

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# activated

Vol 13 • Issue 10

## **SIGHT ADJUSTMENT**

How is your range of vision?

## **God Is Timeless**

Putting personal growth in perspective

## **Man, It's Hard to Be a Christian!**

Why millions do it anyway



## PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Life is made up of choices, ranging from mundane to mind-boggling. What should I wear today? What do I want for breakfast? What career should I pursue? Should I marry this person? Big and small, our choices work together to order our days, define

who we are, and largely determine our levels of happiness and fulfillment.

Ironically, it's the little choices that often get more than their share of our time and attention, while the most fundamental choices, the ones that matter most and could make the biggest difference in the long term, get overlooked or put off. What do I want out of life? What kind of person do I want to be?

It's possible to go through life without ever tackling those big questions. Millions of people do. But that approach to life is far more likely to end in disappointment and regret than in genuine accomplishment and happiness. As Yogi Berra<sup>1</sup> quipped, "If you don't know where you're going, chances are you will end up somewhere else." Don't let that happen to you! Find what matters most to you and go for it.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."<sup>2</sup> How many others, do you suppose, had also seen that pearl but hadn't realized its worth, or had already spent their resources on things of far lesser value, or simply weren't willing to pay the price?

What is your pearl of great price? What other things are you prepared to sacrifice in order to make it yours? Those are decisions only you can make, with God's help, but we hope that this issue of *Activated* will get you thinking in the right direction. May God bless you with His best!

Keith Phillips  
For *Activated*

1. Yogi Berra (b. 1925) is an American former Major League baseball player and manager.
2. Matthew 13:45-46

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# What Matters Most

BY AKIO MATSUOKA

“I’VE BEEN SO BUSY WITH LIFE THAT I HAVEN’T HAD TIME TO THINK,” a terminally ill woman in her forties told me

when I visited her at a hospice. “I realized while lying here that I barely know my husband, my children, or my mother-in-law, who also lives with us. I’ve been wrapped up in caring for them—shopping and cooking, doing their laundry, cleaning after them, helping them with their homework—and yet I can’t say that I really know what they are thinking or what they are going through.

I can’t tell you when was the last time that I had a deep conversation with any of them.”

I heard a similar lament recently while attending a seminar. The main lecturer finished and opened the floor for a casual question-and-answer period. An elderly man who was the retired CEO of a large company stood up and spoke to the 100 or so attendees. “I am 70 years old, currently in excellent health, and recently retired with a substantial pension. I was looking forward to finally relaxing and spending time with my family, but yesterday my wife asked for a divorce. I have worked hard my entire life, always for the family that I loved. Where did I go wrong? Why has my life turned out this way?”

I often hear people say that they want their loved ones to be happy, and that is why they need to work so long and hard. Unfortunately, the more successful they become, the busier they get and the less time they have to spend with their families—and the less they reap of the rewards they expected from their investment. While the dying woman’s and the retired man’s motives may have seemed noble at the time, the lives they led to hadn’t been able to satisfy the needs of their loved ones’ hearts.

The Bible tells us, “Don’t forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.”<sup>1</sup> The original Greek word translated “share” is *koinónia*, which means “participation,” “communion,” “fellowship.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, it pleases God when we sacrifice other things to make time to help others, to participate in their lives, to share in their victories and struggles, to have heart-to-heart interaction with them—in short, when we make time to love.

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1. Hebrews 13:16 NLT  
2. *Strong’s Concordance*



# MAN, IT'S HARD TO BE A CHRISTIAN!

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

BEING A CHRISTIAN CAN FEEL LIKE AN UPHILL FIGHT, because much of what Jesus taught goes against human nature. Look at the list below and ask yourself if what Jesus said comes naturally to you.

Love your enemies.

Do good to those who hate you.

Bless those who curse you.

Pray for those who mistreat you.

Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also.

Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.

Lend, expecting nothing in return.<sup>1</sup>

Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.<sup>2</sup>

Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus said all of these things, and He expects us to actually do them. That's the kicker. They're hard!

Obviously, it costs to be a follower of Jesus, so why would anyone want to? "What's in it for me?" That's a fair question. Let's take a look at the package.

First, you've got to think long-term—very long-term. It's clear in the Scriptures that rewards are given in the afterlife and that they are connected to how we lead our lives on earth.

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.<sup>5</sup>

No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood,

1. Luke 6:27–30, 35 NASB

2. Luke 12:15 NIV

3. Matthew 20:26 NASB

4. Revelation 22:12 NIV

5. Colossians 3:23–24 NIV

6. 1 Corinthians 3:11–14 NIV

7. Matthew 16:27

8. Matthew 6:19–21 NASB

9. James 1:12 NASB


10. Deuteronomy 28:2, 12

11. Luke 6:38 NLT

12. Matthew 6:3–4

13. John 15:10

14. Matthew 6:10



hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.<sup>6</sup>

The Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.<sup>7</sup>

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.<sup>8</sup>

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for ... he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.<sup>9</sup>

Besides rewards in the afterlife, God also rewards us in this life.

All these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God. ... The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand.<sup>10</sup>

Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.<sup>11</sup>

When you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.<sup>12</sup>

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I

have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.<sup>13</sup>

The Bible makes a clear case that we will be rewarded both in this life and the next for doing the things that Jesus said we should do, even though they go against our human nature. Perhaps the fact that they are so hard has something to do with why God rewards us for doing them.

We "lay up treasure in heaven" by making right decisions now, by living in such a way that we help "His kingdom come, His will be done on earth as it is in heaven."<sup>14</sup> It's a bit like putting money in the bank. Imagine that for every time you showed love or mercy or did a kind deed, a sum of money was deposited in your bank account. What if every time you forgave someone who wronged you, a check was deposited? If that happened, then doing what Jesus said wouldn't seem so hard, would it?

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■

# GOD IS TIMELESS

BY PHILLIP LYNCH

## I HAVE COME TO REALIZE THAT GOD TAKES HIS TIME.

Perhaps that comes from being eternal. He *has* all the time in the world, so why should He hurry?

God is an investor, not a speculator. He doesn't "buy" something today with the intention of "selling" it tomorrow. Sure, He wants to get high returns on His investments, but He can wait a very long time if need be. He invests in people, and

He doesn't seem to mind the time it takes for that investment to pay off. Knowing the future also comes in handy, no doubt.

The story of Joseph in the Bible is a good example of this.

He may have been the favorite of his father Jacob's eleven sons, but Joseph was also the youngest—the low man in the family business when our story begins.

Then Joseph had two fantastical dreams in which his brothers bowed down to him. In classic ambitious newbie fashion, young Joseph told his brothers about the dreams. What was he thinking? Did he expect them to say, "Sure thing, bro! Move to the head of the table as CEO of Jacob and Sons"?

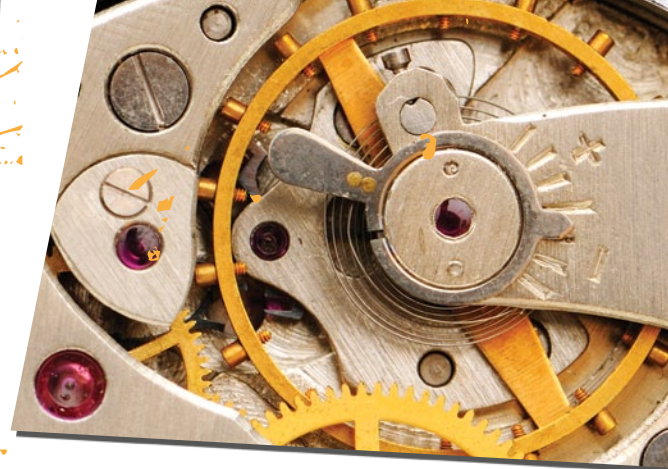
At a secret meeting of board members, in the absence of the current CEO, Jacob, Joseph's brothers dumped him from the board, and for good measure sent him off to Egypt as a slave.<sup>1</sup>

But what looked like the end was only the beginning of the path to glory for little bro Joe. It was an odd path, but it exemplifies the struggles that many other great men and women have had to endure—the slow but thorough education gained in the School of Hard Knocks.

Joseph rose through the ranks in his new career, until he reached the position of head slave in the household of one of Pharaoh's top officials. The Bible doesn't say how long that took, but probably a good number of



1. See Genesis 37.
2. See Genesis 39.
3. See Genesis 40.
4. See Genesis 41.
5. Genesis 42–47:12



years. Along the way, Joseph learned how to manage a large estate.

Things went well for Joseph until his master's wife took a fancy to him, and poor Joseph ran afoul of one of the confounding intangibles in life: he did the right thing, but was punished for his trouble—unceremoniously tossed into prison on trumped-up sexual harassment charges, where he languished for many years.

But as it turned out, this was the start of Joseph's next career. The prison warden recognized Joseph's organizational ability and decided to put it to use, and Joseph was happy to comply. He did, after all, have a lot of time on his hands. Eventually the jail was being run by

an inmate—Joseph—but even that wasn't enough to spring him.<sup>2</sup> We know that God had a plan because we know how the story ends, but I'm sure Joseph must have despaired.

When the first chance for a breakout came, the man who could have interceded for Joseph didn't live up to his side of the bargain, and the break never materialized.<sup>3</sup>

It took two more years before Joseph got another chance, and he did not let this one pass him by. Dreaming big dreams is what had gotten him into this mess in the first place, and dreams are what got him out of it.

The Chairman of Egypt, Inc., Pharaoh, a big dreamer himself, heard that Joseph had a reputation as a visionary, and he listened to and approved Joseph's fourteen-year plan, and made him CEO.

After seven boom years, the market dried up, but by that time Joseph had the company not only securely grounded, but in a position to keep the entire population afloat.<sup>4</sup>

When Joseph learned that Jacob and Sons was about to go bankrupt due to the recession, he persuaded them to close shop in unprofitable Canaan and relocate offshore in Goshen as a special division of Egypt,

Inc. As Joseph had seen in his dream so many years earlier, he became his brothers' boss. Those nasty older brothers groveled at his feet, but Joseph forgave them, because by then he understood that God had let him go through all those difficulties for his own and their eventual good.<sup>5</sup>

What if Joseph had managed to take over the family business at the beginning of this story? At best, he might have cornered the Canaan wool market. Certainly he never would have risen to the dizzying heights that he did, or have been used by God as he was. God was investing in Joseph all along, but it took years of hardship and failure before God gave him his big break. When opportunity came knocking, Joseph had the smarts and skills needed to make the most of it. God's investment paid off, and the profits tumbled in hand over fist.

So if you are despairing of ever achieving your dreams, think on this: Times may have changed since Joseph's days in Egypt, but *God* is timeless.

PHILLIP LYNCH IS A NOVELIST AND COMMENTATOR ON SPIRITUAL AND ESCHATOLOGICAL ISSUES, LIVING IN ATLANTIC CANADA. ■





# My Miracle Wedding

BY ANDREW MATEYAK

JESUS SAID THAT IF WE WILL “SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD ABOVE ALL ELSE,” God will give us everything we need.<sup>1</sup> If you work hard and do your job well, it’s in your boss’s best interest to notice and reward you with a pay raise or promotion. God thinks that way too. If we invest our time and energy in His work, helping others and living as He would have us live, God will notice and see that we are rewarded.

As a career Christian volunteer, I’ve spent my life sharing God’s love with others and trying my best to live my faith. There have been times, however, when I’ve compared my

life with those of people around me and wondered if I might be better off materially if I worked at a secular job.

When my girlfriend and I decided to marry, we wondered how we would ever be able to pay for a large enough wedding that our families and friends could attend. But we claimed our boss’s “seek first” promise, and He didn’t let us down!

A longtime friend whom we had met through our volunteer work, who had since moved on to another city, heard that we were engaged and phoned me. “Congratulations to you both!” she said. “My mother is a wedding planner in your city. As my wedding gift, I’ve arranged for her to organize the entire event.”

Not only did our friend’s mother take over the entire planning—the decorating, the flower arrangements, etc.—but she also arranged for a

tailor to make my wife’s wedding dress and my suit, all free of charge. Meanwhile, another friend arranged for a professional photographer to document the event and paid for the wedding cake, rings, and hotel rooms for our out-of-town guests.

On the day of our wedding, when we walked into the fully decorated room, we were both amazed at how God had used these dear people to provide everything we needed.

But my story doesn’t end there.

Since my wife had never been out of the country, I was secretly hoping to take her abroad for our honeymoon. I found promotional tickets to Macau on the right dates, but at best I would only have money for our airfares, not the hotel room or other expenses.

I had pretty much given up the idea when an old friend—one of my seventh grade classmates,

1. See Matthew 6:33 NLT.
2. Psalm 37:4; Ephesians 3:20
3. Micah 6:8
4. Galatians 5:14 NIV
5. 1 Timothy 6:10, emphasis added.





# THE SECRET OF LIFE

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

actually—wrote me out of the blue. “I heard that you’re getting married. Where will you be going for your honeymoon?” he asked. I replied that I had hoped to go to Macau, but that it probably wouldn’t work out.

You can imagine my shock when this man, whom I hadn’t been in contact with for years, wrote back that he takes regular business trips to Macau and is part of a hotel club. “If you decide to go to Macau,” he wrote, “all of your expenses will be on me!”

My wonderful boss, God, had given me the desires of my heart, above and beyond my wildest dreams.<sup>2</sup> Does God repay those who serve Him with their time, money, and talents? You bet He does!

ANDREW MATEYAK IS A VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE PHILIPPINES. ■

**JESUS SAID THAT THE SECRET TO HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS IS TO** “seek the kingdom of God above all else,” but does that work today? Can we lead God-centered lives, do more than survive in this materialistic world, and still be ourselves? I believe we can.

To “seek the kingdom of God above all else” means to bring our priorities into line with God’s, so the first step is to honestly assess our values and goals in life.

The next step is to understand God’s priorities. How would He like to see us live? Many people stop here because they expect God to ask impossibly complicated and sacrificial things of them. Actually, He makes it pretty simple: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”<sup>3</sup> “The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”<sup>4</sup> Easier said than done, but doable.

It’s also important to clear up another misconception: God is not against material success. The Bible doesn’t say that “money is the root of all evil,” but rather “the *love* of money is the root of all evil.”<sup>5</sup> God will bless us materially if we will use those blessings to “do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with our God,” and “love our neighbor.”

Can we still be ourselves?—Yes, only we will be happier, more focused, and more fulfilled. God made each of us to be a unique expression of His love. He’s not going to spoil that, but rather improve on it. When our values are in line with God’s values and we let His priorities become our priorities, it’s a win-win situation. ■

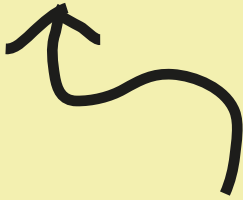
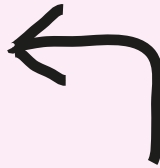


the



# choice

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG



1. Hebrews 11:24–26
2. Exodus 2:1–10
3. Acts 7:22
4. 2 Corinthians 8:9
5. James 1:12; Revelation 2:10
6. Psalm 16:11

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”—*1 Corinthians 2:9*

“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”—*Romans 8:18*

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT THE CHOICE MOSES HAD TO MAKE WHEN HE FORSOOK EGYPT? That choice is what made Moses great. Solomon is known for his wisdom, Daniel for his vision, David for his psalms, and Peter for his zeal, but Moses was great because of the choice he made.

We read in Hebrews chapter 11 that Moses is included among the heroes of faith in God’s hall of fame. “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”<sup>1</sup>

Moses, who as a baby had been found by Pharaoh’s daughter floating in a basket among tall reeds along the Nile River,<sup>2</sup> was reared in Pharaoh’s palace in wealth and privilege. But when he came of age, he had to make a choice. He was a Hebrew, not an Egyptian. Would he be true to Egypt and wear the crown of the pharaohs, or would he choose his own people?

What a crisis that must have been for this young man, Moses! Imagine him climbing to some high place and looking at the lights that twinkled from the palace and the imperial city—the palace with all its riches and beauty, things that he had been used to all his life. Then looking south toward the pyramids, where his own people worked as slaves of Pharaoh, making bricks. As they toiled to the sound of the slave driver’s whip,



how Moses' heart must have burned within him! They were his people, but if he chose to be one of them, he would have to forget all the comforts and luxury he had always enjoyed; he would wear the despised garb of the slaves and renounce forever his foster mother, Pharaoh's daughter. But he made his choice, as God's Word says, "to suffer affliction with the people of God [rather] than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin."

Now these "pleasures of sin" were more tempting than one might think from this simple statement, because Egypt at that time was the most attractive spot on earth. Her granaries were bursting with grain, the wealth of the world poured into her treasury—and Moses could have been heir to it all!

Moses had been educated "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,"<sup>3</sup> so he knew exactly what such a choice would mean: turning from the possessions of the mightiest empire on earth to slavery. But he was not only educated and wise, he was farsighted; he was willing to sacrifice present pleasure for future gain. "He looked to the reward." He knew that the pleasures of sin were only for a moment, and also that God's reward for choosing rightly was for all eternity. Moses understood that without God's favor a millionaire is only a pauper.

The apostle Paul wrote of Jesus, "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor."<sup>4</sup> This is the choice that Moses made too.

Moses' choice entailed poverty and suffering and terrible

humiliation, but he decided he would rather be the least of God's children here on earth and forever wear a crown in heaven.<sup>5</sup> He took a stand with God's children, that he might stand with them before the eternal King, his head held high.

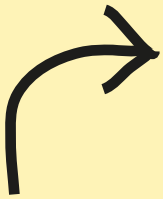
If you picture Moses facing down Pharaoh on the steps of the palace, that may seem like a foolish choice. But if you picture Moses on the steps of the throne of God in heaven, receiving his reward, it becomes clear what a wise and glorious choice that was! Even apart from that, Moses went on to become one of the greatest leaders the world has ever known, and his influence reaches to this very day.

So many today are shortsighted when they make their choices; they can see only the present. They sell out the future for the present. They're blind to the reward that could have been theirs.

What about you? Do you suffer from shortsightedness of the soul, spiritual myopia, where you're living mostly for the present? Or do you keep your heart and mind on the great reward God has promised to those who put Him and His kingdom first?

Are pleasures blinding your vision to the great reward God has in store for you? The realities of eternity are pleasures forevermore!<sup>6</sup> God loves you and has great plans for your life, but He lets you choose. Make wise choices.

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS AN AMERICAN EVANGELIST AND PASTOR. ■



# Today Is My Birthday

BY LUIS AZCUÉNAGA

**TODAY I'M 65.** I have officially entered the ranks of the elderly. As of today, I'm an "old man."

What a wretched little word—"old"! It conjures up other words like "decrepit" and "declining" and "dementia." It doesn't describe what I am or how I feel. It's almost insulting!

Not too long ago I considered 65-year-olds to be absolutely ancient, living on borrowed time, having little or nothing left to contribute. I just couldn't relate.

Now that I'm 65, I have to admit that some things have changed. I have a belly, white hair, and a few quirks. I don't have as much strength as I used to. I go a little slower, forget things, and sometimes don't recognize the tired, wrinkled face that stares at me from the mirror while I shave. But the truth is, those things don't matter much. I don't believe

1. Psalm 23:4

that "being old" is best gauged by one's chronological age, but rather by one's heart. "Old" is an attitude; it's something we can decide about and control to a certain extent.

Honestly, I've never felt better. My life has meaning. I'm fulfilled. I love my work and find fulfillment in it. I love to start new projects and face challenges. I've also learned to love life's simple joys: a grandchild's mischief, a sunset, a delicious meal, an invigorating ping-pong match, a glass of wine, a walk in nature, a stimulating conversation, travel, a good laugh, sleeping in occasionally and not feeling bad about it. This is the best stage of life so far!

I've gained experience and some wisdom, howbeit often through the school of hard knocks and my own blunders. It's been wonderful to see God's hand in my life, not only in my obvious blessings but also through adversity and trying,

troubling, "valley of the shadow of death"<sup>1</sup> experiences. I'm thankful for all of that now, because I realize it has helped shape me into the person I am today.

I better understand which things have genuine, lasting value. I know what truly satisfies and what doesn't. I've learned about love. I've experienced the love of my wife, my children, my grandchildren, my friends, and I've drunk straight from the source of all love, God Himself.

I have learned to recognize the manifold ways through which God shows me His love every day. Even though I'm still no closer to grasping how deep and wide His love is, I've never been more thankful for it.

Some say life begins at 40. I say it begins at 65.

LUIS AZCUÉNAGA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN COLOMBIA. ■





BY ARIANA ANDREASSEN

**WHEN I AM NOT WEARING MY GLASSES**, everything a few feet away strains my vision, and anything past that is a blur. I have been wearing glasses for about 20 years, but sometimes there are situations where I can't or won't wear them. When that happens, I invariably miss most of what is going on around me.

Once my husband Mike and I were leaving a hairdressing salon when, out of the blue it seemed, Mike started talking about a friend of ours. She had, in fact, been in the salon the entire time, but my range of focus had been so limited that I hadn't even seen her.

It's easy to go through life that way, so focused on what's happening

at the moment that we fail to see the whole picture. When that happens, those relatively small matters that have our attention become too important to us. If we would only step back, we would realize that bigger and ultimately more important things are going on outside of our range of sight; we would see what we have been missing.

As a young mother, I sometimes resent that parenthood doesn't leave me much time. I miss the freedom to do as I please. But when I stop and think about it, I immediately realize that my "freedom" is a very small thing to give up in exchange for the love and appreciation I receive from my two adorable children, or the pride I take in being their mother.

Sometimes we're too shortsighted to see the bigger picture; other times we pass through fog, or obstructions block our view; and yet other times the big picture is just too big for us to comprehend.

Whatever the case, we can take comfort in knowing that God sees and understands it all clearly, and that one day we will too. The apostle Paul put it nicely: "Now we see things imperfectly as in a cloudy mirror, but [in the next life] we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely."<sup>1</sup>

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1. 1 Corinthians 13:12 NLT

## POINTS TO PONDER

## Life's Priorities

COMPILED BY SAMUEL KEATING

No matter what you've done for yourself or for humanity, if you can't look back on having given love and attention to your own family, what have you really accomplished?

—*Lee Iacocca (b. 1924), American businessman and author*

If there is a sin against life, it consists perhaps not so much in despairing of life as in hoping for another life and in eluding the implacable grandeur of this life.

—*Albert Camus (1913–1960), French author and philosopher*

In all my years of private practice I've never heard one of my young clients (the children) mention "quality time." All a child knows is that he wants your time and your attention, whether it's to watch him do somersaults and cartwheels or to take him for a Big Mac. In trying to find time for your children, don't worry too much about how much "quality" is in it. Give them all the time you can and the quality will take care of itself.—*Kevin Leman, American psychologist and best-selling author*

Treasure the love you receive above all. It will survive long after your gold and good health have vanished.—*Og Mandino (1923–1996), American author*

I conceive that the great part of the miseries of mankind are brought upon them by false estimates they have made of the value of things.

—*Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790), American author, political theorist, scientist, musician, statesman, and diplomat*

The life you have left is a gift. Cherish it. Enjoy it now, to the fullest. Do what matters, now.—*Leo Babauta, American blogger and author*

We are always getting ready to live but never living.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), American essayist, lecturer, and poet*

Spend time with those you love. One of these days you will say either, "I wish I had," or "I'm glad I did."—*Zig Ziglar (b. 1926), American author, salesman, and motivational speaker*

Many people die with their music still in them. Why is this so? Too often it is because they are always getting ready to live. Before they know it, time runs out.

—*Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (1809–1894), American physician, professor, lecturer, and author*

The purpose of life is a life of purpose.—*Robert Byrne (b. 1930), American author*

When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life so that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice.

—*Cherokee proverb*

Remember that you have only one soul; that you have only one death to die. ... If you do this, there will be many things about which you care nothing.

—*Saint Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), Spanish nun, mystic, and writer*

What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?—*Jesus, Mark 8:36* ■

Two things fill me with constantly increasing admiration and awe, the longer and more earnestly I reflect on them: the starry heavens without and the moral law within.—Immanuel Kant<sup>1</sup>

# THE SKY AT NIGHT

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE  
BY ABI MAY

This is an exercise for the evening or nighttime, preferably on a clear night, when the stars and moon are clearly visible. Outside is best, but if that isn't possible, anywhere with a view outside a window will suffice.

Gaze up at the vastness of the sky. Observe the stars, twinkling in their uncountable millions, at distances incomprehensible to our finite minds. Look at the moon, our nearest neighbor in the great expanse of space. Take your time; the vista before you is immense and worthy of your attention.

The Lord, whose name is excellent, has set His glory in those heavens.—So wrote David, the psalmist.<sup>2</sup> You are following his meditation, for he too sat and observed:

*"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained ..."*<sup>3</sup>

When you look up at the stars, the moon, the great spread of the sky, do you feel small and insignificant? David seemed to feel the same, yet it is his next realization that merits our focus. He is speaking to the Lord when he asks,

*"... what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor."*<sup>4</sup>

As small as you may feel, as insignificant as you may judge yourself to be in the great scope of the world and history, God thinks about you. He "is mindful" of you. The God who set the great creation into motion, the same God knows the very hairs of your head.<sup>5</sup> He knows your thoughts and plans.<sup>6</sup> He knows your secret sorrows just as He knows your wishes.<sup>7</sup> You are not alone in the universe; God knows and loves you.<sup>8</sup>

And with this meditation on the all-encompassing, virtually incomprehensible love of God for you—one solitary individual—you can conclude along with David,

*"O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!"*<sup>9</sup>

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1. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was a German philosopher and anthropologist at the end of the Enlightenment.

2. Psalm 8:1

3. Psalm 8:3

4. Psalm 8:4–5

5. Luke 12:7

6. Hebrews 4:12

7. Psalm 38:9

8. John 3:16

9. Psalm 8:9

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# *What is truth?*

That age-old question is being asked less and less these days. Some people don't ask because they're so wrapped up in satisfying their material needs and desires that they never stop to consider their spiritual needs. Others don't ask because they're afraid they won't like the answer. And some don't ask because they don't believe that there *is* an answer; their inborn hunger for truth has been dulled by the skepticism and notion of "relative morality" that pervade modern thought.

But does the truth cease to exist because people don't seek it or don't want to acknowledge it? Do God and the spiritual realm cease to exist because so many choose not to believe? Of course not! The truth is the truth, and it's not contingent on anyone believing it. Even if no one believed, it would remain more real and enduring than the world you experience with your five senses. What you consider reality is no more than a weak reflection of the real world—and that's the truth!

The truth is spiritual reality, and it's there for all who sincerely want it. I gave the keys to finding it when I said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. If you abide in My Word, you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."<sup>1</sup> Open your heart to Me, and receive new life—eternal life. Let Me guide you into all truth. Let Me set you free!

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1. John 14:6; 8:31–32; Matthew 7:7

