

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 14 • Issue 3

HE'S ALIVE

Easter brings change

An Imperfect World

The answer is love

11 Tips

Beat the blues





PERSONALLY SPEAKING

I was 20 when I first read the gospels. That was also when I began to form my own thoughts about God and Jesus. Until then my beliefs had been sketchy at best and based on things I'd heard others say. The truth was that I'd never given the subject any real thought.

As I read, most of it was so new that it made little sense. I didn't understand it, but it drew me in a strange new direction. I couldn't say I believed it, but I wanted to. Who wouldn't want to be part of a world where miracles actually happen, where wrongs are challenged, the weak and downtrodden are defended, and love has the last word? Things Jesus said, like, "If you abide in My word ... you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,"¹ kept me going back for more. I read all four gospels and started over at Matthew.

After several weeks I realized that it wasn't only my thoughts that were changing. I had been waiting for "truth" to strike me between the eyes, which never happened, but something was at work in my spirit. Each time I would embrace a statement or story, my crude lump of faith would strike God's love, like flint against iron, and sparks would fly—moments of an odd sort of happiness that was part peace, part exhilaration.

Eventually I moved on from the gospels to other parts of the Bible, and there I found passages that helped me understand what was going on inside. Like the psalmist and countless others before and since, I had discovered that "in [God's] presence is fullness of joy."² The apostle Peter went a step further in explaining that heart-to-heart connection I had made with my Creator: "Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."³

May that joy be yours.

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

1. John 8:31–32
2. Psalm 16:11
3. 1 Peter 1:8

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Living hope

BY ELENA SICHROVSKY

I GREW UP IN A CHRISTIAN HOME AND HAVE BEEN FAMILIAR WITH THE EASTER STORY SINCE CHILDHOOD, but it wasn't until last year that I discovered what Easter means for me personally.

Last Easter, my thoughts were not on the glory of Jesus' resurrection, the triumph of good over evil, or even the bright morning dawning outside my window. Just one week earlier, my best friend had phoned me with the sad news that her father had suddenly passed away during the night. My mind was still reeling with shock and grief. How could a life slip away so abruptly, with no time for last words or goodbyes? I thought about the grandchildren who will grow up never knowing

their grandfather, my friend who will no longer have a dad's support and advice, and the widow who would miss her husband's loving presence.

As I read a Bible study on Easter that detailed Jesus' last hours, crucifixion, and resurrection, it struck me that the death of the Savior must have seemed to His friends and disciples like the worst thing that could have happened. Yet it was transformed into the most wonderful miracle imaginable: Christ's triumph over death. If hope emerged from such a terrible event, can that hope still be found today? I thought of my hurting friend. Where was the hope in that tragic and untimely death?

My eyes fell on a Bible verse: "God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation."¹ As I reflected on those words, I realized that the miracle of Easter did not

end 2,000 years ago with Jesus' resurrection. It has continued on, carrying a message of living hope through the ages and into the 21st century.

Regardless of how dark things look today, a glorious dawn is approaching. When Jesus prepared to leave His disciples, He left them with the promise that because He lives, they (and we) will live also.²

Easter is not meant to only be a day of remembrance that comes around once a year, but a living hope in our hearts all year round. As surely as the sun rises every morning, we can leave behind whatever sorrow or pain we are facing and rise again with renewed faith and comfort in the eternal love of God.

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1. 1 Peter 1:3 NLT
2. See John 14:19.



HE'S

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

ALIVE!

IT HAD BEEN ABOUT THREE YEARS SINCE THEY HAD ANSWERED THE CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS. Each had his own story. Nathanael was told he was “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit.”¹ Peter and his brother Andrew heard the words, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men,”² while casting their nets into the sea. Matthew was sitting at his tax collector’s booth.³ The years that followed had been the most exciting and intense years of their lives. Jesus was the most incredible person they had

ever known, and they loved Him deeply.

The things they witnessed were incredible—many miraculous healings, deliverances from demonic forces,⁴ the feeding of thousands with only a few loaves of bread and a few fish.⁵ There was also the day when a funeral procession was coming down the street, and the Master was so moved by the dead man’s grieving mother that He stopped the procession, touched the coffin, and the young man sat up alive.⁶ And that wasn’t the only time that Jesus brought the dead back to life. There

1. John 1:47

2. Mark 1:17

3. See Matthew 9:9.

4. See Matthew 4:23–24.

5. See Matthew 14:14–21;
15:32–38.

6. See Luke 7:11–16.

7. See Mark 5:35–42.

8. See John 11:38–44.

9. See Matthew 13:10–13.

10. See John 6:15.


11. See John 6:3.

12. See Luke 20:20.

13. See Matthew 21:6–9.

14. See John 11:47–48.

15. See Luke 23:55–56;
24:1–11; John 20:3–9.



was the girl who was dead when He entered the room and alive when He left it,⁷ and also Lazarus, who had been dead for four days when Jesus called him from his tomb.⁸

There were times when He told such insightful stories—stories that held deep meaning and revealed great truths to those whose minds and hearts were open enough to understand them.⁹ Sometimes He taught the multitudes who gathered round to hear what He had to say, and at one point those people were on the verge of taking Him by force to make Him king.¹⁰ At other times, He took His closest followers away to a quiet place where they could rest and He could give them personal teaching.¹¹

These were heady days indeed.

Of course, not every day was full of such wonder and excitement. Sometimes there was opposition. His religious enemies disagreed with what He taught and continually challenged Him, but His answers were filled with wisdom, power, and most

of all love.¹² Everything about Him was rooted in love and compassion.

As time went on, the opposition grew stronger and His enemies more determined to stop Him. But then, right in the middle of all that, there was the day when crowds from Jerusalem, joined by thousands of Passover pilgrims, met Him outside the city walls, waving palm branches and shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David.”¹³ His religious opponents were afraid to touch Him because of His popularity, and feared that if the civil authorities had to step in, that would cost them their positions of prominence.¹⁴

Those days had been extraordinary—full of wonder, hope, excitement, learning, and love. His followers probably expected that things would continue that way for many more years.


Then suddenly, everything changed. Jesus was arrested, and less than 24 hours later He was executed as a criminal. Their dreams were

dashed to pieces. The One they loved so deeply was gone. The life they had lived for the past three years was over. It seemed the future He had spoken of wouldn't work out. He was dead.

Sad, confused, and afraid, they hid behind locked doors. How abruptly it had all come to an end—the work they had participated in, the love they had come to know so well. Everything changed almost instantly. The future was bleak.

On the third day after His execution, early in the morning, some women who had followed Him visited His tomb, but His body wasn't there. When they told the other disciples, nobody took them seriously except Peter and John, who ran to the tomb and confirmed the women's story. He wasn't there! They didn't understand what had happened, but His body was gone.¹⁵

Suddenly Jesus appeared in the midst of the room where they were hiding, behind locked doors. The Man they had loved and followed,



who had been brutally tortured and killed, was standing before them.¹⁶

He was alive!

He had risen from the dead and was back with them. His presence changed everything. Though He had been executed as a criminal, the fact that He was standing there alive validated everything He had told them about Himself: that He *was* “the resurrection and the life,”¹⁷ that He would be killed but would be raised to life again three days later.¹⁸ The truth of those words was now evident, because He was there, alive. His presence totally changed the context of the preceding days, and they knew their faith hadn’t been misguided. God’s plan hadn’t been defeated after all.

Forty days later, Jesus ascended into heaven. He was no longer with them physically, but the Holy Spirit was sent to dwell within them—a constant presence guiding them in truth and love and in the sharing of all He had taught them and all

they had witnessed during their time together.¹⁹

The wonderful days of living and working together with Him had come to an end, and the days of branching out and reaching out to others had begun. His being alive empowered them to move beyond what they had been used to, to let go of how things had been and to dedicate their lives to spreading His love and salvation to others. While it took time and adjustment, they did what He had instructed; they went to different cities and countries, meeting new people, making new friends, leading others to Him. They built communities of faith, they taught others what He had taught them, they engaged in the mission He had given them, day by day, heart by heart, year after year. They faced difficulties, trials, and tribulations, but they carried on even at the cost of their lives. In so doing, they profoundly affected the world of their day and every age since.

Although things had changed, and Jesus was no longer present bodily, He was still able to do miracles; to bring the dead back to life; to give incredible answers to those in need; to show love, compassion, and mercy; to bring the good news of salvation. Only now, instead of Him doing it in person, He did it through them. He continued to dwell in them and work through them, and He’s been and continues to be just as alive in those who have loved and followed Him ever since.

Easter is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. It’s a celebration of His defeat of death and hell and Satan. Jesus redeemed us from our sins. He lived and loved and died for us as individuals, and He’s with us today in spirit just as much as He was with those He walked beside two millennia ago.

There was a short time when His disciples despaired, after Jesus had been crucified and was no longer with them, but that crisis was

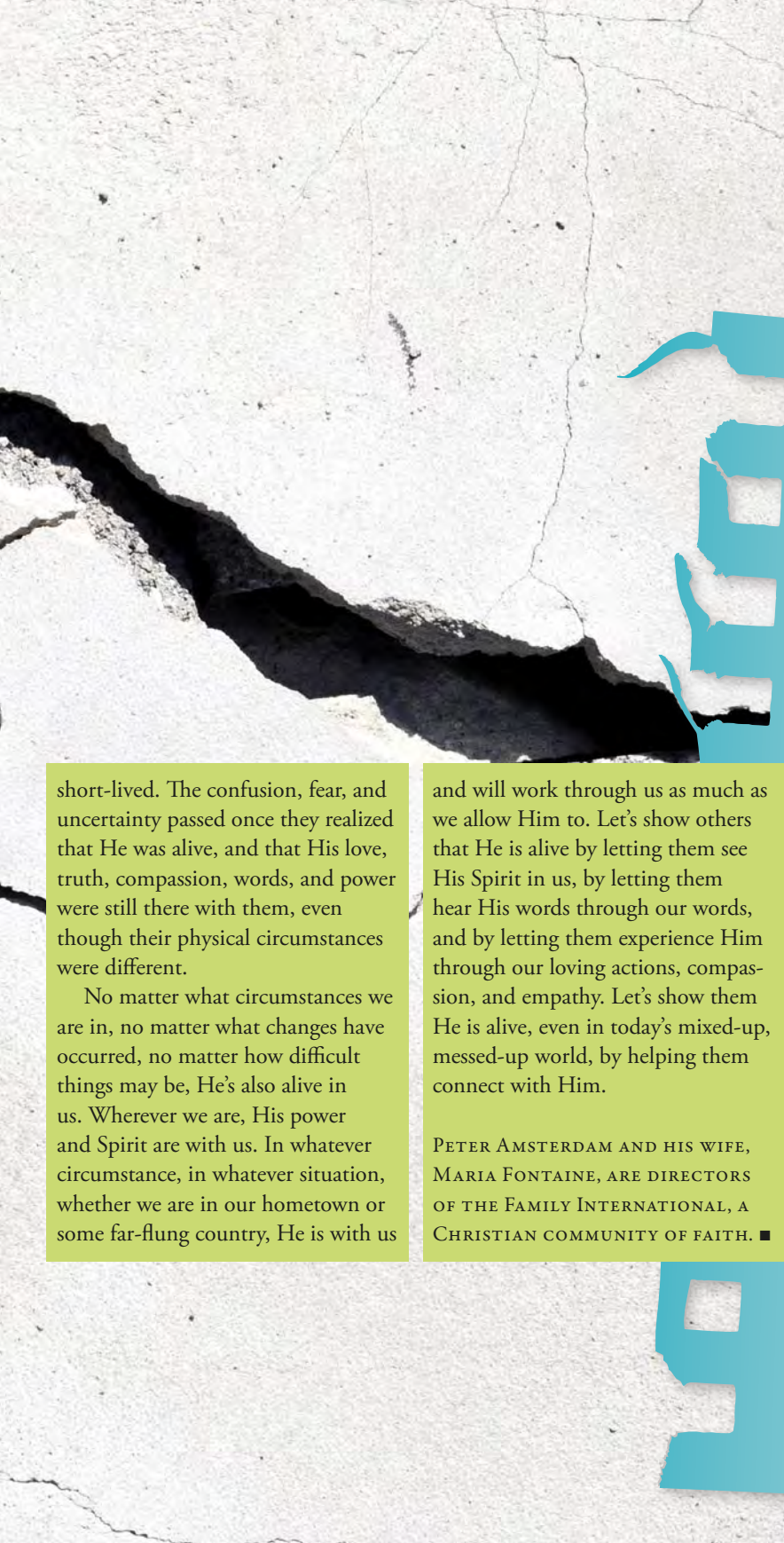
¹⁶. See John 20:19–20.

¹⁷. John 11:25

¹⁸. See Mark 8:31; John 2:19–21.

¹⁹. See Acts 2:1–4; Matthew 28:19.

²⁰. 1 Corinthians 15:55 KJV



PARDON GRANTED

—Thoughts on Easter

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

We don't have a Jesus on the cross; He's left the cross! We have an empty cross. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"²⁰ We don't have a Christ in the grave; we have a live Jesus living in our hearts.

He rose in victory, joy, liberty, and freedom, never to die again, so that He could redeem us as well and prevent our having to go through the agony of death of spirit. What a day of rejoicing that must have been when He rose and realized it was all over. He had won the victory; the world was saved!



The miracle of Easter is that because Jesus didn't remain in the grave, we don't have to, either. We don't have to suffer in hell to pay for our sins, or experience eternal separation from God. He took that payment for us, and then rose to a new life. And His new life can be inside us, giving us hope and peace, as we are filled with His love. ■

short-lived. The confusion, fear, and uncertainty passed once they realized that He was alive, and that His love, truth, compassion, words, and power were still there with them, even though their physical circumstances were different.

No matter what circumstances we are in, no matter what changes have occurred, no matter how difficult things may be, He's also alive in us. Wherever we are, His power and Spirit are with us. In whatever circumstance, in whatever situation, whether we are in our hometown or some far-flung country, He is with us

and will work through us as much as we allow Him to. Let's show others that He is alive by letting them see His Spirit in us, by letting them hear His words through our words, and by letting them experience Him through our loving actions, compassion, and empathy. Let's show them He is alive, even in today's mixed-up, messed-up world, by helping them connect with Him.

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

“THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS love, JOY, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”¹

JOY—THE SUNSHINE FRUIT

BY RAFAEL HOLDING



WE ALL KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE OUR LIVES BESET BY PROBLEMS. Financial difficulties, inclement weather, or even rush-hour traffic can cast a pall over our spirits.

But it doesn't have to be that way. The Holy Spirit can help us rise above our problems, big or small, and cause us to be happy and cheerful in spite of circumstances.

The secret to having the joy of the Lord is taking the time to fill up on God's Word, so that you have a reservoir of His Spirit within to draw from in stressful times. "These things I have spoken to you," Jesus told His

disciples, "that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."²

So if you feel down or discouraged, try spending more time with Jesus, reading and studying His Word. You'll be amazed at the difference it will make!

It also helps greatly to count your blessings, to think about all the good things the Lord has given you and done for you. "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."³ "The joy of the Lord is your strength."⁴

RAFAEL HOLDING IS A WRITER IN AUSTRALIA. "JOY—THE SUNSHINE FRUIT" IS TAKEN FROM THE *GET ACTIVATED* BOOK *GOD'S GIFTS*, AVAILABLE FROM AURORA'S ONLINE STORE ([HTTP://SHOP.AURORAPRODUCTION.COM/](http://shop.auroraproduction.com/)) ■

You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.—*Psalms 16:11*

It is the consciousness of the threefold joy of the Lord, His joy in ransoming us, His joy in dwelling within us as our Saviour and Power for fruitbearing, and His joy in possessing us as His Bride and His delight; it is the consciousness of this joy which is our real strength. Our joy in Him may be a fluctuating thing: His joy in us knows no change.—*James Hudson Taylor*⁵

Be merry, really merry. The life of a true Christian should be a perpetual jubilee, a prelude to the festivals of eternity.—*Théophane Vénard*⁶

1. Galatians 5:22–23
2. John 15:11
3. Philippians 4:8
4. Nehemiah 8:10

5. James Hudson Taylor (1832–1905) was a British missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission.
6. Théophane Vénard (1829–1861) was a French Catholic missionary to Indochina, who was martyred for his faith.



A Breath of Fresh Air

BY ANNA PERLINI

IT WAS A PARTICULARLY HOT, muggy summer day, and Jeffrey and I had already been traveling for a few hours when we plopped down in a stuffy bus station waiting room in northern Italy. “Did I *really* have to come?” he muttered.

How had I gotten this idea? Dragging a 14-year-old away from his friends to visit his grandparents—not exactly a teenager’s idea of fun!

We had another hour before we needed to catch the bus that would take us the rest of the way, and I didn’t know which was worse—the stale air in the waiting room or the thick air between us. “Would you like some ice cream?” I asked.

That usually did the trick, or at least it used to. Not this time. “No!” came his sharp reply. “I don’t need it.” My little boy was growing up.

My patience was starting to run out. “Well, I’m going to get some for myself.” I grabbed my purse and

headed for the station café, asking Jesus to restore good communication between Jeffrey and me.

When I returned, Jeffrey was talking with a boy a year or two older. “Emmanuel is Romanian,” Jeffrey explained as he introduced us, “but he speaks Italian well. He’s living in a trailer nearby with his mom and two younger sisters, and doing odd jobs to help support his family.” Emmanuel was bright, well-mannered, and said he was willing to do just about any kind of work.

He and Jeffrey continued the animated conversation that my return had interrupted. When Jeffrey told Emmanuel that he had gone to a summer camp in Timișoara, Romania, Emmanuel lit up. “That’s where I come from!” he said. I could tell it really made Emmanuel’s day to find a boy about his age whom he could talk

to and relax with. Also, Jeffrey seemed very interested in this boy’s life and in meeting someone about his own age who was fending for his mom and sisters.

When it was time to catch our bus, Jeffrey prayed for Emmanuel and his family and then gave Emmanuel one of the gospel tracts we had with us, along with some money for his family.

“Mom,” Jeffrey whispered as we took our seats, “that was a hundred times better than ice cream!”

Sometimes when we are upset or discouraged, all it takes to make us forget our frustration and feel better is a little giving of ourselves.

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An Imperfect World

BY CHALSEY DOOLEY

IT WAS JUST A LITTLE THING, that smile on my baby's face, but it changed my perspective on life.

As he woke and looked up at me, he was looking at what mattered most in the world to him—me! He didn't care that I was dressed in mismatched pajamas, my hair a mess. He just loved me and loved being with me. He didn't need perfection; love made it all right. That moment of holding him and taking in those rays of love clarified something I'd been thinking about earlier.

The lack of perfection in life has always rubbed me the wrong way. When someone said or did something that irked me, I'd often argue my case against it in my mind. Why do there have to be things like personality clashes, carelessness, inconsideration, injustice, pessimism,

put-downs? These things are real, and they are wrong! I wish they didn't exist. If everyone, me included, could just get their act together, my life could be one of blissful perfection. Perfection, I reasoned, was the only thing that could ever relieve my irritations. But I also knew that could never be. This was real life. I needed another option.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that what I really wanted was for the world to revolve around me—my wishes, my feelings, my preferences, my priorities. Something had to change, and this time it had to be me, regardless of the faults of others. But how? I'd tried before.

Then that morning, as I held my baby, a whisper of a thought came to me. Would you want your baby to be perfect right from the start?

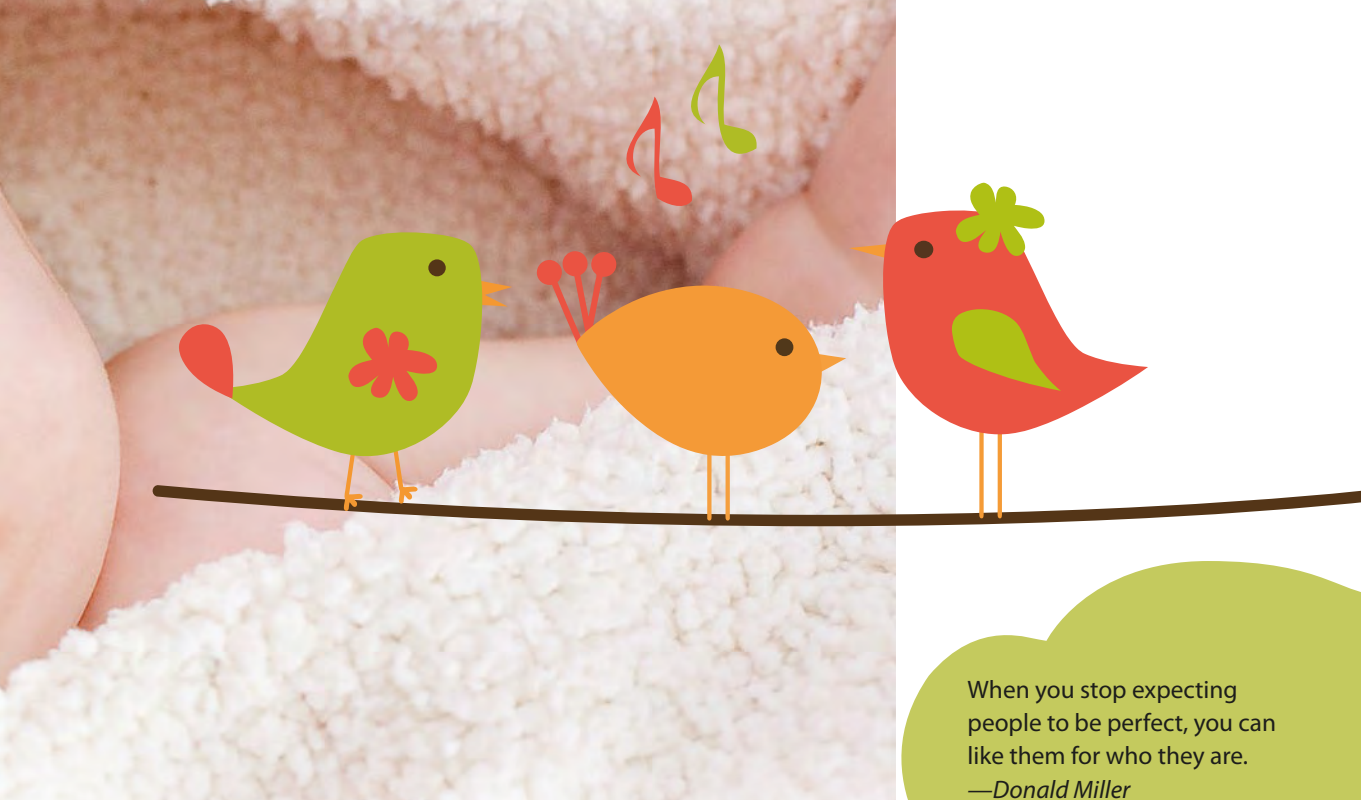
After pondering that thought, I couldn't imagine something I'd want

less. If he'd been able to walk and run the day he was born, I'd never get to see the look of thrill and accomplishment on his face when he took his first steps, and I'd also miss that special feeling of holding him in my arms, knowing that he was completely dependent on me. If he had been able to talk perfectly from the time he was born, I'd never experience the joy of hearing him speak his first word. If he knew everything that an adult knows, I'd never get to see him overcome with wonder at some new discovery and I'd never have the fulfillment of teaching him something new. So many things I'd miss. No, his imperfection makes him just perfect. I wouldn't have him any other way!

What was it then, I asked myself, that made his imperfection different from the other imperfections around me?

The answer was love.

1. Matthew 7:7



That was it! That was what I was lacking. That was what I needed more of in order to cope bravely and cheerfully when confronted by problems I wished didn't exist.

I realized how much I'd be missing if I and everyone around me were perfect from the start. I'd miss the unpredictability of life that adds the sense of surprise; the joy of forgiving and being forgiven; the strong, abiding bonds of friendship that are formed through adversity, and the positive character traits that are formed much the same way.

Adding negative thoughts to a negative situation, I reminded myself, never brings positive results. I determined then and there to look for and find the positive opportunities and experiences that are hidden behind the mask of imperfection.

When my baby couldn't sleep later that day, I decided to make the best of a difficult situation by putting my

new lesson into practice. I put what I had been sure was best for him and me on hold, and my husband and I took some time to sing and laugh with him. It was a perfectly happy moment that we all would have missed had everything been "perfect" that day.

Every situation and person we encounter can make our lives a ride of joy and surprise, if we look beyond. Difficulties, losses, hurts, lacks—we can think of each as a clue in a treasure hunt, the door to a secret vault where you will find beautiful treasures from God. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."¹

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When you stop expecting people to be perfect, you can like them for who they are.

—Donald Miller

If you look for perfection, you'll never be content.—Leo Tolstoy

There are two kinds of perfect: The one you can never achieve, and the other, by just being yourself.—Lauren King

I abhor the idea of a perfect world. It would bore me to tears.—Shelby Foote

Being happy doesn't mean that everything is perfect. It means that you have decided to look beyond the imperfections.—Author unknown



Mayan CIVILIZATION

By ANNA WORMUS

WHEN OUR VOLUNTEER WORK TOOK MY HUSBAND ANDREW, our daughter Angelina, and me from Europe to Central America, we were blessed with the wonderful opportunity to visit a peaceful lake in Guatemala that had once been a local center of the rich Mayan culture. In this serene setting, the main event of the day for locals and visitors alike is watching the sun set behind three volcanoes that rim the west side of the lake. Here the pleasures of life are simple, like swimming where the volcanic hot springs rise up into the lake, creating a curious mixture of ice-cold, tepid, and very hot water.

I don't drink coffee myself, but I was fascinated to observe how coffee beans are grown, dried, roasted, ground, and finally brewed to a delicious deep brown cup of coffee. The aroma was intoxicating, and the taste, said Andrew and Angelina, was divine—a truly homemade cup of coffee from beginning to end.

It was a curious sight—tourists on

temporary reprieve from their fast-paced, pressure-driven, “civilized” lives in juxtaposition with Mayan women peacefully weaving their beautiful multicolored cloth, some with an infant child, grandchild, or perhaps even great-grandchild sleeping peacefully in a sling across their backs or playing quietly nearby. What a contrast!

Although the Mayans of today must sell their wares to the foreigners in order to survive, they have not let the pressures of the modern world pollute their lives. Industrious and hard-working, they work in rhythm, sunrise to sunset, producing lovely traditional garments. Not swept along by the fashion trends, they proudly wear their own wares, as do their children. Nor are they dependent on the pharmaceutical system, but find the medicines they need right in the trees and plants that are grown locally. They even produce their own cosmetics. (My hair has done better with the herbal

shampoo I bought from them than it has with any commercially produced shampoo, herbal or otherwise, that I've ever tried!)

While sitting beneath the softly waving palm trees, listening to gentle waves lap the lakeshore and observing the sun set behind the volcanoes, I felt like I had been taken up to God's heavenly kingdom and shown one of the reasons that I had been created—to enjoy it all!

Jet-setters, get-aheaders, and others consider the Mayans backward, but I'm not so sure. Speed and stress take the joy out of life, but slowing down and bringing our priorities into line with God's puts it back in.

ANNA WORMUS IS A COFOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF HEALING HEARTS BALKANS ([HTTP://HEALINGHEARTSBALKANS.ORG/](http://healingheartsbalkans.org/)). SHE AND HER HUSBAND CURRENTLY LIVE IN SERBIA AND HAVE BEEN OPERATING IN THE WAR-TORN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA SINCE 1995. ■

11 Tips

-Beating the Blues

BY SAMUEL KEATING

1 Count your blessings.

Expressing gratitude does wonders to lift your spirit. There is spiritual power in praise that can counterbalance whatever is weighing on you.

2 Get in touch with Jesus.

He loves and cares for you, and He's got the solution to every problem. Talk to Him about how you feel; read God's Word; bolster your faith by holding on to promises from His Word.

3 Do something good for someone else.

Reaching out to others not only helps that person, but it lifts your spirit at the same time.

4 Take a break.

Stop everything and go for a walk, sit somewhere relaxing, or take in a nature scene or favorite picture. Meditate on the beautiful things in life.

5 Sing a happy song,

or listen to one. A song of praise to God can draw you closer to Him and fill your heart with gratitude and peace.

6 Exercise.

Physical exercise releases endorphins, "feel good" hormones that help to calm the mind and redirect thoughts and energy away from worries and concerns.

7 Laugh out loud.

"A merry heart does good, like medicine."¹ Don't take life or yourself too seriously. Read, watch, or think about something funny. Talk to someone who is fun to be around.

8 Spend time with your children.

Children have so much love to give, and their cheerfulness, resilience, and simplicity can help put your own problems in perspective.

9 Spruce up your surroundings.

A clean room, a nice view, a small home improvement, or even good lighting can lift your mood.

10 Get enough sleep.

Problems are easier to deal with when you are well rested. A large sleep deficit can magnify problems and make you feel lousy.

11 Smile.

Smiling even when you don't feel like it has a positive effect on your spirit. Keep it up, and you will soon be seeing the world in a brighter light.

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1. Proverbs 17:22



WHEN GOOD IS BETTER THAN BEST

BY PHILLIP LYNCH

THERE IS AN ADAGE, “Good is the enemy of best.” The point is that settling for something that is merely good may mean that something better is never attained. It seems to be a cultural imperative these days that we never settle for less than what we believe will prove to be the absolute best for us. But I’m coming to a different conclusion.

In my personal quest for the best possible outcome in each and every situation, I’m seeing that I have sometimes passed up some good possibilities; because I was worried that just around that next corner could be what I really, really, *really* wanted, I failed to take advantage of the opportunity at hand. In such cases, it seems to me that “best” is really

the enemy of “good.” Going for the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow caused me to miss the beauty of the rainbow. I would probably be happier if I embraced the journey, rather than always being fixated on reaching my next goal.

While thinking about this, I was reminded of something that Peter said about Jesus: He went around doing good.¹ Jesus took advantage of opportunities to do good whenever they presented themselves.

There is also the classic passage from Paul’s letter to the Romans where he writes that “all things work together for *good* to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”² I have often taken solace in that verse when things didn’t seem to be going at all well. But lately I have been thinking deeper on that scripture and how all things work for *good*, not necessarily *best*. I am not

sure I am in the best situation right now, but I know it is good, and rather than fretting about what I don’t have, I could be finding and enjoying the positives in my present circumstances.

Solomon apparently came to a similar conclusion, because he wrote, “Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor ... for this is his reward.”³ If that’s so, a constant search for something better can cause us to not appreciate the good thing we already have.

So should we be happy to settle for the good? Perhaps not all the time, but I think we might be happier overall if we often did. After all, good is not a bad thing!

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

1. See Acts 10:38.

2. Romans 8:28, emphasis added.

3. Ecclesiastes 5:18 NASB



5 Senses Thanksgiving

—A Spiritual Exercise

BY ABI MAY

EVERY DAY IS FILLED WITH HAPPY MOMENTS THAT WE COULD THANK GOD FOR, if we paused to acknowledge them. This thanksgiving exercise is based on what we perceive through our five traditional senses.

TOUCH

We see only with our eyes, smell only with our noses, taste only with our mouths, and hear only with our ears, but the sense of touch is transmitted through tiny nerve endings that cover us from head to toe. Each fingertip alone has around 2500 receptors.

Our days are filled with touch. We brush our child's hair and feel its softness. We hold a mug of warm tea or coffee. We splash cool water on our face on a hot day. What special experiences did you have today thanks to your sense of touch? Thank God for those.



To develop this exercise further, consider starting a sensory thanksgiving notebook. Each evening, jot down your day's experiences of each sense. Just a word or two may be sufficient; it's the moments of appreciative reflection that make this exercise valuable.

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SIGHT

Many things are beautiful to behold, whether natural sights such as trees and flowers, created works such as art and architecture, or the sight of a friend or home after an absence. What pleasurable sights lined your path today? Thank God for them.

TASTE

When God provided food for the Israelites during their 40-year sojourn in the wilderness, it seems He was not only concerned with providing sustenance, but also something tasty. The psalmist later called manna, the mystery food that appeared on the ground each morning, "angels' food."¹ In another passage, we are told that "its taste was like the taste of pastry."²

Think back over what you ate and drank today. What flavors and textures did you enjoy? Thank God for them.



SMELL

The sense of smell is evocative. Freshly mown grass reminds us of summer; a certain perfume or cologne may remind us of a loved one or friend; the smell of a certain food can conjure up places and experiences from our past.

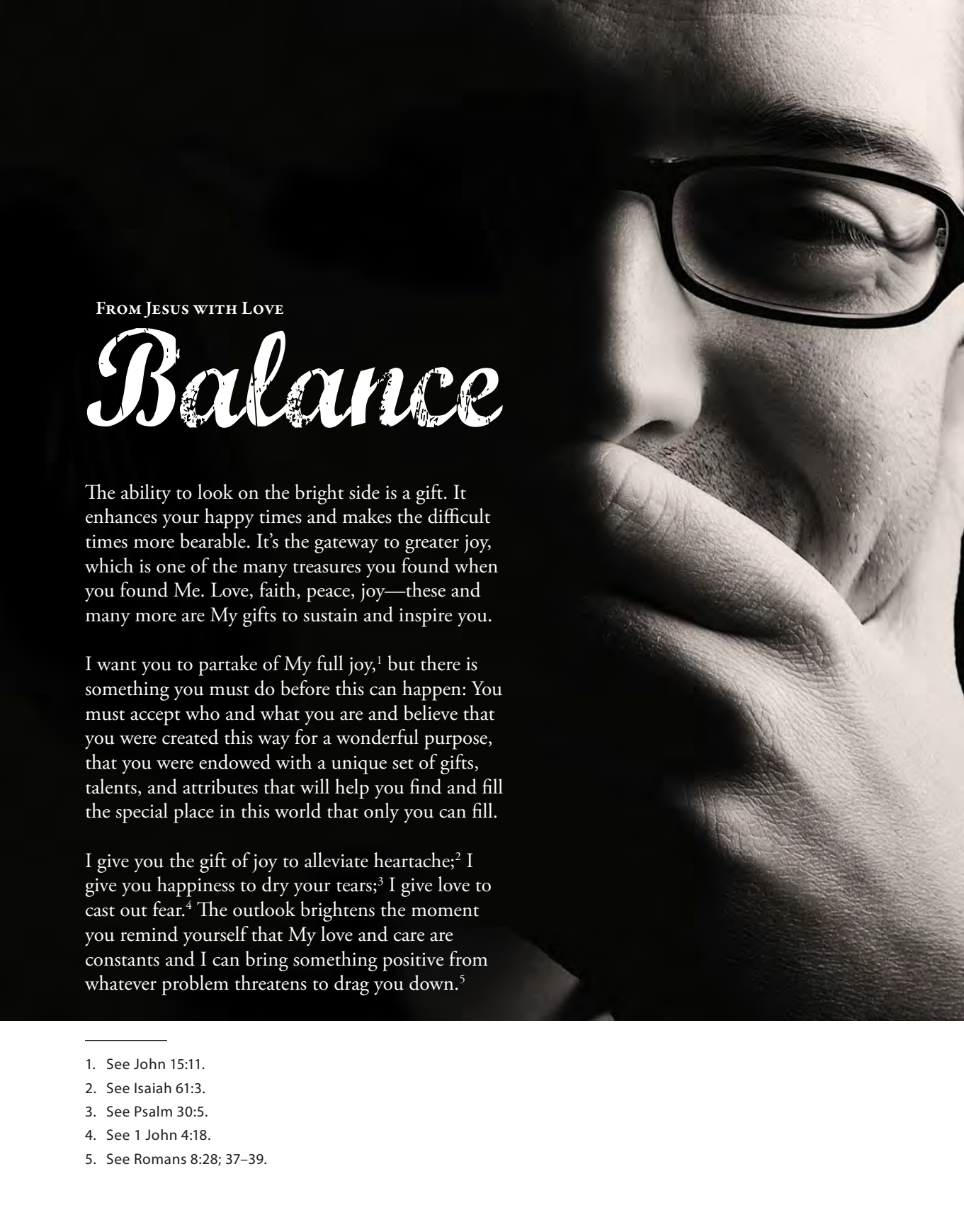
What good smells came your way today? What happy thoughts did they trigger? Thank God for them.



HEARING

The warble of birds, the sound of music, or a loved one's voice on the phone can bring a smile. What were the sounds that brought you pleasure today? Thank God for them.

1. Psalm 78:25
2. Numbers 11:8



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Balance

The ability to look on the bright side is a gift. It enhances your happy times and makes the difficult times more bearable. It's the gateway to greater joy, which is one of the many treasures you found when you found Me. Love, faith, peace, joy—these and many more are My gifts to sustain and inspire you.

I want you to partake of My full joy,¹ but there is something you must do before this can happen: You must accept who and what you are and believe that you were created this way for a wonderful purpose, that you were endowed with a unique set of gifts, talents, and attributes that will help you find and fill the special place in this world that only you can fill.

I give you the gift of joy to alleviate heartache;² I give you happiness to dry your tears;³ I give love to cast out fear.⁴ The outlook brightens the moment you remind yourself that My love and care are constants and I can bring something positive from whatever problem threatens to drag you down.⁵

1. See John 15:11.

2. See Isaiah 61:3.

3. See Psalm 30:5.

4. See 1 John 4:18.

5. See Romans 8:28; 37–39.