

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# activated

Vol 16 • Issue 9

## ONE HUNDRED PERCENT COVERAGE

God for everyone

## The Therapy Room

Healing and strengthening

## Like a Dog with Two Tails

Happy in the presence



## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION MOUNTAIN MOVERS

I've always wondered what Jesus meant when He said, "If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move."<sup>1</sup> I've never heard of mountains moving—and I've certainly never moved a mountain—so why did He choose that analogy?

Over time, I've come to realize that while my faith hasn't moved any literal mountains, even a little bit of faith—faith the size of a tiny mustard seed—*can* overcome mountainous obstacles in our lives.

The difficulty with this is that the outcome is often not as obvious as a mountain moving and falling into the sea. Christian author Kent Crockett put it this way: "Faith is the ability to look past adverse circumstances and see God's hand at work." That ability can be hard to gauge, and that's why we often wonder if our faith is real.

In Hebrews 11, Paul lists characters from the Old Testament who lived their entire lives in faith, but never got to see the final fulfillment of what they were hoping for—the kingdom of God on earth. Yet their faith was not wasted: among other things along the way, "these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength."<sup>2</sup>

I hope the articles and personal accounts in this issue of *Activated* will be a blessing to you in deepening your relationship with God, the Author and Finisher of our faith.<sup>3</sup>

Samuel Keating  
Executive Editor

1. Matthew 17:20 NLT
2. Hebrews 11:33–34 NLT
3. See Hebrews 12:2.

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# LIKE A DOG WITH TWO TAILS

BY KOOS STENGER

**THERE SHE WAS AT THE DOOR,** jumping up and down for joy, barking and wagging her tail, as if to say: “He’s back!” After a long and tiring day, I received the most wonderful welcome from our black Labrador retriever.

It made me feel good. I smiled and gave her the attention she wanted. After all, a dog is man’s best friend.

But then a funny thought struck me: *Am I just as excited when I meet with Jesus?*

I’ll be honest: I have a way to go.

I treasure prayer, and I enjoy studying my Bible, but compared to my dog’s sincere outburst of joy, I realize my enthusiasm could be greater.

Why *is* my dog so happy to see me? I suppose the answer is as simple as it is deep. It’s because she treasures being with me. She isn’t only happy because she knows I feed her and take her on

long walks through the fields. She’s happy because *she wants to be with me.*

When I read about the heroes of faith, I notice they had the same attitude.

These men and women of God *liked* to pray. They *liked* to read God’s Word. They looked forward to the moment they could spend time with their Lord. They loved being with Him early in the morning, late at night ... and almost constantly throughout the day.

Is that enthusiasm reserved for the great heroes of faith? What about average people like me?

For a while, I thought I had that excitement in my relationship with God, but after seeing my dog today, I’m looking at it a bit differently.

Sometimes my time with God feels flat, because I’ve got my

priorities wrong. I’m not seeking God because I like to be with Him, but because I have selfish reasons of my own. I’m sad, or lonely, or sick, or struggling to pay the bills, or all of these things. In short, I need something from Him.

It’s not wrong to pray for needs. Jesus wants us to do that. But in our relationship with God, we should want to be with Him because we *like* it. Oswald Chambers said: “The goal of prayer is that we get closer to God. It’s not that our prayers are answered.”

I’m going to take that lesson to heart.

Funny that I had to learn it from my dog.

KOOS STENGER IS A FREELANCE WRITER IN THE NETHERLANDS. ■

# WHAT FAITH KNOWS

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

WHEN I LOOK AT SOME OF THE MEN AND WOMEN IN THE BIBLE, at a quick glance they seem to be so confident, so certain of everything. Next to such seemingly unwavering faith, we can start to feel a little unsure of our own faith.

Perhaps that's because we're seeing the miracles they experienced through the perspective of hindsight. But try to put yourself in their shoes. Consider how impossible the situation must have seemed for them at the time when they couldn't see the outcome.

For example, look at the three Hebrew men who were about to be thrown into the fiery furnace for not bowing down and worshipping the

golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.<sup>1</sup> It might look like they were glowing with confidence in front of the head of the largest empire of their day, certain that nothing could happen to them in that fiery furnace. But could it be that they also battled fear and the uncertainty of what would happen?

It's true that their friend Daniel held a great deal of power and influence, and he might have been able to stand up for them and rescue them from their fate, but he is not mentioned in regard to this event and may have been away on a trip to another part of the empire. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were on their own, standing up for what they knew was right; and there they were before a king who saw himself as God, surrounded by the king's jealous counselors who may have

seen these Hebrews as a threat to their power. Those angry counselors had probably been instrumental in whipping up the king's fury against the three Hebrew men.


Despite the bold declaration of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that they would trust in God no matter what happened, they were human and prone to the same fears that any one of us facing such a horrifying fate would experience.

Faith isn't the absence of fear; faith is what overcomes fear. My guess is that they dreaded what was about to happen with everything in them, but they still knew what they had to do. Their faith didn't seem to be based on any assumption that their bodies would miraculously be impervious to the heat and fire. At least, that's not what their words in the Bible indicate.

1. See Daniel chapter 3.

2. Daniel 3:17–18 NIV

3. See Deuteronomy 31:6.



They said, “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”<sup>2</sup>

They didn’t know what would happen, but they had faith that God was in control. Their faith was in the fact that no matter what, they knew God had a plan, and they trusted Him to take care of them as He saw fit. They weren’t setting conditions according to what seemed best to them. They didn’t tell the king that their bodies couldn’t be burned. Of course they knew that God could do anything, but they weren’t basing their faith on God keeping them from

burning up in the furnace. Their faith was in God’s love and power, not in the results they thought would be best.

We know that God will ultimately make things right in the next life, but that knowledge doesn’t lessen the struggles of possibly facing very painful experiences or death. At this moment in time, it’s not the next life that we have to deal with, it’s the present.

You may feel afraid of what you’re facing. You may not see anything you can do to fix the situation you’re in. But God’s intervention in your life isn’t based on your self-confidence. It’s based on your belief in Him and your trust in His unlimited power, goodness, and love. You don’t have to believe that what you want to happen will always happen. You just have to believe that God can bring

about what is best in His time and His way, because you trust Him.

Faith knows what is most important to know: God will never leave you nor forsake you.<sup>3</sup>

None of us knows what lies ahead. We often can’t know if that setback we’re facing or the things we’re suffering will be gone in a minute or a month, or if they will last a lifetime. Our faith can’t be built on expected results that make sense to us. What faith knows is that Jesus will not leave us comfortless; He’ll be there walking with us through the fire, as He was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

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



# BECKONING ME ONWARDS

BY ROSANE PEREIRA

I GREW UP IN A CHRISTIAN FAMILY, but at 13 I became an atheist. When I was 18, I left my hometown of Rio with a backpack and set off to see the world. I visited the British Isles, then crossed the Channel and took a bus overland to India, through Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. I learned that Arabic speakers use the same expression, *As-salamu alaykum*—the peace of God be with you—for hello and goodbye. Once in a little town in Afghanistan, I heard a boy singing a beautiful song in his father’s tailor shop. When I asked what he was singing, he said, “The Koran, of course.” When I arrived in Goa, I stayed with a group of French young people who would sit in their hut and spend hours silently contemplating a lit candle on the table.

I remember thinking, *There must be a God. Everywhere I go, people are seeking Him.* Soon I found my Christian roots again and became a missionary, and that’s when I began learning what having faith really meant.

In my experience, as you pass the tests of life one by one, you will find that faith beckons you onwards. It keeps you going when setbacks and discouragement scream that you should give up. It’s a still small voice that tells you in the midst of turmoil that everything is going to be all right. Faith grows through the challenges we overcome day by day.

ROSANE PEREIRA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND WRITER IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

If God would give us all the gifts and everything that He is able to give, but withhold only Himself, we would remain hungry and unsatisfied. The inward stirring and touching of God makes us hungry and yearning; for the Spirit of God hunts our spirit, and the more it touches it, the greater our hunger and our craving. And this is the life of love in its highest working, above reason and above understanding; for reason can here neither give nor take away from love, for our love is touched by the divine love.—*John of Ruysbroeck (1293–1381), adapted*

Religion leaves a million questions unanswered and apparently unanswerable. . . . Religion does not relieve us from the duty of thought; it makes it possible for a man to begin thinking. It does not put an end to research and enquiry, it gives a basis from which real research is made possible and fruitful of results.—*G. A. Studdert Kennedy in The Wicket Gate (1923)*



# THE THERAPY ROOM

BY ANNA THERESA KOLTES

A FRIEND OF MINE RECENTLY HAD A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE. While at work, a dog bite took off part of her finger. Weeks of pain, surgeries, casts, pills, anesthesia ... and it still wasn't the end of the story. Her finger had gone into "shock mode"—any touch brought on fresh pain. It seemed almost paralyzed.

Two months later, I accompanied her to the physiotherapy clinic for one of her weekly sessions. By then, her finger had "petrified" from the trauma, and it would take many more weeks of gentle flexing and motion exercises until it would be normal again.

As I sat there, I watched the other patients in the therapy room, stretching, weightlifting, exercising. They were all different ages and had sustained varied injuries, so the

physiotherapists were coaching each through their own personal program.

We all suffer blows at some stage in our lives—physical, mental, spiritual ... sometimes all three. When a crisis hits, our faith takes a blow, and we can go into "shock mode," where moving, let alone moving *forward*, feels impossible.

The therapy room reminded me how fragile we are. We depend on professionals to help and guide us. We trust that they know what they're doing, they know what our body needs, and we surrender to the healing process.

In the same way, God wants to fortify our faith, mend our wounds, and soothe our spirits, if we'll let Him. "The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes

to the rescue each time."<sup>1</sup> And He promised, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."<sup>2</sup>

We can't always prevent the faith shakers from coming our way. That's just life. But it's nothing to be afraid of. As long as we keep coming back to the therapy room to God's welcoming arms and the strength of His Word, we will find the comfort we need, along with the power to heal and move again.

ANNA THERESA KOLTES IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND GLOBETROTTER. ■

## Dear Jesus,

Sometimes I feel broken, even shattered, stunned by life's events and challenges. I'm so glad You came into this world to save us.<sup>3</sup> I receive You as God's Son, my Savior, and ask You to make me whole again.

1. Psalm 34:17–19 NLT
2. 2 Corinthians 12:9
3. See John 3:16.



# 100% COVERAGE

BY KEITH PHILLIPS, ADAPTED

**AROUND 40% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION HAS INTERNET ACCESS.** That's more than three billion people. Instead of hunting through books or doing research at a physical location, we can find information we need by typing a few key words and clicking "search." Within seconds, links to thousands of websites appear on our screen. Admittedly this can be a bit hit and miss. There's a lot of material to skim, and not everything you do find is reliable, but there's no arguing that the Internet puts a world of information at our fingertips.

Wouldn't it be great, though, if instead of merely supplying us with information, the Internet could actually provide guidance, answer our deep questions about the meaning of life, help organize and direct our daily lives, and satisfy our emotional and spiritual needs? The Internet will never be able to do all those things,

of course, but God can. God put in us all the needed hardware and software for us to access Him when He created us. We can reach Him anytime, from anywhere, for free, and it's *never* hit and miss.

All that is necessary to power up our system is faith. We get that faith by reading up on our equipment in the Maker's manual, the Bible. Faith-building tips and testimonials can also be found in feedback from those who are already powered up and enjoying the benefits. Let's connect with our interactive God, so we all can receive, enjoy, and benefit from what He has to offer.

Seven billion people have access to God. That's 100% coverage.

KEITH PHILLIPS WAS *ACTIVATED'S* EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FOR 14 YEARS FROM 1999 TO 2013. HE AND HIS WIFE CARYN NOW WORK WITH THE HOMELESS IN THE U.S. ■

## THE VOID

King Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes, had wealth beyond measure, wisdom beyond any man of his time or ours, hundreds of women, palaces and gardens that were the envy of kingdoms, the best food and wine, and every form of entertainment available. . . . And yet he summed up "life under the sun"—life lived as though all there is to life is what we can see with our eyes and experience with our senses—is meaningless. Why is there such a void? Because God created us for something beyond what we can experience in the here-and-now. Solomon said of God, "He has also set eternity in the hearts of men."<sup>1</sup> In our hearts we are aware that the "here-and-now" is not all that there is. —*Courtesy of GotQuestions.org*

1. Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV





# A LIFE ABOVE THE ORDINARY

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG, ADAPTED

THE SECRET OF DRAWING CLOSER TO GOD IS PRAYER AND COMMUNION WITH HIM THROUGH MEDITATING ON HIS WORD. But it's not just quickly opening your Bible. I'm sure that the failure of many Christians to gain much from meditation arises far more often from opening their Bibles too quickly than from shutting them too quickly!

When opening your Bible, ask God to reveal to you the riches of what you're going to read.<sup>1</sup> Your prayer can be very simple, such as, "Holy Spirit, help me to get in touch with God,"

1. See 1 Corinthians 2:10.

2. See Matthew 5:6.

3. See Hebrews 5:12.

4. See John 10:10.

5. John 14:27

6. John 16:24 CEB

7. See Psalm 1:3.

8. Psalm 73:26 NIV

but it has to be a sincere cry from the heart, a real hungering and thirsting.<sup>2</sup>

You can't survive spiritually on just a few sips of the milk of the Word on Sunday morning or an occasional nibble of a verse or two from the Bible. In order to grow morally and spiritually, you also need full meals; you need to chew on and assimilate the meat of God's Word.<sup>3</sup> That's how you can come to know the joys, the benefits, the comfort, the peace and rest that can be found in Jesus—and the closer the walk with Him, the greater the revelations of His power and glory.

Jesus wants you to have the things He has to give.<sup>4</sup> He wants to give you His best, and He longs for you to have peace and rest and joy. He says, "My peace I give to you,"<sup>5</sup> and "Ask and you will receive so that your joy will be complete."<sup>6</sup> He even desires for you to succeed in all that you do!<sup>7</sup>

He wants His children to have all this because He loves us. He wants you

to draw closer to Him so you'll know the life He comes to give: a life above the common, a life above the mediocre, a life above the ordinary. "God is the strength of my heart and all I need forever."<sup>8</sup>

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS AN AMERICAN EVANGELIST AND AUTHOR. READ MORE ABOUT HER LIFE AND WORK AT [HTTP://VIRGINIABRANDTBERG.ORG/](http://virginiabrandtberg.org/). ■

Just a closer walk with Thee,  
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea.  
I am weak, but Thou art strong  
Jesus, keep me from all wrong.

I'll be satisfied as long  
As I walk, let me walk close to Thee.

—Traditional gospel song, author  
unknown



Divine Scripture is the feast of wisdom,  
and the single books are the various  
dishes.—Saint Ambrose (c. 339–397)

# READING TIPS

BY DENNIS EDWARDS



“WHERE DO I START?” is probably the most common question asked by people starting out reading the Bible.

I remember my first attempts when I was a young man. I started at the beginning, but didn’t get too far, losing interest by the time I got to Leviticus, a book full of ancient laws.

Later, when I began developing a personal relationship with Jesus, I discovered that I was better able to understand what I was reading. Paul tells us, “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”<sup>1</sup> Once you personally know the “author,” the book becomes a lot more interesting.

I enjoy reading through the book of Psalms quite frequently. These are often actual prayers and can help us to verbalize our own requests. A psalm may start out in anguish and despair, but it usually ends in praise and thanksgiving. There are 150 psalms, and if you read five

a day, you’ll get through the book in a month. There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs, which makes reading one per day for a month convenient.

The Gospels are always a joy to read and are easy to get through. I go through them a few times a year and find they’re the best for helping me to stay close to Jesus and keep my life in check.

Another tip is to ask God to help you understand what He wants you to learn from your reading. I often claim the verse “Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your law.”<sup>2</sup> When I come to a passage I don’t understand, I research it further or put it on the shelf of faith and leave it for another time.

You never go wrong reading the Bible. It is food for your soul and will give you strength for life’s battles.

DENNIS EDWARDS IS A RETIRED TEACHER WHO WORKS WITH A PORTUGUESE NGO INVOLVED IN SUPPLYING EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR POOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONS. ■

1. 1 Corinthians 2:14

2. Psalm 119:18



# It's All Right

BY ELDORA SICHROVSKY

**THOSE WERE THE WORDS  
UTTERED BY A WOMAN  
NEARLY 3,000 YEARS AGO  
WHOSE ONLY SON HAD JUST  
DIED IN HER ARMS.** Hours earlier, he had complained of a headache after returning from harvesting the fields with his father. She had sat him on her lap and tried to cool his burning forehead, but by noon he was gone.

Her son had been her delight. And no words can adequately describe the shock, pain, and sense of loss she must have felt. This makes what she did next quite extraordinary. Apparently without breaking the news of their son's death to her husband, she set off on the journey to Mount Carmel, where she knew that she would find the prophet Elisha. Her husband was surprised and asked her why she wanted to go.

1. Read the full account in 2 Kings 4:18–35.

Her only explanation was a confident statement: “It’s all right.”

From his vantage point upon the mountain, Elisha saw her riding rapidly toward him and sent his servant Gehazi to ask her if all was well. She gave Gehazi the same reply she had given her husband: “It’s all right.”

When she reached Elisha, she threw herself at his feet and cried, “Did I ask you for a son, my lord? Didn’t I tell you, ‘Don’t raise my hopes?’” Elisha understood her meaning instantly: Several years earlier, in gratitude for her hospitality and generosity toward him, he had prophesied that she would have a son, and God had fulfilled His promise. That was the son who now lay dead.

Elisha was deeply moved by her faith to reach out to him in the midst of her anguish. Having arrived back at her house, he went into the room where the boy’s body lay, closed

the door, and prayed desperately. Eventually, the little boy sneezed seven times ... and opened his eyes!<sup>1</sup>

While I have never faced as extreme a situation as this woman, there have been times lately when challenges and problems seemed to ambush me from out of the blue, and my life seemed to go to pieces. The next time I’m tempted to become alarmed and panicky, I hope I can remember how, in the midst of terrifying uncertainty, this nameless woman held to what she knew to be unchanging: the faithfulness of God. She put her son into God’s hands and trusted Him to work everything out. Her faith even enabled her to anticipate the miracle and declare, “It’s all right.”

ELDORA SICHROVSKY IS INVOLVED IN MISSIONARY VOLUNTEER WORK AND LIVES WITH HER FAMILY IN TAIWAN. ■



# THE BLOCKED CARD

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA V.

**NOT LONG AGO**, when we checked our credit card statement after buying an airline ticket, we discovered that the airline had charged us twice. We contacted the airline in the hope of correcting the error right away to avoid the charge and interest that it would incur. After three futile and time-consuming phone calls to the company's call center, we felt irritated and helpless. Then we called our bank and were advised to block the credit card until we could find a solution.

It turned out to be too hasty a decision. After searching the airline's website, my wife found detailed instructions on how to proceed in the event of an overcharge. We sent an email with the necessary details, and within a few days, we received a gracious reply notifying us that the

money would be reimbursed to our account.

In the meantime, we had to deal with the consequences of having blocked our card. First, we had to deactivate our old card and then activate a new card. We also had to fill out, scan, and email pages of forms and make two trips to the bank.

All these wasted hours could have been avoided if we had not been so hasty. Our attempts to speed up the process ended up making things much more complicated.

There are times when we try to push our way through a problem instead of giving God time to work or waiting for things to run their natural course. When we feel inclined to rush into a situation, it is a good idea to take time in communion with God. Instead of intervening on our

own, we can pray for a solution to the problem and seek heaven's guidance on how to proceed.

The Bible calls us to work in the Spirit rather than in our own natural strength. To take off running to win the 100-meter dash is fine for athletes like Usain Bolt, the Jamaican sprinter; but even he has to watch his step, because he lost the opportunity to defend his 100-meter world sprint title in 2011 due to jumping the gun.

My conclusion is to go slower, give God time to work, let things flow, and act with deliberation. The next time I am tempted to rush off on an impulse, I plan to wait instead for God's leading.

GABRIEL GARCÍA V. IS THE EDITOR OF THE SPANISH EDITION OF *ACTIVATED* AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN CHILE. ■

POINTS TO PONDER

THE FAITH AND  
PEACE CONNECTION

You will keep him in perfect peace,  
whose mind is stayed on You,  
because he trusts in You.—*Isaiah*  
26:3

God, teach me to be patient;  
Teach me to go slow.  
Teach me how to wait on You  
When my way I do not know.  
Teach me sweet forbearance  
When things do not go right,  
So I remain unruffled  
When others grow uptight.  
Teach me how to quiet  
My racing, rising heart,  
So I may hear the answer  
You are trying to impart.  
Teach me to let go, dear God,  
And pray undisturbed until  
My heart is filled with inner peace  
And I learn to know Your will!  
—*Helen Steiner Rice (1900–1981)*

1. John 14:27
2. See Mark 4:35–41.
3. Philippians 4:6–7 NIV
4. See Acts 16:22–26.
5. See Proverbs 3:5.

Jesus promises us peace. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”<sup>1</sup>

Just as Jesus calmed the stormy sea when His disciples thought their ship was sinking and they were about to drown,<sup>2</sup> He can calm the storms of life and give you inner peace that passes all understanding.<sup>3</sup>

He did it for Paul and Silas, when they were beaten and thrown into prison. Instead of despairing, they sang praises to God—and were suddenly and miraculously set free!<sup>4</sup>

As you learn to trust in God with all your heart,<sup>5</sup> you’ll find that He can give you perfect peace—no matter what is going on around you!  
—*Rafael Holding*

Trust doesn’t just happen. As children, we learn to trust our parents because we feel their love and benefit from their care and mature understanding of life. We trust friends who have stuck with us through thick and thin. We trust businesspeople who we find to be honest and reliable. We trust people, in short, because of our experience with them.

It’s the same with God. The more we open our hearts to Him, the more we experience His love and concern. The more we study the Bible and Bible-based materials, the better we understand life and the more we appreciate God’s wisdom and goodness. The more we learn and claim God’s promises, the more faith we have in them. The more we take our problems to Him, the more we learn to depend on Him to work them out. The better we get to know Him, the more we trust Him; and the more we trust Him, the more inner peace we have.—*Keith Phillips* ■



BY MISTY KAY

# Pancakes and Pudding

MY NINE- AND TEN-YEAR-OLDS CAME WHINING TO ME AGAIN.

“Mommy, Chalsey’s taking all the LEGO blocks!”

“Davin always gets the best pieces!”

Kristy, my five-year-old, was crying. “It’s not fair! I want to build an airplane, but they won’t let me.”

This had been going on all afternoon, one thing after another. No matter how many toys they had, they couldn’t just have fun together. I shot up a quick prayer for an illustration that would help us to get a grip on the problem.

“Who likes plain, dry pancakes?” I asked. The kids froze and looked surprised at my sudden change of subject. “Plain pancakes with nothing on them—just dry, get-stuck-in-your-throat pancakes?”

“Not me!” they all cried in unison.

“I see. So when you asked me to make pancakes yesterday, you didn’t

want plain pancakes. You wanted pancakes and pudding.” It had been a special Father’s Day breakfast of hot pancakes smothered in creamy chocolate pudding.

“And when you’re playing, you don’t just want to play with plain toys, any more than you wanted plain pancakes. Just like the pudding made the pancakes delicious, your friendship is what makes the games fun. Even if you got every LEGO piece you wanted, your playtime could still be no fun. What makes it special is when you all play together. That’s when you really have a good time. You need ‘pancakes and pudding.’”

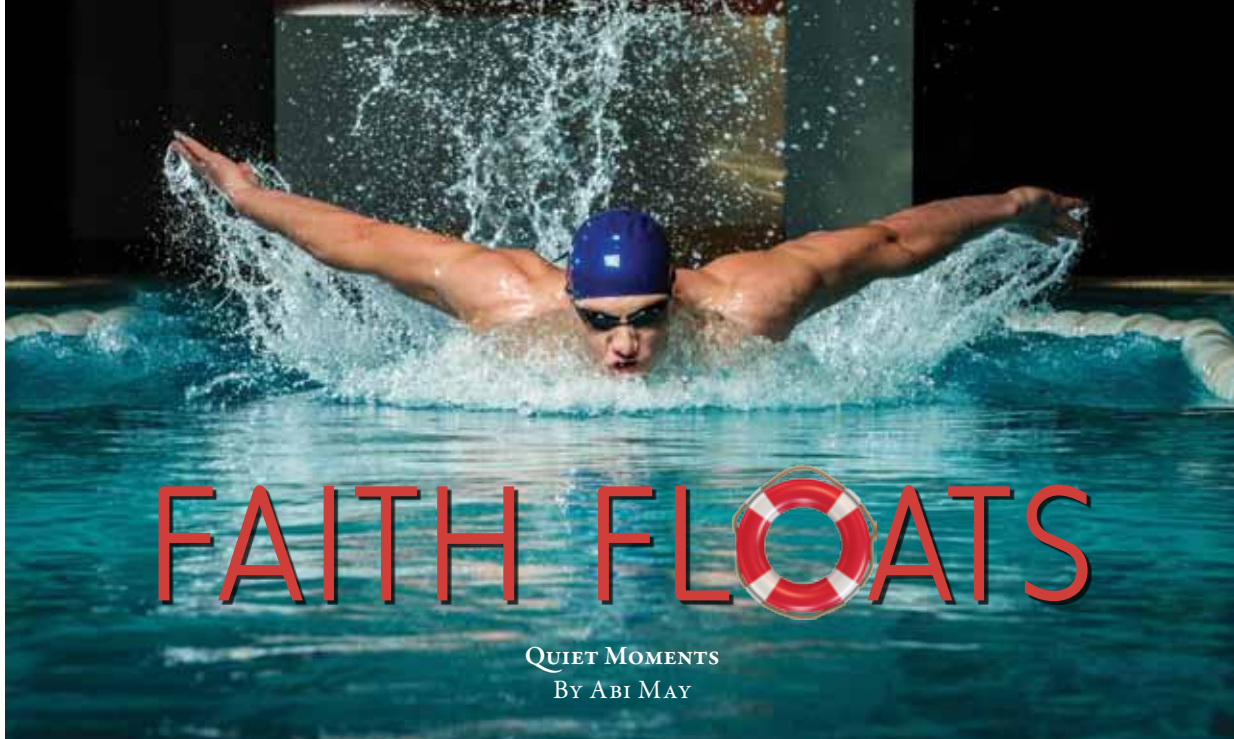
The children understood the illustration perfectly and decided to play a game together. It worked like magic. We were stuck in the house for the next few days due to bad weather, but no one seemed to mind. Any time tempers flared, I’d tell the kids, “The

pancakes need some more pudding.”

As I thought more about it later, I realized that lesson wasn’t only for my children. I sometimes work so hard to accomplish the goals I set for myself that I view everything else as a distraction. I want plain, uninterrupted work time, and then I wonder why my work feels so dry and unenjoyable.

If you too sometimes find that your day is crowded with worries, stress, and work, if you feel you’ve lost that spark, if you’re feeling a little dry, perhaps what you need to make your day complete is a heaping scoop of sweet, fresh “pudding.”

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# FAITH FLOATS

QUIET MOMENTS  
BY ABI MAY

**“To have faith is to trust yourself to the water. When you swim you don’t grab hold of the water, because if you do you will sink and drown. Instead you relax, and float.”—Alan Watts (1915–1973)**

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**COMPARING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD TO SWIMMING ISN’T A BAD ANALOGY.** When you swim, you’re surrounded by water; it’s the element in which you move and survive. “In Him we live and move and have our being,” Paul proclaimed.<sup>1</sup>

Swimming instructor Jane Greene Pettersson wrote in a blog post: “Teaching swimming has taught me so much about fear itself. Fear keeps

us safe, but it also prevents us from moving forward. If you are frightened and try to hold on to the water, you can’t swim. It is only by letting go and trusting that the water will hold you up that you can learn to swim.”<sup>2</sup> Just so, letting go and trusting in God doesn’t always come naturally—some find it easier than others—it can be somewhat disconcerting—but it’s an essential element of our relationship with Him.

Swimmers immerse themselves in the water, knowing that in this environment they can do things they can’t do on dry land. They float, they flip, they dive deep, they thrust upwards, they speed along rapidly, they glide... Just so the person of faith, upheld by God, immersed in His love, has confidence to navigate their life and progress in ways that wouldn’t be possible without His support.

Confident swimmers are often happiest in the water. Liberated from the gravity of an earthbound

existence, they revel in the near weightlessness. When we’re trusting in God, we are freer, less weighed down with the concerns of our daily lives, because we are letting Him buoy us up. “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”<sup>3</sup>

But don’t be discouraged if you’re not a good swimmer, or even if you can’t swim at all. Not everyone swims, but each of us can be a person of faith. Faith is not about our own abilities or strength; it’s not really about anything within ourselves at all. Faith is an outward, not an inward look, toward God who is always there, ready to hold us up.


**Dear God, help me to trust You to hold me up. Give me faith in Your support in the midst of life’s challenges.**

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1. Acts 17:28

2. <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/the-swimming-blog/2014/jan/02/learning-to-swim-fear-of-swimming>

3. John 8:36 NIV



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# Never alone

You are precious in My sight. Even the very hairs of your head are numbered. I know your heart and your many thoughts. I want you to know that I am right here beside you, holding your hand. I am a constant help in time of trouble. Never think or feel that you are alone, for My presence is always with you, and My Spirit will give you help.

Come to Me, casting aside your cares and worries. My love for you is without measure, without end, without boundaries, eternal. Remember that. Keep your eyes steadfast on Me and on My love. Be reassured in your heart that I am with you always, holding your right hand.

Spend time with Me, and you will be refreshed and strengthened and inspired. I am close to the brokenhearted and rescue those whose spirits are crushed.<sup>1</sup> Trust in My love for you. Don't look at the waves. Don't look at the obstacles you find in your path that might discourage you, slow you down, or even stop you. Keep looking ahead. Look unto Me, for I will never let you down. I will never fail you.

Let your heart be filled with My love and joy and peace. You are Mine forever, and nothing will separate you from My love.

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1. See Psalm 34:18.