifestyles and habits have a way of blinding us to those benefits, in part by keeping us so busy that we seldom stop long enough to carefully consider what we're doing. We "move with the groove," but that groove may be depleting us of precious funds, health, and happiness. A few ways to "move your groove" are:



Self-propel. A lot of people are so used to getting behind the wheel to go anywhere that they don't realize how fun, eco-friendly, and healthy it is to walk the few blocks to the gym (that can double as your warm-up, saving time overall) or anywhere else within comfortable walking distance. Or do errands by bicycle. Besides getting exercise and fresh air, you can significantly reduce your carbon footprint, "experience life" along the way, and save money. Exercise also produces a healthy natural high and increases energy levels. Public transport and carpooling are also relatively economical and eco-friendly options.

Go natural. Drinking plenty of water and eating lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, including nutrition-dense yet inexpensive seasonal ones, will boost your

resistance and thus lower your medical expenses.

Local fruits and vegetables often have nutritional benefits that rival expensive, exotic supplements like spirulina or Tibetan leh berries. Depending on what is available and affordable in your area, some of the best cosmetics and health products may be among the cheapest, and you may already have them in your kitchen. A salt-soap-and-loofah scrub can give the same smooth, polished-body effect as an expensive body scrub made from exotic ingredients. Mashed papaya can give you a quick peel that is cheaper than a glycolic peel. (Don't leave it on for more than 10 minutes, though!) Olive oil makes great lip gloss and is harmless if accidentally ingested or kissed off. Research the benefits and possible adverse effects of any homemade health

MASTER OF REINVENTION

"Necessity is the mother of invention," Plato wrote.¹ Others have since added that necessity is also the mother of reinvention—meaning that new challenges give birth to progress in new directions. That certainly has proven true during the economic upheavals of the past couple of years. Forced from their relatively comfortable positions in the former status quo, many people have reinvented their businesses or found promising new careers in fields they never would have considered otherwise. Others have reexamined their priorities and are now focusing on things they used to think they didn't have much time for, such as family, community service, charity work, further education, or spiritual pursuits.

If you're looking to reinvent yourself during an economic downturn—or any time, for that matter—Jesus is a master at that. The Bible promises, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."²



or beauty aid before trying. Moderation is usually advisable.

You probably don't have a lot of time to make your own potions and lotions. However, eating healthfully and living well is possible even on a tight budget, and it can be fairly simple. Form good habits, and you can splurge once in a while on a special treat like a foot spa or special meal.

Recycle. Shop for an exciting “new” outfit in your own wardrobe by finding things you haven't worn for a while and giving them a fresh look by making alterations or pairing them with something new. Or have a discards-and-treasures party with friends, where you get together little-worn clothing and other items and offer them to each other before donating the rest to charity.

Repair rather than replace worn or broken but salvageable items, or pass them on to someone else who will.

Limit paper clutter and the associated waste by doing as much as you can electronically, like keeping records on computer and using email.

Do it yourself. Learn to do some of the things you've been paying others to do for you. You'll save money, learn new skills, and perhaps even pick up a new hobby in the process.

Be values oriented. Trying to keep up with the Joneses costs in more ways than one. Jesus taught “One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”³ Jesus also pointed the way to God's blessing and happiness and fulfillment in life when He said, “Seek first the kingdom

of God and His righteousness, and all these things” —everything you really need—“shall be added to you.”⁴

Co-op. Living or doing things cooperatively with extended family or like-minded friends is more cost- and labor-efficient than private living, and it gives a sense of community. It's also a step toward learning to “love your neighbor as yourself,” which is another key to God's blessing and true happiness.

God is a great life coach. When we follow Him and His spiritual laws, we find that it can actually be easier and more fun to live on less.

SWATI SANKLECHA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN INDIA. ❧

1. *The Republic*, circa 380 bc.

2. 2 Corinthians 5:17

3. Luke 12:15

4. Matthew 6:33

starting again



MY HEART HAS SUNK TO SUCH DEPTHS THAT NOT EVEN THE INCESSANT FLOW OF TEARS CAN WASH AWAY THE REGRET AND DESPAIR. HOW DID IT ALL GO SO WRONG?

Until three years ago I had been fairly content with my life as a fisherman, yet I wasn't truly satisfied. I resented paying the tax collector his due. I resented the rabbis for criticizing my drinking and coarse language. Most of all I resented the fact that although my belly would be filled most days, I was never really any better off. The next day I would need to fish again to eat again. Was the sum of my life a basket of fish?

I hadn't sought out the Master—He had found me. He appeared to be a teacher who spoke with both kindness and authority. I'd heard Him speak before and realized then that He was no ordinary man, but it was that meeting by the Sea of Galilee that changed my life.

I'd been out all night with my brother Andrew and our fishing partners, James and John. Two boats, a night of fishing, and not one fish! All I wanted to do was finish washing the nets, get home, eat, and go to sleep.

A crowd had gathered to hear Jesus teach, and He wanted to borrow my boat. Anchored a short distance from the shore, everyone

would be able to see and hear Him. Fair enough.

By the time He was done, I had finished with my nets and I was about to go home, but He told us to take our boats out to deep water and cast our nets once more—the same nets I had just used my last strength to clean. I was tired and hungry, but there was something about Jesus that made it hard to say no.

When we hauled in our nets, they were filled with so many fish that they could barely hold them all. And when we got the fish into our boats, they were so heavy they nearly sank us.

“Leave it all behind and follow Me,” Jesus told us when we got to shore. He didn’t mean for us to forsake only those fish, we quickly realized, but also our boats, our nets, our families, our homes—everything. And we did. All four of us left with Him that day, with only the clothes on our backs.

During the next three years we saw amazing things! He healed countless people and did many other miracles—like the time the twelve of us He had chosen as disciples were in a boat far from land when a storm hit. Jesus had stayed behind to pray, but He came to us when the storm was at its worst, *walking* on the water. When I asked if it was really Him, He told me to leave the boat and come to Him. I also walked on

the water for a few steps, but then I panicked and began to sink. I would have drowned if Jesus hadn’t caught me.

He was always there when we needed Him, but where was I when He needed me? That’s why I have this ache in the pit of my stomach. I had boasted several times that I would always be there for Him, that I would never run off to save my own skin, but look what happened!

Two nights ago, I couldn’t even stay awake while He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, before His enemies came for Him. Then what did I do? I ran off and hid, then followed at a safe distance to see where they were taking Him and what they would do to Him. I was waiting in a nearby courtyard as He stood trial before a religious council, when a woman singled me out as one of His followers. I denied it. And not only to her, but two other times as well. I could have stood up for Him then. Why didn’t I?

I was such a coward! I insisted that I didn’t know Jesus—the same Jesus who had done all those miracles, who had showed such love, whom I had recognized was the Son of God. I’m a failure as a disciple and as a friend!

Yesterday His enemies persuaded the Romans to execute Him. If only I could turn back time. I would give anything for another chance. ...

A vertical background image on the right side of the page showing a wooden boat on a body of water. The text is overlaid on this image.

If you ever
feel like the
tests, trials,
and battles
are more than
you can bear,
remember that
God is greater
than they are.
Take them
to Him.

—*David Brandt Berg*


That was Simon Peter's story up to that painful moment, but it wasn't the tragic end he imagined.

The third day after Jesus was put to death and buried, an angel appeared to three women who had gone to His tomb at sunrise. "Do not be alarmed," he told them. "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him."

And it happened as the angel said it would. Peter, unsure of himself or what to do, returned with his friends to the Sea of Galilee, where the story had begun. They spent the night fishing, and like that night years before, they caught nothing. In the morning, they saw a man on the shore. He called out to them, "Cast the nets again!" Could it be ... Jesus? Soon the nets were filled with fish. It *was* Jesus! Peter impulsively jumped overboard and swam to shore to greet the risen Savior. Over a breakfast of bread and fish, Jesus and Peter had a conversation that Jesus concluded with the same words that had changed Peter's life the first time—"Follow Me."

We know from the Bible and other historical records that Peter overcame his despair and started again. He went on to preach and teach for the rest of his life, and was a key figure in the Early Church.

Peter's story reminds us that no matter what has happened thus far on life's journey, we can find strength to start again, like he did. We can go on to greater things, because, as Peter later wrote, our faith and hope is in God, not ourselves.¹ If we stay close to Jesus, the best is yet to come.

THIS RETELLING IS BASED ON LUKE 5:1-11; MATTHEW 14:22-33; MARK 14:66-72; 16:1-7; MATTHEW 27:1-2; JOHN 21. 

1. 1 Peter 1:21

2. Isaiah 40:31

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

If you're having trouble believing that God can help you overcome past mistakes and present difficulties, it may be because you haven't yet received Jesus into your heart. You can do that right now by praying the following prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so I can have eternal life. Please forgive me for every wrong and unloving thing I have ever done. Come into my heart, give me Your gift of eternal life, and help me to know Your love and peace. Thank You for hearing and answering this prayer and for being always with me, from this moment on. Amen.

WINGS OUT OF WEIGHTS

No matter what obstacles you face in life, there is a way to live above them. God gives His children wings when things get to be too much. Wings are born out of weights.

There's a sort of devilish gravitation in this old world that daily strives to pull us down. But there's also an upward pull that can lift us up to the very heart of God. "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles."² Those who wait in the Lord's presence, in prayer and in His Word, rise to realms of peace and rest.

—Virginia Brandt Berg



a new morning, a fresh start

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

EVERY MORNING IS A NEW CHANCE TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY, BETTER THAN WE HAVE BEFORE—especially when we take time to connect with God, get His perspective on the areas we want to improve in, and ask Him to help us make the necessary adjustments in our thinking, attitudes, and actions. In fact, there is nothing He would rather do than help us change for the better.

Morning by morning new mercies I see!
Great is Thy faithfulness dear Lord unto me.
—*Thomas Chisholm*

A wonderful way to start your day is with a prayer of thanksgiving to God for His loving care. Take a few minutes first thing tomorrow morning to do this, and see what a difference it makes in your day. You can use the following prayer, or one of your own. Or start with this one, and tailor it to your circumstances by adding specifics.

Thank You for this new day, fresh and clean, unspoiled by yesterday's messes and mistakes. While I was sleeping, You cleaned them all up and made all things new.

Thank You for brand-new mercy, brand-new love, brand-new forgiveness, renewed strength, and Your unfailing promise of help. You're so wonderful to me, so patient with my shortcomings and my weaknesses. You don't look at my faults or condemn me for my mistakes, but always offer me hope.

I leave all my mistakes and failures behind. Help me to go forward, with my hand in Yours. 🙏

My voice You shall hear in the morning,
O Lord; In the morning I will direct it to
You, and I will look up.—*Psalms 5:3*

FEEDING READING

Progress—one step at a time

Ask God to help you set goals and arrive at the best plan for achieving them.

Psalms 37:23

Proverbs 16:9

Proverbs 19:21

Be conscientious; do what you can.

Proverbs 13:4

Proverbs 21:5a

Proverbs 28:20a

Ephesians 5:15–16

Thank God for His help, even if it isn't immediately evident.

Psalms 100:4

1 Corinthians 15:57

Philippians 4:6

Trust God for the future.

Psalms 37:5

Proverbs 3:5–6

Matthew 6:31,34

Philippians 1:6

Have patience for the desired outcome.

Luke 21:19

Galatians 6:9

James 1:4

James 5:7b–8a

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

My riches are yours

The secret to obtaining both spiritual riches and material supply is actually quite simple: Realize what vast resources are at My disposal.

My Word contains hundreds of promises that are yours to claim. As you read, absorb, and claim them, you will see answers to your prayers that will thrill your soul and cause your faith to grow. And as you continue to read and absorb and claim, I will continue to answer and inspire and provide. Together we will create an unbeatable, unbreakable cycle of success.

That is not to say that your faith will never ebb or that you will never again go through difficult times. As long as you are in this present world you will experience good times and hard times. Problems are a necessary part of life, but your connection with Me and your faith in My love and promises can make all the difference in the world!

