

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 11 • Issue 7

GIVING THANKS

Perspective matters

You Are Unique

One big reason to be happy

Loneliness

The sure cure



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Twenty-five years ago I came across a gem of wisdom that was to save my sanity. The thing that amazes me now is how easily I could have missed it. I was feeling happy and fulfilled at the time, satisfied with my life and where it seemed to be taking me. I could have brushed it aside as not applying to me, but I was soon

glad I hadn't. Things took an unexpected downward turn, I lost my job and the security it had provided, and those words became a reference point that helped me get through the next few difficult months.

"If we would find our security in the knowledge that God loves us and has a plan for our lives, instead of relying on other things to meet that need, He could make us very happy. But we sometimes make ourselves unhappy by being dissatisfied, because we haven't learned, as the apostle Paul did, to be content in whatever state we're in."¹

That doesn't mean we should stop striving to be better people. We also shouldn't adopt a fatalist attitude when our circumstances aren't what they could or should be.

But getting back to my experience of 25 years ago, that little bit of advice helped me realize that while my circumstances had suddenly changed, that didn't change the things that counted most in life. It didn't change who I was or my main goals, nor did it change God's love for me. Therefore it shouldn't rob me of the contentment I'd had before things fell apart. The happy ending? By focusing on what I still had and not what I had lost, I made it through that difficult time and came out happier in the end.

Whatever you happen to be going through at the moment, I hope this issue of *Activated* will help you find that place of perfect peace of heart and mind.

Keith Phillips

For *Activated*

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1. David Brandt Berg, expounding on Philippians 4:11

Chasing Happiness ←

BY ANITA HEALEY



IN THE MOVIE *THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS* (2006), WILL SMITH'S CHARACTER MAKES THE OBSERVATION THAT THE UNITED STATES DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE INCLUDES IN ITS SHORT LIST OF "UNALIENABLE RIGHTS" THE RIGHT TO THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS—not the right to *be* happy, but the right to pursue happiness. Why, he questions, was it worded that way? His conclusion is that its author, Thomas Jefferson, must have understood that happiness is something that we all desire and strive for, but also something that not all will find or be able to hold onto.

I had my years of chasing happiness, of always feeling that if only I had a boyfriend, if only I could change certain aspects of my job, if only my circumstances

could be just the way I wanted them, then I would be happy and free from the bouts of depression I struggled with.

Two years ago I hit a low point. I felt that all the cards had been stacked against me, that I must be the most horrible person in the world, and that I wasn't worth anything. In desperation I asked God to do something—anything—to pull me out of the morass I was sinking into.

In one of my times of prayer, He helped me see that a major reason I was so down was that I wasn't willing to accept and make the most of the situation I was in. It was true. I felt that the problem was always with my circumstances, never with me. Accepting my circumstances, whatever they happened to be at the time, seemed impossible at first. That made me even more depressed, but finally I gave in and asked

God to help me to accept that truth—that the real problem was not my circumstances, but my attitude toward them.

Once I was willing to let God change my attitude, He did the rest. For example, before long He brought a wonderful person into my life, and that reassured me of His love and boosted my self-esteem.

I am still hit by depression from time to time, but now when it starts to pull me down its dark path I know I don't have to give in. I have learned that happiness is a choice, and one that I must make every day. Circumstances don't need to be perfect for me to choose to be happy and thankful for what I have and to make the most of it.

ANITA HEALEY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SOUTH AFRICA. ✂

loneliness —and the cure

God put a little sign on the table of your heart that reads, “Reserved for Me.”

THERE IS A MYSTERY IN HUMAN HEARTS: TO EVERY ONE OF US, FROM TIME TO TIME, THERE COMES A SENSE OF UTTER LONELINESS.

Some of the loneliest people in the world are those who are constantly surrounded by others, yet they feel that no one truly knows or understands them. They may even have an abundance of material things—everything to satisfy every physical need—yet they complain of loneliness. They long to share their interests with someone, to find someone who will listen to their problems and sympathize with them.

We may have a lifelong companion or dear friends who love us, but even they will never know or understand us completely. We may climb the heights of success or accomplishment, yet there is no one who can fully share the emotion of that moment when we finally reach our goal. Our dearest friend is a stranger to our supreme joy and cannot realize our most bitter pain. Some tears are always shed alone. No other human being can ever enter the deepest recesses of our mind or soul.

“There is no one who really understands, no one to share all I feel!” Such is the cry of each of us, in turn. We wander in a solitary way, no matter what or where our lot may be. Each heart, mysterious even to itself, must live its inner life in solitude.

But why? Why do we all have this deep craving to be understood by someone? Why this intense longing to have another share our joys and triumphs, sorrows, and defeats?

Did God, who made us a living soul, make some mistake in this, His masterpiece, humankind? Has He left some void in our makeup? He made provision for every other hunger of life: bread for the hunger of the body, knowledge for the hunger of the mind, love for the hunger of the heart. Has He then left the soul unsatisfied, with this longing for deepest understanding and truest companionship unfulfilled? Has He left this loneliness of ours unanswered?

There is an answer to these questions. This incompleteness that we feel is a need of our soul for God. He knew that when we found human sympathy lacking, we would seek the divine. He knew that this



BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

very sense of isolation, of not being understood, would drive us to Him.

God made us for Himself. He desires our love. He put a little sign on the table of your heart that reads, “Reserved for Me.” In every heart, He wishes to be first. He therefore keeps the secret key Himself, the key to open all our hearts’ chambers and to bless with perfect sympathy and peace each solitary soul that comes to Him.

God Himself is the answer, the fulfillment. He who made us is the only One who can fill every part of our life. God’s Word says He is our “satisfying portion.”¹ Not until He fills that inner longing will we ever be truly satisfied or completely free from loneliness.

God wants to satisfy that need, but He and His love are so big, so great, that they are beyond our comprehension. That is why He needed to make someone who could show us His love in terms we could understand, someone who was within our realm, someone we could experience, one Man who was like Himself, His Son.

Jesus is touched with our every longing, and He will satisfy every longing of our heart. As He enters

our life, He becomes our satisfaction. He is complete companionship, ideal and perfect friendship.

There’s no need to ever be lonely. Jesus said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” and “I am with you always.”²

So when you feel this loneliness, it is the voice of Jesus saying, “Come to Me.” And every time you feel that no one understands, it is a call for you to come to Him again. And when beneath some heavy load you faint and say, “I cannot bear this alone,” you say the truth. The grief that no one understands conveys a secret message from the King, entreating you to come to Him again. You cannot come too often.

His presence satisfies the lonely soul, and those who walk with Him from day to day can never know a solitary way.

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS AN EVANGELIST AND PASTOR, AND THE MOTHER OF FAMILY INTERNATIONAL FOUNDER DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994).✠

1. Psalm 107:9; Psalm 73:26

2. Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20

A Soccer Ball and a Sea of Smiles

BY PHILIP SALAZAR

I AM THE FATHER OF A LARGE FAMILY, A FULL-TIME CHRISTIAN VOLUNTEER, AND A PART-TIME SPORTS COACH. DURING OUR FAMILY'S TWO-YEAR STAY IN INDIA, I ALWAYS PACKED SOME SPORTS EQUIPMENT WHEN WE TRAVELED.

Our time there included many challenging and rewarding experiences. Our teenagers did volunteer work at several medical clinics, where they cheered up and helped ease the suffering of terminally ill children. They also taught at a home for children who had lost their parents to AIDS. We traveled to the sites of natural disasters, bringing water, food, clothing, and other relief supplies. It seemed that wherever we turned, someone needed encouragement or assistance.

One Saturday, after an especially busy week, we packed a picnic lunch and a soccer ball

and headed for a cricket ground on the edge of a nearby college campus. The dense trees and bushes that surrounded the field reminded us of our native Northern California. The day was perfect, and so was the spot.

Such beauty, such peace, such rest, I thought. This is going to be great! No crowds, no noisy traffic, no pressing business—just my family and me! Heaven!

I pulled out my old, worn soccer ball and tossed it to one of my girls.

No sooner had we begun to kick the ball around than a horde of slum children emerged from the woods. They had been there all along, it turned out, curiously studying our every move. The sight of the soccer ball, though, had been more than they could stand. Before we knew it, we were face to face with more than 50 children, ranging in age from about 6 to 13, all eager to join the fun. They wore ragged clothes, no shoes, tousled hair, and gorgeous smiles. And they all expected something from this family of foreigners.

I called them to gather around, and tried to make myself heard over the hubbub. When it became clear that most of the children didn't speak English, I called for an interpreter. An older boy stepped forward. I pulled out my whistle and proceeded to explain the rules. From the oldest to the youngest, they listened respectfully and nodded. We chose teams, and the game began.

Like a swarm of bees, we ran up and down the field, chasing and kicking



that ball for hours. Forget the teams. Forget the rules. Forget the goals. These kids just wanted to kick the ball! You never saw so many smiles, or heard so many giggles and so much laughter!

Every once in a while, someone would kick the ball out from the conglomeration of little bodies and into the open field. When this happened, one boy seemed to always get to the ball first and claim it for his own. Off he would go, running and kicking the ball away from the rest of us until someone caught up with him and guided him back to the group. Not even my whistle blowing or everyone else's shouts could get him to return with the ball.

Finally, bewildered, I asked my young interpreter why this one boy wouldn't stop when I blew the whistle.

"Why, sir," he said, "the boy is deaf."

Much later, we ended the game and the children gathered at midfield to say goodbye. I was exhausted but immensely satisfied. The sea of smiles and happy faces warmed my heart.

When all but a few of the children had returned to the mud huts and hovels they called home, two boys, one on a bicycle and the other pushing it, approached me. The younger one on the bike had something to say. With a beaming smile that I will never forget, he exclaimed, "Thank you, sir, for a wonderful day. I had so much fun!"

"You are welcome," I replied. "But I don't remember seeing you on the field today."

It was only then that I realized why his friend had been pushing him. His legs were paralyzed and twisted from polio. My look of shock and dismay only triggered another bright smile.

As he was being pushed off toward home, he looked back and announced, "I enjoyed very much watching you playing with my brothers and friends today. Thank you, sir! Thank you!"

I had been looking for a little relaxation and time with my family, but found a lesson instead.

When I thought I'd given all I could and it was time to look out for me and mine, God put others who needed His love in my path. He gave me the renewal I needed, but not in the way I had expected. The joy of giving melted away the tiredness and burned-out feeling.

PHILIP SALAZAR IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S. ✨



If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.—*The Dalai Lama*

giving thanks

WHEN MY DAUGHTER WAS VERY YOUNG, I OVERHEARD HER PRAYING FOR THE RAIN TO STOP AND FOR THE NEXT DAY TO BE NICE. I said, “Honey, I don’t think the Lord minds us asking Him to stop the rain. He wants us to make our wants and wishes known to Him, and He promises to give us our needs, but we also need to realize that He can’t *always* give us what we want. We need both sunny and rainy days. If we call sunny days ‘nice days,’ it makes us think of rainy days as ‘bad days,’ so let’s try to always praise God for the beautiful day He’s given us, whether it’s rainy or sunny.”

It seemed such a simple, childish lesson—to be thankful for both rain and sun—but it made me realize that the way we talk about things affects our overall happiness and outlook on life. Sad to say, many of us have formed the bad habit of adopting a negative terminology regarding certain situations. If we want to be more positive, think more positively, and react more positively, we need to work on changing our vocabulary to be more positive, because it’s pretty hard to talk about a “bad” day and think of it positively. To change the way we think about things, we need to also change the way we talk about them.

Our vocabulary, the way we label things and the way we express things, has a major bearing on the way we think. It would be pretty hard, for example, to think of someone whose nickname was “Pea Brain” as being intelligent and capable. If

we want to think positively, we need to speak positively.

It’s not wrong to ask the Lord to change a situation—the weather, for example—if we need or want it to be changed. If something hurts or hinders, we know the Lord can alter the situation in answer to our prayer. But until it happens—and even if it doesn’t happen—we should maintain a positive outlook, speak positively, and thank God for what He has given us.

According to the Bible, we’re supposed to be content in whatever state we may find ourselves.¹ On one hand it would seem that whenever we pray for the Lord to change a certain situation, we are, in effect, not being content with the way things are. But we can’t base our whole life and philosophy on that one verse; we have to balance that with other spiritual principles. If we take that verse to mean that we should always be content no matter what, we will never “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain ... help in time of need,”² or pray for one another to be healed³—or pray for anything, for that matter.

When we feel something needs to be changed, we should first of all pray and ask the Lord to change it. At the same time we should ask the Lord and ourselves if there is anything He wants us to do to help bring about that change. But once we’ve prayed and done our part, while we’re waiting for the Lord to answer, we need

BY MARIA FONTAINE

to give thanks in all things.⁴ If we truly believe that the Lord knows best and is in control, we'll be content with His answer. And even if the desired change never comes, we are supposed to keep thanking the Lord anyway because we know that "He does all things well."⁵

So even though we may not be thrilled about the rain, for example, we can still be happy in knowing that each day He gives us is "the day which the Lord has made," which is why we can "rejoice and be glad in it."⁶

"In everything give thanks."⁷ In other words, in every situation give thanks. You can say, "Even though this situation is far from ideal, we thank You for all we *do* have and for giving us another day of life."

How can we say something is bad if it teaches us to pray or we learn lessons of faith or patience or perseverance or love—if the good effect is greater than the bad effect? Almost everything in life has its pros and cons. But if the positive outweighs the negative, then we can and should say that it is a good thing—and for those of us who love and trust God, that includes *everything* because in the long run He always makes the good outweigh the bad for us. "All things work together for good to those who love God."⁸

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

You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing and grace before I dip the pen in the ink.

—G.K. Chesterton

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- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Philippians 4:11 | 5. Mark 7:37 |
| 2. Hebrews 4:16 | 6. Psalm 118:24 |
| 3. James 5:16 | 7. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 |
| 4. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 | 8. Romans 8:28 |

Do some people really “have it all”?

Q: *WHY IS IT THAT SOME PEOPLE SEEM TO LEAD CHARMED LIVES? THEY HAVE PERFECT LOOKS, PERFECT HEALTH, LOTS OF NATURAL ABILITIES, AND LOTS OF FRIENDS—EVERYTHING—WHILE PEOPLE LIKE ME SEEM TO HAVE NO END OF DEFICIENCIES AND PROBLEMS.*

A: On the surface, things often don't seem fair, but a lot goes on in every person's life that is unseen by others. In the wise words of King Solomon in the Bible, “To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under Heaven.”¹ Not everyone goes through the same rough spots or at the same time, but everyone has their share eventually.

No life is complete without a touch of suffering, sadness, and difficulty. God allows each person to experience some sort of difficulty because He wants each to learn to overcome. He wants us to experience coming to the end of ourselves and then turning to Him and finding

His power. It takes a desperate situation to bring that about. So, while you may look at others and think they have it so easy, you can be assured that they have troubles too.

It's also important to remember that God often sees things quite differently than we do. We consider people blessed if they have a more carefree or obviously successful life with fewer problems, illnesses, and so on. But God's blessings often come disguised as problems. He would rather we have a full life than an easy life. He wants our lives to be rich in faith, depth of spirit, understanding, self-sacrificial love, inner strength, and tenderheartedness. All of these treasures of spirit come from an intimate relationship with Him, and often these come by way of trials, suffering, or surviving great difficulties. That relationship and the spiritual growth that comes with it result in a deeper and more lasting joy.

If you could “have it all” at the cost of a life of contentment, completeness, and joy, would you want that?✚

1. Ecclesiastes 3:1

FEEDING READING

Never Alone

Once we have Jesus in our hearts, we always have His company and love.

John 14:18
Matthew 28:20b
Romans 8:38–39
Hebrews 13:5b

Though earthly companionships may fail, the Lord never fails.

Psalm 27:10
Psalm 38:11,15
Psalm 142:4–5
Isaiah 41:10
Isaiah 54:10

Sometimes the Lord lets us feel lonely to drive us closer to Him.

Psalm 63:1,5–7
Psalm 73:25–26
Lamentations 3:24
Philippians 3:8

Even Jesus felt lonely and forsaken at times.

Isaiah 53:3–4
John 1:10–11
Hebrews 4:15

Reaching out to others is often the best cure for loneliness.

Proverbs 11:25
Proverbs 18:24a



you are unique!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

DO YOU KNOW WHO THE HAPPIEST PEOPLE ARE?

Those who have the courage to be themselves, just the way God made them, rather than try to be something they're not in order to fit in or impress others. Struggling to live up to what you think others expect of you puts a heavy weight on you, but there's freedom in humility.

When I was young I didn't like the way I looked. I thought my nose was too big and that I was too skinny and ugly. I had quite an inferiority complex about that, and it took me a long time to get over it. Part of it was my pride, and part of it was comparing myself to others. But as I grew older, I realized it really didn't matter. I understood that the Lord made me the way He wanted me, and that He made me that way because He loved me.

He loves you the way He made you, and you're beautiful in His eyes. We're all unique and special. In His eyes there is no ugliness, no matter what we look like.

Building self-esteem often has a lot to do with your relationship with the Lord. The closer you draw to Him and the more at peace you are with Him, the more content and at peace you'll be with yourself, the happier you'll be, and the more relaxed you'll be. When you're living close to the Lord, you're handsome or beautiful because His love and His light shine through.

I have a suggestion for you: Sit down sometime and let the Lord speak to you about yourself. Or ask someone else to pray and ask Him how He sees you, what your inner beauties are, what your inner strengths are, and what gifts and abilities He likes to bring forth in you. Let Him encourage you, and you'll find that you can actually be quite happy being His unique creation.

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994) WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ✨

A PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Heavenly Father,
You could have
made me per-
fect according to
my standards or
someone else's,
but You didn't.
Instead, You made
me just the way
You wanted me—
perfect according
to Your standard.
To doubt that is to
doubt Your love,
but to realize that
is to find perfect
peace, security, and
rest in Your love.
Thank You!

10 things science says will make you happy

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, PSYCHOLOGISTS AND RESEARCHERS HAVE BEEN DIGGING UP HARD DATA ON A QUESTION PREVIOUSLY LEFT TO PHILOSOPHERS: What makes us happy? Researchers like the father-son team Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, Stanford psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky, and ethicist Stephen Post have studied people all over the world to find out how things like money, attitude, culture, memory, health, altruism, and our day-to-day habits affect our well-being. The emerging field of positive psychology is bursting with new findings that suggest your actions can have a significant effect on your happiness and satisfaction with life. Here are 10 scientifically proven strategies for getting happy.

1. Savor everyday moments. Pause now and then to smell a rose or watch children at play. Study participants who took time to “savor” ordinary events that they normally hurried through, or to think back on pleasant moments from their day, “showed significant increases in happiness and reductions in depression,” says psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky.

2. Avoid comparisons. While keeping up with the Joneses is part of American culture, comparing ourselves with others can be damaging to happiness and self-esteem. Instead of comparing ourselves to others, focusing on our own personal achievement leads to greater satisfaction, according to Lyubomirsky.

3. Put money low on the list. People who put money high on their priority list are more at risk for depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, according to researchers Tim Kasser and Richard Ryan. Their findings hold true across

nations and cultures. “The more we seek satisfactions in material goods, the less we find them there,” Ryan says. “The satisfaction has a short half-life—it’s very fleeting.” Money-seekers also score lower on tests of vitality and self-actualization.

“A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.”

—*Proverbs 14:30*

4. Have meaningful goals. “People who strive for something significant, whether it’s learning a new craft or raising moral children, are far happier than those who don’t have strong dreams or aspirations,” say Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener. “As humans, we

actually require a sense of meaning to thrive.” Harvard’s resident happiness professor, Tal Ben-Shahar, agrees, “Happiness lies at the intersection between pleasure and meaning. Whether at work or at home, the goal is to engage in activities that are both personally significant and enjoyable.”

5. Take initiative at work. How happy you are at work depends in part on how much initiative you take. Researcher Amy Wrzesniewski says that when we express creativity, help others, suggest improvements, or do additional tasks on the job, we make our work more rewarding and feel more in control.

6. Make friends; treasure family. Happier people tend to have good families, friends, and supportive relationships, say Diener and Biswas-Diener. But it’s not enough to be the life of the party if you’re surrounded by shallow acquaintances. “We don’t just need relationships, we need close



BY JEN ANGEL

ones” that involve understanding and caring.

7. Smile even when you don’t feel like it. It sounds simple, but it works. “Happy people ... see possibilities, opportunities, and success. When they think of the future, they are optimistic, and when they review the past, they tend to savor the high points,” say Diener and Biswas-Diener. Even if you weren’t born looking at the glass as half-full, with practice, a positive outlook can become a habit.

8. Say thank you like you mean it. People who keep gratitude journals on a weekly basis are healthier, more optimistic, and more likely to make progress toward achieving personal goals, according to author Robert Emmons. Research by Martin Seligman, founder of positive psychology, revealed that people who write “gratitude letters” to someone who made a difference in their lives score higher

on happiness, and lower on depression—and the effect lasts for weeks.

9. Get out and exercise. A Duke University study shows that exercise may be just as effective as drugs in treating depression, without all the side effects and expense. Other research shows that in addition to health benefits, regular exercise offers a sense of accomplishment and opportunity for social interaction, releases feel-good endorphins, and boosts self-esteem.

10. Give it away—give it away now! Make altruism and giving part of your life, and be purposeful about it. Researcher Stephen Post says helping a neighbor, volunteering, or donating goods and services results in a “helper’s high,” and you get more health benefits than you would from exercise or quitting smoking. Listening to a friend, passing on your skills, celebrating others’ successes, and forgiveness also contribute to

happiness, he says. Researcher Elizabeth Dunn found that those who spend money on others reported much greater happiness than those who spend it on themselves.

COURTESY OF YES! MAGAZINE

“Whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

—*Philippians 4:8*



BY JORGE SOLÁ

MY THREE-YEAR-OLD SON MANUEL WAS PLAYING AN EDUCATIONAL GAME ON THE COMPUTER WHEN HIS SIX-YEAR-OLD SISTER ALONDRA DEMANDED THAT HE LET HER HAVE A TURN. MANUEL'S RESPONSE WAS TYPICAL.

"I was here first!"

I don't know where Manuel picked that up, but it got me thinking. It's a generally accepted principle of human society that those who "get there first" have more rights than those who get there after them. The first one to set foot on virgin land is entitled to take possession of it. The first one to find a pearl in the sea, or strike gold or oil may claim it as his own. The first one to make a scientific discovery or invention

may patent his find and claim any profits that may result. The first one to settle in on a particular spot on the beach becomes the owner of that spot for the day.

In my children's case, if one of them has been playing for half an hour at the computer, I tell him or her that it's time to let the other one have a turn. Most other parents probably do something similar. But if we applied that principle to every aspect of society, there would be absolute chaos. Can you imagine a landowner saying, "I've had this plot of land for quite a while, so it's time to let someone else enjoy it"? Or can you imagine a man who has a good job giving it to someone else who is out of work and short of money?

Those examples are rather extreme, but what about little acts of selflessness? How often do you see people who have a seat on the bus or subway offering it to able-bodied others who have just boarded, simply because they look like they'd appreciate a chance to rest their weary feet? Are little sacrifices like that too much to expect?—Or do we fail to make them simply because we don't see anyone else making them and no one really expects us to do so either?

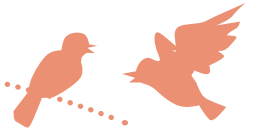
It's a matter of selfishness, when you get right down to it, and selfishness is part of our sinful human nature. But the love of Jesus can help us break out of that mold. "Give, and it will be given to you," He taught, "for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."¹ Those are certainly revolutionary concepts in this day and age. How we cling to our selfish rights! But that giving, selfless kind of love is actually what God wanted for us all from the beginning—and His love can help us achieve it. If we would practice this kind of love, the world would be a different place.

JORGE SOLÁ IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN CHILE.✝

1. Luke 6:38

Relief from Loneliness

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE



“THERE IS A FRIEND WHO STICKS CLOSER THAN A BROTHER,” THE BIBLE TELLS US.¹ That friend is Jesus, who also promises, “I am with you always”² and “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”³ His presence can fill the aching void within that we all sometimes feel, no matter how many close companions we may have on life’s journey. We need to learn to let Jesus fill that void.

Sit quietly and focus on this promise. “My Presence will go with you.”⁴ Think back to before your day even started. Jesus was with you as you slept, watching over you. Morning came, and just as sure as the sun rose, He was there. When you thought about the day ahead, He was there, just waiting for you to ask His help in planning and carrying out that plan. On your way to work, He was right beside you. Every time you encountered a problem, He was waiting with the answer you needed, hoping you would ask Him for it. When you heard some good news, He was happy along with you. When the day took a difficult turn, He was there to comfort you. As you read this, He is beside you.

Tomorrow, as you go through your day, think of Jesus as your constant companion. As you become more aware of Him being right there with you, you will find comfort and companionship that relieves loneliness and fills those blank spots like no one or nothing else can. ✨

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, “Surely the darkness shall fall on me,” even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You.

—Psalm 139:7–12



If you haven’t experienced Jesus’ loving presence, you can right now by accepting Him as your Savior and inviting Him into your life. Simply pray:

Dear Jesus, I want to know You and experience Your love. Please come into my heart, forgive my wrongs, give me eternal life, and lead me into a close personal relationship with You. Amen.



1. Proverbs 18:24
2. Matthew 28:20
3. Hebrews 13:5
4. Exodus 33:14



I AM
HERE
FOR
YOU

Turn to Me in your loneliness. I love you dearly, and I am here for you anytime, all the time. I am your constant companion, your best friend.

When you feel like no one cares and there is no love to be found, that is the time to lie back in My arms and find peace. When you are discouraged and feel like a mess, look into My face and see Me smile upon you, for I love you just the way you are. When you feel worried or frustrated, run to Me. I will be your perfect companion. When you feel that no one can possibly understand the difficulties you are passing through, that is the time to come to Me. I *always* understand. Set your affections on Me, and I will fill your every need.

In those special times together, our love will grow stronger and our relationship deeper than any earthly love or relationship could ever be. From this oneness with Me will grow your greatest and most lasting happiness, fulfillment, and contentment.