

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 14 • Issue 5

NOT EVERY WAVE IS WORTH RIDING

Save yourself for things that count

Battered Sails

Faith is more than feelings

Creating Space

How to not be overwhelmed by life





PERSONALLY SPEAKING

In one of the most powerful and poetic chapters of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, the apostle Paul describes the sort of love Christians are meant to embody: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed

up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”¹

Longsuffering heads the list, and I think that’s significant because to love freely and consistently in the other ways Paul names requires a readiness to go the distance. We can’t reserve our love for certain situations or special people, and we can’t withdraw it when people disappoint or fail. Longsuffering is both a prerequisite and the bottom line.

How do we find it within ourselves to continue to show love to someone who has hurt us or others? Giving the person the benefit of the doubt can help, and so can remembering that we also hurt others through thoughtlessness, blunders, and unloving choices. But the surest way I know can be found in another translation of this same passage. In the New International Version, the phrase “love thinks no evil” is rendered “love keeps no record of wrongs.” Hurts are real and take time to heal, but when we resist the all-too-human urge to replay them in the courtroom of our mind, when we choose rather to forgive and truly forget, God gives us the love and grace to keep on loving. And everyone wins.

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

PS: Dear readers, I’m retiring as editor after 14 wonderful years with *Activated*. Beginning next month, Samuel Keating, who has long been an invaluable member of the *Activated* team, will take the reins. Expect the magazine to only get better.

God bless you all!

1. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

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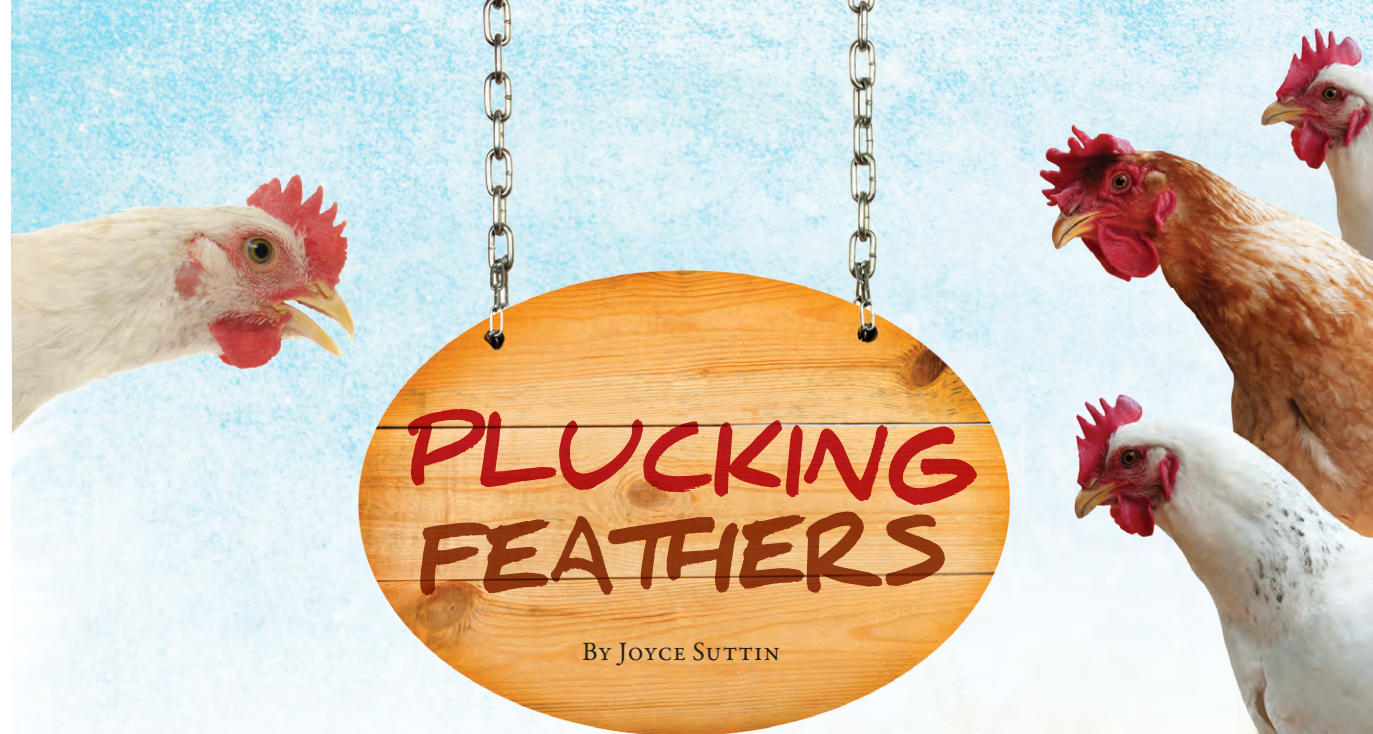
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BY JOYCE SUTTIN

IN MY CHILDHOOD FARMYARD IN PLEASANT HILL, New York, we always had an abundance of chickens roaming around looking for worms and bugs, scratching the ground for seeds, and generally living an easygoing, happy life. That’s one reason why, in spite of a modest food budget, I still always buy free-range eggs. I believe that happy chickens create better eggs.

One thing I noticed at an early age was that there is a definite pecking order among chickens. Most chickens are social, humble creatures that mind their own business. But some chickens run around puffing out their chests, lording it over the other chickens ... and plucking their tail feathers.

At first, it might seem a humorous quirk. I remember watching certain hens run up behind others and pluck their feathers with such

1. Matthew 5:5

pride. They probably thought they had something up on the other hens. Perhaps the one doing the plucking was making a statement to the other hens that the one she was plucking thought too highly of herself and needed to be cut down to size. Perhaps chickens are less prone to sin with their tongues and more prone to sin with their beaks.

The odd thing, though, was that tail plucking became a bitter challenge. The Golden Rule was playing itself out in reverse; what they were doing to others was being done back to them. The more they plucked others, the more they got plucked by others. In the end, some of our beautiful barnyard chickens looked quite ridiculous.

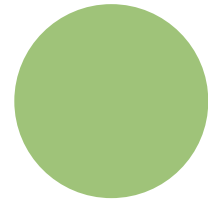
Chicken owners debate the issue of plucking. They all know it is a problem, but they have few solutions other than to try to separate the pluckers before the problem becomes widespread. A common rationale is

to blame it on vitamin deficiencies, as better-fed chickens are less prone to pluck. On our farm, habitual pluckers often ended up in the Sunday stew instead of the henyard.

As an awkward young child, I watched the chickens and learned early that the best defense was not a defense at all. In any social situation, I learned to avoid tail plucking. Unlike more competitive animals in the food chain that believe they must eat or be eaten, I realized that plucking was essentially a self-destructive habit. Better to be in a henyard, surrounded by other hens, than to be in the stewpot.

Jesus said it beautifully in the Sermon on the Mount. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”¹ Or as chicken farmers would say, inherit the henyard!

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BY PHILLIP LYNCH

LONG-TEMPERED

I USED TO HAVE MY OWN DEFINITIONS OF LONGSUFFERING AND PATIENCE. Longsuffering was putting up with something, and patience was putting up with nothing. The one was expressed in “I wish I didn’t have,” and the other in “I wish I did.” There’s more to both than that, of course, especially longsuffering.

When I looked into the Greek word μακροθυμέω (phonetically, *makrothumia*), the word translated in some Bible versions as “longsuffering,” I saw that there was another facet. *Makro* means “long” (no revelation there), and *thumia* means temper, which was eye-opening. So a more precise translation of *makrothumia* may be long-tempered, the opposite of short-tempered.

When my brother-in-law returned from a conference a while back, he told me how one of the speakers

had said that spontaneously flying off the handle is now referred to as Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED). If sudden short-temperedness is now regarded as a mental disorder, then it makes sense that long-temperedness would be a sign of mental well-being. The speaker went on to say that IED is reaching alarming proportions, and I can say that recent personal experience has provided a little anecdotal evidence to support that position.

Just the other day, my wife and I were walking in town when a well-dressed lady behind us let loose with a string of expletives that would make a rapper blush. She was apparently angry that an older fellow on a bicycle was riding on the sidewalk. I was taken aback by the “sidewalk rage” of this otherwise elegant middle-aged woman.

We live in a beach town, and we can expect the population to swell over the coming summer months. It’s

good for the local economy, but it plays havoc with traffic, food prices, and other aspects of our otherwise easygoing town. So around here, at least, we’re coming into the season to practice being long-tempered.

In the book of Colossians, Saint Paul lists some of the qualities that Christians are supposed to cultivate, and—you guessed it—longsuffering is one of them. “Put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another ... even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection”—it’s the glue that holds the rest together—“and let the peace of God rule in your hearts.”¹

What more can be said than that?

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



BY MARIA DOEHLER

SOMETIMES, AT THE MOST UNEXPECTED TIMES, we get little revelations that clarify perspective, give insight, and recharge our faith. I got one of those the other day.

It had been a long few months financially speaking, and now our vehicle was in the repair shop. As I waited for my husband to call me with the cost estimate, I asked God why this was happening to us now, of all times. “We’re already struggling,” I pleaded. “How can we afford an expensive repair on our vehicle?”

The reply I got was simply, “Sometimes, in life, these things just happen.”

It was not the comforting “I will put an end to this struggle” reassurance I had hoped for, but I didn’t feel that God’s reply was harsh or that He was amused by our predicament. He was simply stating the fact that life is full of challenges, unexpected misfortunes, and disappointment. It happens, and we get through it.

I have always wanted the easy way. I’m quite fine with being rescued before things get too bad. That would be ideal, but it’s not always what God has in mind. He was telling me that there isn’t always going to be a miracle, a magic bullet, or a free pass that allows me to skip the tough parts. It’s not that He can’t do the miracle, if that’s what’s needed, but He’s not a bailout for tough times. What He sometimes chooses to provide is the ability to soldier through—the grace, strength, joy, and stamina to work my way through the disappointments, struggles, and less-than-ideal happenings.

Of course, I can’t just accept everything that happens as “God’s will” and put up no fight, allowing myself and my family to become victims of happenstance. But when God’s message is, “Honey, you have to go through this one,” then I need

to quit hoping for a way *out* and start trusting for a way *through*.

To be honest, I know that I need these times. I don’t like them, but I need them. These circumstances take my faith from a lovely “shelf” faith to a more practical “street” faith. It’s not as mystical, but a lot more real.

PS: We did have to pay a large repair bill that prolonged our financial struggles. It wasn’t ideal or how we would have preferred things to be, but I’m amazed at what that little word from the Lord did for my perspective on the situation. Just realizing that these things happen and that people get through them helped to vanquish the fear.

MARIA DOEHLER IS A FORMER MISSIONARY TO THE FAR EAST AND EAST AFRICA. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES IN TEXAS WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN, AND RUNS A SMALL FAMILY BUSINESS. ■

1. Colossians 3:12–15

CREATING SPACE

By IRIS RICHARD

I DECIDED “BETTER LATE THAN NEVER” AND VENTURED INTO SOMETHING NEW AND LONG OVERDUE: at age 50-plus, I registered for lessons at a local driving school.

To my horror, during just my second class, I was taken to drive in the chaotic Nairobi traffic.

“Try to create space around your vehicle,” was one of the first instructions.

“Easier said than done when no one else seems to do that,” I mumbled nervously as I attempted to weave my way through rush hour traffic. Despite my efforts, I soon found myself sandwiched between overloaded minibuses blaring out rap music, motorcycles snaking between lanes, and a dump truck carrying heaps of garbage that towered over my compact car.

“If you can’t have space on all sides, try to have space on two

sides—and if not on two, then on at least one, front or back.”

That sounded like a lesson that could be applied to life in general when problems tower over me.

As a mother of seven and a long-time missionary in Africa, I have experienced a wide spectrum of situations that included some so stressful that they threatened to test me beyond my limits. Whenever things felt like they were getting too much to bear, though, this promise would pop into my mind: “God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.”¹

These strategies have helped me:

- **Creating space.** To be able to cope with demanding situations, I started taking short breaks throughout the day. These times act as buffers during periods when extra grace and energy are needed.

• **Being honest.** I’ve had to learn to be honest with myself

and others about my limitations. For example, my three-year-old grandson knows that I have a hard time with noise and respects that by keeping the volume down, which helps us make the most of our times together.

- **Making time.** Our family has always tried to find time to talk things over, as well as to commit difficult issues to God in prayer together.

- **Accepting help.** Letting others help with stressful situations can be a lifesaver. It’s also a chance to forge deeper bonds through shared victories.

- **Giving it a rest.** Applying the “sleep on it” principle puts many controversial topics and unsettling issues to rest. It also gives God time to work things out.

IRIS RICHARD IS A COUNSELOR IN KENYA, WHERE SHE HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER WORK SINCE 1994. ■

LONGSUFFERING —THE CONCILIATORY FRUIT

By RAFAEL HOLDING

“THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL. AGAINST SUCH THERE IS NO LAW.”¹

“If my brother offends me, how many times shall I forgive him?” someone once asked Jesus, before offering a hopeful guess. “Seven times?”

“No, seventy times seven!” was Jesus’ reply.² In other words, we should never stop forgiving.

Now that’s love! And Jesus wasn’t just talking about lovingly and patiently forgiving our siblings, spouses, or close friends, but also overbearing bosses and coworkers, wayward subordinates, and cantankerous neighbors—anyone and everyone, in fact. This is so contrary

to human nature that such loving patience could only come from God Himself.

Hasn’t God forgiven you “seventy times seven”? Doesn’t that make you want to extend that same love and mercy and forgiveness to others, so they can also come to know Him and experience His forgiveness?

“Love suffers long, and is [still] kind.”³ “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition.”⁴

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1. Galatians 5:22–23
2. Matthew 18:21–22
3. 1 Corinthians 13:4
4. 2 Timothy 2:24–25
5. Leviticus 19:17–18
6. Psalm 51:10 KJV

FORGIVENESS

Many people are afraid to forgive because they feel they must remember the wrong or they will not learn from it. The opposite is true. Through forgiveness, the wrong is released from its emotional stranglehold on us so that we *can* learn from it. Through the power and intelligence of the heart, the release of forgiveness brings expanded intelligence to work with the situation more effectively.

—David and Bruce McArthur, *The Intelligent Heart*, 1997

When I forgive, I am not to carry any bullets forward on the journey. I am to empty out all my explosives, all my ammunition of anger and revenge. I am not to “bear any grudge.”⁵

I cannot meet this demand. It is altogether beyond me. I might utter words of forgiveness, but I cannot reveal a clear, bright, blue sky without a touch of storm brewing anywhere.

But the Lord of grace can do it for me. He can change my weather. He can create a new climate. He can “renew a right spirit within me,”⁶ and in that new atmosphere nothing shall live which seeks to poison and destroy. Grudges shall die and revenge shall give place to goodwill, the strong genial presence which makes its home in the new heart.

—John Henry Jowett (1864–1923) ■



I CAN'T STAND HER!

BY INGIBJÖRG TORFADÓTTIR

THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE THAT WE LIKE MORE THAN OTHERS; and let's face it, some people like us more than other people do.

When I worked as a nurse in the emergency room of a hospital in Reykjavik, Iceland, I was quite self-assured and felt I could deal with pretty much any situation. I liked the action, the adrenaline rush, and always volunteered for the toughest cases.

We used to get some of the same patients over and over again—alcoholics, drug abusers, derelicts. I was young and I didn't mind them. Some of them were actually nice, funny, lonely guys who simply needed a warm bed and were genuinely sorry for making a mess of their lives. They would usually be on their best behavior if they were treated with care.

One night shift, the paramedics brought in a drunk man who was fighting hard and didn't want to be treated. He was seriously ill, though, with water in his lungs. He had not been taking his diuretics for heart failure, and his lung oxygen saturation was low. He was shouting, and the paramedics were arguing with him and telling him to calm down.

"I'll take him," I told the other nurse on duty.

I got the tray with all the standard equipment and went into the trauma room where he and the two paramedics were. When the man saw me, he gave me a terrible look and started cursing at me. I froze and then said I'd forgotten something and would be right back. My heart was pounding as I closed the door behind me, and I realized that I was really scared. That man looked like he was crazy, and he could hurt me! He looked strong and was younger than most of the patients that came to the ER in his condition. What to do?

After standing for a few seconds in the med room, pretending to be fetching something, I asked God to show me what it was about that man that He loved. It was the first time that I had prayed that prayer.

I had learned while training horses when I was younger that the sooner you get back on a horse after it has thrown you off, the more the horse will believe that you are not afraid. I took a deep breath and went straight back to the ER.

Walking into the room, I reached out to shake his hand, introduced myself with a smile, and started explaining what I was about to do. "I need to insert an IV now." I tapped on the veins of the back of his hand,

and set up the IV, saying all the usual "You will feel a sting," and so on, as if he had never had this done before. The patient was calm, so after a minute or so, I told the paramedics I'd be fine on my own and they left.

As I was taking the man's pulse, he suddenly asked, "Why aren't you afraid of me?"

I just smiled and said, "I'm sorry. Should I be?"

"No, of course not," he quickly replied. "It's just that ... well, most nurses are."

He spent the night in the trauma room, where I gave him all the meds, fluids, and salts that he needed according to his blood tests, and it turned out to be a simple enough case.

When the morning shift arrived, I saw the department manager talking to the security guards, angrily asking them why they weren't watching this patient's room. Then she spotted me and asked, "Were you in there with the doors closed and no guard?"

It turned out this man had been red flagged as a dangerous patient after attacking nurses in the heart ward upstairs with a knife. Somehow that report hadn't been entered into the computer system. I told them

that he was fine and obviously not acting dangerous at the moment.

The next night I heard that the man had left after a couple of hours, seemingly back to his usual angry, threatening self, sad to say. Everyone else, it seemed, was glad to see him go.

What has all of this got to do with the title of my story?

Well, since that experience I have used that prayer quite often when I find myself unable to hide what I feel about people. It seems to draw out the best in both them and me. I used to pray, "Help me tolerate So-and-so," but that just made them bearable. Now, when I'm tempted to think I can't stand someone, I pray, "Show me what You love about them," and it works so much better.

Today I am a department manager in a nursing home, and I need to treat all the staff and patients equally and lovingly. I naturally get along better with some of them, but Jesus loves them *all* and knows what's special about each of them. When I ask Him to help me see that, He brings it out in the open.

INGIBJÖRG TORFADÓTTIR IS A MEMBER OF TFI IN REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND. ■

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Why is God taking so long?

Q: *I've been looking for a new job, but so far without success. If I have prayed and am doing my part, why isn't God helping me?*

A: The way God works in our lives and the way He chooses to do things is often past our comprehension. It's mysterious, it's humbling, and it usually takes faith and patience. His purposes and timetable are often different from ours.

When things are rough, when you feel that they're not turning out the way you had hoped, when you feel your prayers aren't being answered, when the trials of life seem too much to bear, when the battle seems too long, when your faith is under attack, when you're feeling weary and aren't sure if you can endure much longer, you can climb up onto the

1. Mark 11:24 NLT
2. James 1:4

foundation that God has provided for your faith—the many promises and encouraging words contained in His Word—and rest in that safe haven.

One such promise is that “you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours”¹—but God doesn't promise that it will be yours *instantly*. His timetable is not always the same as ours. There are times when He does bring instant answers to prayer, but there are also many times when He allows time for our faith to mature and develop, like fine wine. Patience is the mark of a vintage faith, one that is deep and rich and full-bodied.

Throughout history God has tested and tried people's faith through not granting immediate answers to their prayers. The Israelites waited thousands of years for the Messiah to come, and

doubtless they often prayed and pleaded with God to send Him, but God waited until His timing was exactly right.

Patience is not an easy virtue to cultivate. In fact, it goes entirely against the way the world today operates, which is all about getting quick results. We can experience instant miracles and answers to prayer when God knows that's what's best, but sometimes He may want us to experience the tests, trials, and challenges of life that arise when His answers don't come immediately.

Faith isn't manifested only in our ability to receive immediate, miraculous answers to prayer; it is also manifested in endurance, longsuffering, and the patience to hold on even when we don't see immediate results from our prayers. So “let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”² ■



the marriage mirror

BY MARIE BOISJOLY

“**MARI-I-I-IE!**” My husband Ivo's stressed voice rings through the house. “Where did you say my green shirt was again?”

“It's in the closet, on the left side, between your white shirts and your jacket.”

“I can't find it!”

I follow his voice up the stairs and into our room.

“I'm late, and it's not where you said!”

“Don't panic. I'll get it.”

I poke my head in the closet for a moment and pull out the hanger with his green shirt.

“Where was it?”

“Just where I said it was. You must have missed it!”

I've lived through similar experiences countless times over 30 years of marriage. Before I got married,

1. John 8:7 NLT
2. Ephesians 4:32
3. 1 Corinthians 13:7
4. 1 Peter 4:8

I knew that my husband-to-be functioned differently from me, but I thought I would be able to change him. When that didn't happen, I got frustrated.

Although I still believe in the magic of love and its power to change and transform us, I realize that God has designed things so that we are not identical creatures, but rather complementary ones.

The ability to complement each other is rooted in acceptance, mutual respect, and appreciation of our differences. It is not surprising that studies on the breakdown of relationships conclude that the main cause is often a lack of communication.

Here are five pointers that have helped me do my part to make our marriage work:

1. Reminding myself of all my husband's wonderful qualities that caused me to fall in love with him.

2. Acknowledging my own shortcomings helps me not make such a big deal about his. “Let the

one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”¹

3. Forgiving as quickly as possible. “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”²

4. Maintaining a good sense of humor. Marriage counselor Mark Gungor comments, “Ever walk past a mirror and are shocked by what you see? Marriage is a mirror. By living so closely with another human being, you start to get a picture of what you really look like and where you need to adjust and change.”

5. Asking Jesus for more of His love when things get difficult. “Love ... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”³ “Love will cover a multitude of sins.”⁴

MARIE BOISJOLY IS A LAUGHTER THERAPIST AND DIRECTOR OF “COLOREANDO EL MUNDO” (COLORING THE WORLD), AN INTERACTIVE CLOWN AND PUPPET SHOW IN MEXICO. ■



BATTERED SAILS

BY BETHANY KELLY

AFTER AN INTENSE PERIOD OF WORK A FEW MONTHS BACK, I had been looking forward to taking some time off. I knew I needed to think about my future and plans in conjunction with changes around me that would affect my career and living situation, but I also looked forward to sinking my teeth into a personal project that I had been excited about for months but had been too busy to devote much time to. I felt passionate about this project and hoped it would be a starting point toward realizing some of my dreams and goals.

I don't know what triggered what came next. Perhaps I had overdone physically and strained my already fragile state of health, but I suddenly became very ill. Crippling exhaustion was the dominant problem. The

1. Jeremiah 29:11

fatigue I suffered from was so deep and overwhelming that on a bad day the kind of decisions I faced were things like, "Do I wash my laundry today, or do I wash my hair?" I simply didn't have the energy to do both, let alone anything more.

On top of the exhaustion, other strange symptoms presented themselves: nerve pains, muscle pains and spasms, digestive problems, an inability to concentrate on work for more than a few minutes at a time. As the weeks turned into a month and then two, I found myself at an all-time low.

Worry nagged me constantly. What if I never get better? What if I remain weak and infirm for the rest of my life? How will I be able to support and care for myself and my daughter as a single mom in poor health? I felt like Mother Teresa must have when she said, "I know God

will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that He didn't trust me so much." My daily prayer became, "Please just help me through this, Lord. Make it stop. Help me survive!"

Things came to a head during a heated exchange with my 14-year-old daughter. "You've believed in God for all these years," she said, "but it doesn't seem like He's taking care of you. You've been praying and asking God to heal you, but He hasn't. You're still sick and you're still struggling!"

I realized that her words, difficult as they were to hear, were actually a vocalization of some of the same issues that I was battling with. Why wasn't God helping when I asked?

I've often equated faith with being able to take adverse circumstances calmly. The problem with that for me has been that when things weren't

going well, I didn't always take them calmly. And it showed. I took that to mean that I didn't have much faith.

It was when I read the poem "I Will Not Doubt" that it clicked: Faith is not a feeling. I can have faith even if I am "weeping because my sails are battered," "grieving because of my losses," or "writhing beneath my crosses." In fact, that's when I need faith the most, and that's when I can't afford to lose my grip on it. Having faith doesn't mean I have to appear to have everything together. It's an inner belief and confidence in spite of *not* having it together. It's knowing and clinging to the fact that God loves and will care for me, regardless of circumstances, disappointments and battered sails, losses and crosses; regardless of how I feel.

My health is improving, and I'm thankful for that, but I still don't have everything figured out. Every day I have to make conscious decisions to shift my focus and my thought processes from fear to trust in God, from doubt to belief in His love and unfailing care, and to stand on His promise, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."¹

BETHANY KELLY MANAGES PRODUCTIONS AND IS THE FOUNDER OF KELLY COMMUNICATIONS INC. SHE LIVES IN THE U.S. ■

I WILL NOT DOUBT

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

I will not doubt though all my ships at sea
Come drifting home with broken masts and sails,
I shall believe the Hand which never fails,
From seeming evil worketh good to me.
And though I weep because those sails are
battered
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie shattered,
"I will trust in Thee!"

I will not doubt, though all my prayers return
Unanswered from the still, white realm above;
I shall believe it is an all-wise Love
Which has refused the things for which I yearn.
And though at times, I cannot keep from grieving,
Yet the pure ardor of my fixed believing
Undimmed shall burn.

I will not doubt, though sorrows fall like rain,
And troubles swarm like bees about a hive.
I will believe the heights for which I strive
Are only reached by anguish and by pain;
And though I groan and writhe beneath my
crosses,
Yet will I see through my severest losses
The greater gain.

I will not doubt. Well anchored is this faith,
Like some staunch ship, my soul braves every gale;
So strong its courage that it will not fail
To face the mighty unknown sea of death.
Oh, may I cry, though body leaves the spirit,
"I do not doubt," so listening worlds may hear it,
With my last breath. ■



NOT EVERY WAVE IS WORTH RIDING

BY DAVID BOLICK

WITH NO OTHER EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS AT THE TIME, my situation was not a happy one. My boss was making my life miserable. He was self-centered, ill-mannered, and crude; yet, like the clueless manager in the TV series *The Office*, he seemed to fancy himself everyone's best friend. Whenever I tried to explain the things that disturbed me, he would listen attentively and thank me, but then he would go on as before, without even a token change in his behavior. I lodged a complaint with his supervisor, but still nothing changed. It seemed I was doomed to work indefinitely in that stressful atmosphere with no control over incidents that ranged from mildly annoying to

outrageous. One of the latter finally drove me to desperation. There was nothing I could do about the situation, but my anger was about to destroy me if I didn't figure out how to manage it. Thankfully, when I sought God's help, He came through and showed me a little trick that helped me survive that stressful situation, as well as several similar ones since. Bringing to mind one of my favorite sports, body surfing, He showed me a picture of myself bobbing in the swells, waiting for a wave to ride. Surfers don't try to ride every wave, but wait for those that are worth expending time and energy on. When lesser waves come along, instead of paddling furiously to try

to get on top of them, they give a little scissor kick, which lifts them high enough in the water for the wave to pass beneath them, while they wait for one that is worth riding. Unpleasant incidents like the one that was getting me all worked up, I realized, were like those lesser waves. I should just let them pass. Mental gimmick? Maybe. But it worked. With a little practice, I learned to float over those bothersome situations, rather than let them wear me out. DAVID BOLICK IS A MEDICAL TOURISM FACILITATOR AND COFOUNDER OF MEDI TRAVEL SOLUTIONS. HE LIVES IN GUADALAJARA, MEXICO. ■



A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE
BY ABI F. MAY

THE BIBLE CONTAINS A LOT OF GUIDANCE FOR HOW TO SPEND OUR TIME AND ENERGY: We're to love and help others,¹ share the good news of God's love,² and apply ourselves in our work,³ to name a few. But the Bible also teaches that sometimes it is best to stay put and let God work on our behalf. "I'm going fishing," Simon Peter told his fellow disciples.⁴ "We are going with you also," they replied. This was in the weeks following Jesus' death. The disciples had seen Him twice since His resurrection,⁵ but it seems they were still at a loss as to what to do next. Some of them had

1. See John 15:12; Matthew 19:21.
2. See Mark 16:15.
3. See 1 Thessalonians 4:11.
4. Read this story in John 21:3–13.
5. See John 21:14.
6. See Matthew 4:18, 21.

been fishermen before Jesus had called them to follow Him,⁶ and perhaps going back to their former occupation seemed like the logical choice—plus it was something they could *do*. But sometimes doing doesn't get us very far. It didn't get Simon and his fishing partners very far that day. "They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing." Many of us can relate. We keep ourselves busy, actively doing things, but not always getting very far or accomplishing much. Picture the disciples the next morning, tired, discouraged, and hungry. They had worked all night and received nothing for their labors. To top things off, an apparent stranger calls from the shore: "Have you any food?" No, they didn't have any! It took the stranger's instruction to "cast the net on the right side of

the boat" for any of them to begin to guess that the stranger might be Jesus. They did as the Master told them, and this time they did land some fish—153, to be exact. However, when they arrived at the shore, they saw fish already roasting over an open fire, and fresh bread. They had not needed to fish all night after all. Their Lord was more than able to satisfy their needs. The next time you feel like your efforts aren't getting you anywhere, remember that God doesn't expect or want us to always be doing something; sometimes He wants us to simply *be*. A few moments of quiet reflection before starting a busy day can make all the difference to the outcome of that day. Be with God at the start, and He will be with you throughout. ABI F. MAY IS AN EDUCATOR AND AUTHOR IN GREAT BRITAIN, AND AN ACTIVATED STAFF WRITER. ■



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

REALITY CHECK

If you're like most people today, you're used to moving fast and expecting quick results. The problem with that—or at least part of the problem—is that what was enough yesterday seldom seems to be enough today, and escalating personal expectations carry over to what you expect from other people and from life in general.

You struggle to keep pace with the world, but at the same time you can't help that some things simply take time. Most problems at work or with your health or relationships can't be solved with the click of a mouse or the push of a button.

Sometimes life is just tough, and sometimes it stays that way for a while. There's always a way out of a difficulty when you look to Me for guidance and help, but it often takes time for Me to work in your and others' minds and hearts. Even when problems drag on and you feel mentally exhausted or emotionally drained, I am by your side, ready to renew your spirit and give you the patience and perseverance to hang on as we work through those problems together.

I don't promise a trouble-free life. I won't wave a magic wand and remove your problems and struggles, but I can give you superhuman resources to enable you to withstand adversity, to hold your head high through the storm, and in time to come out stronger and better equipped to face the next challenge.