

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 17 • Issue 5



HE CARES

When your heart breaks

The Sound of Silence

Meditation tips

Jesus Is My Walkthrough

Showing the way through life



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION BEST FRIEND FOREVER

The Bible lets us know that we can expect to go through some difficult times while we're on this earth.¹ The good news is that it also promises that we won't have to go through them alone. "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."² "I know the Lord is

always with me. I will not be shaken."³

God loves for us to talk with Him, just as we would our closest friend, and He promises to be there for us when we do: "When you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me."⁴

He wants to hear about our burdens and for us to give Him all our cares, so that He can bring hope to our heart, peace to our soul, and strength to our life.⁵ Of course, God is not only interested in our struggles; He also wants us to talk with Him about *everything*, from our smallest victories to our greatest fears and everything in between.

Once Jesus comes into our lives, His presence is always with us. Sometimes we can feel it, sometimes not, but by faith we can say like King David of old: "The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time."⁶ While David had his difficult moments when he felt overwhelmed,⁷ ultimately he knew that God would never forsake him in times of trouble.—And neither will He forsake us.⁸

I hope this issue of *Activated* will be a blessing and encourage you that whatever happens, *you are not in this alone!*

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. See John 16:33.
2. Psalm 23:4 NIV
3. Psalm 16:8 NLT
4. Jeremiah 29:12–13 NLT

5. See 1 Peter 5:7.
6. Psalm 34:19 NLT
7. See Psalm 61:2.
8. See Hebrews 13:5.

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UNTIL THE SHADOWS FLEE

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

THE OTHER NIGHT, I was awakened by a phone call that needed my urgent attention. Pulling myself from deep sleep, I had to quickly dress, grab my car keys, and run out the door to take care of a small emergency. Someone had had a minor accident late at night and needed to be picked up. I was distraught, but at the same time couldn't stop thinking how things could have been so much worse. So I tried to calm my anxious heart for the next hour as I attended to the details and got everybody safely home.

As I drove on unfamiliar streets trying to find my way in the middle of the night, I prayed for everyone who had been involved and for wisdom and protection. Mostly, I thanked God that He takes care of us so wonderfully, even in difficult circumstances and even despite mistakes and blunders.

Several hours later, finally back in bed, I continued to pray and commit all these things to God's hands. I reviewed some Bible verses and listened to some inspirational devotionals. Alone with Jesus in the darkness of the night, I felt the long hours slip away.

As time crawled by, I realized that I was not at all sleepy. The adrenaline that had surged through my

body and completely awoken me when I needed to jump into action was still affecting me. So I just lay there, listening, praying, and trusting until I saw the first hint of light of the new day outside the window. Then I fell into a deep sleep for the next few hours and awoke remarkably refreshed and prepared for the day ahead.

It was an unusual night and the type I am thankful not to have to go through often. But even though I couldn't control my reactions to the stress of the night, I felt loved and cared for. Even though I couldn't sleep, I rested in God's arms, and it was enough. Even though bad things happen sometimes, He protects us from worse accidents and bigger problems.

The shadows of a night can be long. We can feel lost, confused, and stressed, but we do not have to face the darkness alone. When we call on Him, God is always there, helping, keeping, comforting, until the day dawns and the shadows flee away.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A TEACHER AND WRITER, AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, USA. ■

FEELING CLOSE TO JESUS



BY MARIA FONTAINE

I'VE OFTEN HEARD PEOPLE SAY THINGS LIKE, "I must not be close to Jesus because I don't *feel* close to Him." But the Bible makes it clear that we're not supposed to go by our feelings or how things appear to be on the surface. "We walk by faith, not by sight."¹

If we rely on our feelings as an indicator of how we're doing

1. 2 Corinthians 5:7
2. Jeremiah 31:3
3. Isaiah 54:10
4. Hebrews 13:5
5. See 2 Corinthians 5:7.
6. 1 Timothy 6:12
7. See James 4:7.
8. James 4:8
9. See 1 John 3:20.
10. See Psalm 103:8; 37:24.
11. 1 John 1:9
12. Psalm 51:17
13. Psalm 145:18
14. Psalm 34:18

spiritually, we're going to be unstable. We'll be tossed to and fro by the various feelings that happen to come along, and we'll never be able to anticipate how we're going to be doing tomorrow, because that would be determined by how we feel when we get up in the morning.

Regardless of how we may happen to feel, we can know that our relationship with Jesus is firm and that His love for us is unwavering. He says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love,"² "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you,"³ and "I will never leave you nor forsake you."⁴

WALKING BY FEELINGS INVITES DISCOURAGEMENT

If you're operating according to your feelings, you might be feeling terrible a lot of the time because there's a lot of negative in the world today,

not to mention the lies and doubts of the devil! When you are flooded with negative thoughts, you can begin to think you're a failure or a hopeless case, until you end up totally defeated, discouraged, and in despair. Then it's easy to think negative thoughts such as, *I certainly am not close to Jesus! In fact, He must not love me, because look how terrible I feel!*

When you're relying on your feelings, your emotions can wreak havoc and make you feel very far from God. When you're walking by sight⁵ instead of faith, you're more vulnerable to doubt. When besieged with such doubts, you've got to "fight the good fight of faith"⁶ and resist the devil and his lies.⁷

IF YOU DON'T FEEL CLOSE TO JESUS, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT

When my daughter was small and I would tuck her into bed, she would



say, “I’m going to snuggle up in Jesus’ arms now.” She could imagine that, and I’m glad she could, but I’ve never had that kind of imagination. I don’t feel like I’m resting on Jesus’ breast when I go to sleep. I’m not that imaginative, and that’s just the way I am.

Some people are able to enjoy things like that, whereas others of us can’t. Some of us are much more emotional and “feely” than others. But if I allowed myself to be worried just because I don’t feel a big emotional closeness to Jesus, I’d be constantly down! I just have to take things by faith. There aren’t too many verses in the Bible about feelings, but there are a lot about faith and trusting God and believing His Word.

You can know if you’re close to Jesus because His Word promises that if you “draw nigh to God ... He will draw nigh to you.”⁸ Even if you

can’t feel any closeness at all, you can know you are close to Him if you’re doing your best to draw close to Him and to love and please Him.

WHAT IF YOU’VE MADE MISTAKES?

Of course, when we know we haven’t lived up to what Jesus expects, it’s easy to feel guilty. *Oh, I can’t possibly be close to Him because of all my faults and shortcomings!* But don’t let the devil—or even your own heart—condemn you.⁹ If you’re sorry for your mistakes and sincerely desire to be close to Him, He will be merciful and gracious to you.¹⁰ “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”¹¹ “A broken and a contrite heart, He will not despise.”¹²

If you sincerely want to please Jesus, He will certainly “draw nigh unto you” when you call out to Him.

The Bible promises, “The Lord is near to all who call upon Him in truth,”¹³ and “The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.”¹⁴

So regardless of any feelings of discouragement, guilt, or remorse that you may be experiencing, if you know you’re truly seeking to love and please Jesus and follow His Word, then you can trust that you *are* close to Him—whether you happen to *feel* that way or not!

In fact, sometimes people are the closest to Jesus when they feel the furthest from Him. For example, when we’re humbled by our own mistakes and shortcomings, we don’t usually feel so inspired or close to God, but we may actually be very close to Him. There are also times when some people may feel that they are very close to Him when in fact they may not be close to Him at



all—particularly if they’re trusting in their own works or goodness instead of His goodness, grace, and mercy.

Sometimes we feel bad because God is speaking to our hearts, convicting us of a sin, or trying to warn us about something. So when we’re feeling bad, we should examine our hearts and actions to find out why we’re feeling that way or what God may be trying to show us.¹⁵

THE KEY TO CLOSENESS

How do you know if you’re close to Jesus? How do you get close to Him? You do that by reading and following His Word. Jesus promised, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”¹⁶ So if you’re loving Him

and keeping His Word, then of course you’re close to Him. He’s made His home in your heart, and that’s pretty close! It’s as simple as that.

BEING CLOSE TO JESUS

We may sometimes experience certain thrills of the spirit—the spiritual high of helping someone find Jesus, or when God’s Word has spoken loudly and clearly to us—which are a token of God’s love and a special encouragement from Him. But we can’t expect those feelings, and we shouldn’t get discouraged or feel that something is wrong with us or our connection with the Lord if they don’t happen.

You’re not always going to be excited and feel inspired and be jumping up and down for joy. Sometimes you’re hungry or tired. Sometimes you’re sick. Sometimes it’s a struggle to keep your mind on the fact that

Jesus loves and cares about you, and that if you hang on long enough, He will pull you through.

So sometimes you might not feel close to Jesus, and other times you might. But don’t let that worry you. Even if you don’t *feel* close to Jesus, you can still *be* close to Him, because closeness to Jesus is much more than a mere feeling!

What we want is to be close to Jesus! If you happen to feel close to Him, be thankful. But if you don’t happen to feel close to Jesus, don’t be discouraged. And remember, you can know you are close to Jesus if you love Him and are trying your best to please Him.

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15. See 2 Corinthians 13:5.

16. John 14:23



Spread It Around

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

TWO ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE are a sound personal relationship with the Creator of life, followed closely by sound relationships with those around us. In fact, it's impossible to be truly happy without either of those. Jesus gave us the key to both when He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"¹

The wonderful thing about the first is that you can't love God without experiencing His love in return. And when you do, you can't help but get excited about life. Knowing that you are His special creation whom He loves puts everything else into perspective, including those nagging little things about yourself that tend to bring you down. He made you the way He wanted you, but He's not done yet. You're a work in progress, and you can and should make a little progress every day with His help. Every day is a new challenge, a new chance, a new adventure, and anything is possible, because nothing is impossible for God!

When you take that approach, the second part to success in life—getting along well with others—follows naturally. You won't have trouble winning or

keeping friends, because your love, faith, and positiveness will draw others like a magnet.

That special closeness to God will also help you through the problems you face. He has everything you need—love, happiness, purpose, answers, and much more—and loving Him puts you in tune and in step with Him, right where you need to be to receive all He has for you. He's not way off in the blue, beyond your comprehension or reach. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you."² Enjoy it and spread it around! ■

THE TEACHER

As told by Father Tommy Lane

One day Mother Teresa took a woman off the streets of Calcutta. She had sores infested with bugs. Mother Teresa cleaned and dressed her sores while the woman never stopped shrieking and even using swear words and insults. Finally the woman asked,

"Sister, why do you do this? Not everyone behaves like you. Who taught you?"

Mother Teresa replied, "My God taught me."

The woman said she wanted to know her God. Mother Teresa kissed her on the forehead and said, "You know my God. My God is called love." ■

1. Matthew 22:37–39 NIV

2. Luke 17:21

Loving God for Himself—and Enjoying It!

BY JESSIE RICHARDS

A FEW YEARS AGO, I had a turning point in my relationship with God. Until then, I had been fixated on the *doing* of things that would make Him happy or proud and on *not doing* the things that would displease Him. And, then, of course, there was the aspect of *Him* doing things. There was the matter of things I would ask Him to do, and a lot of me reading into things He did that I hadn't asked Him to do—being discouraged when it seemed He was doing things that weren't in my interest, and getting hung up on trying to figure out why He was doing them.

Then I had an epiphany that made me look at God and my interactions with Him very differently. It came about as a result of something I read, about loving God for Himself, for who He is, and not for what He does for us. I'm sure I

had heard that before, but this time, it changed me.

I started thinking about what that meant for me—loving God for Himself. I started thinking more about *being* than *doing*—about being with God, enjoying Him, being the kind of person He would enjoy being around. I thought about getting to know His person, and about our deep spiritual connection—spirit with spirit, mind with mind. Each human soul is deep, complex, and not that easy to get to know or define—how much more so the God of all things? How could I have dumbed Him down so much?

I realized that I had been looking at Him almost as a caricature. Sometimes I saw Him as a kind of “cosmic genie” who ran around “magically” getting things for me and doing things for me (in the good times). Or doing things “to” me (in

the bad times). In other cases, my thoughts toward Him were as if He were a boss or “overlord” who always wanted me to do something for Him and take care of things for Him. A guy who had a list of expectations and was always keeping score.

After my epiphany, I tried to think along the lines of, *If God were a person, and I had a relationship with Him, what would we do together? What would we talk about? What would I share with Him? What would I want Him to share with me, and what would I ask Him about?*

The answer to that isn't clear or simple; but the core concept is that when we love someone and want to spend time with them, we don't usually spend that time talking about what we accomplished today, or what we did wrong, or going over our to-do list. There's a time and place for that, but building a loving



relationship is more about deep thoughts, feelings, and the things we care about. It's also not one-sided, with either side making all the requests or doing all the work.

So we walk together, or go for a jog, and we talk. While I walk or run, ideally in nature, I turn my thoughts toward Him. I try not to do all the talking. I try to listen. I avoid expecting anything in particular as far as the direction the conversation will go. I know that there's a time and place for asking for things in prayer, but to break bad habits, for a while I stopped asking for anything at all from Him during these times. I think thoughts of gratitude and praise. I focus on His attributes and character and nature—the things that He *is*, rather than the things that He *does*. I meditate on how I can be more like Him and like all the good things that He is. The one thing I ask

of Him during these conversations is to help me do that.

I've also learned to think differently about the idea of God “watching us.” I love people-watching. Whenever I'm in a restaurant or bar, an airport or train station, it's fascinating to me to observe what people do—from how they dress and how they walk or carry themselves to what they're reading to how they talk and interact with other people. I now think about the concept of “God watching us” more along the lines of me watching people. In other words, rather than thinking about Him examining and measuring everything I do and every word I say, and judging me, I think about how He must be enjoying observing what everyone is doing and saying and how we're interacting.

I imagine how I would feel if I made a huge Lego construction and

it all came to life, like in *The Lego Movie*. How much would I love watching that?! I realize that's a very simplistic way of looking at it, but I think there's something to the idea that God enjoys watching us and finds us fascinating. In the same sense that we love Him for Himself, He loves us for ourselves—for who we are, for what interests us, for what matters to us, for our peculiarities and preferences. He loves watching us, and He loves being with us.

JESSIE RICHARDS HAD A ROLE IN THE PRODUCTION OF *ACTIVATED* FROM 2001 TO 2012, AND HAS WRITTEN A NUMBER OF ARTICLES AS AN *ACTIVATED* STAFF WRITER. SHE HAS ALSO WRITTEN AND EDITED MATERIAL FOR OTHER CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS AND WEBSITES. ■

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

BY DAVEEN DANIELS

MY MORNING ROUTINE IS A BIT LIKE THIS: My alarm goes off and I lie in bed a moment longer to pray for the day ahead. After getting up, I'll give my inbox a quick scan, and then read or listen to something devotional and inspiring, sometimes distracted by my mail or to-do list. Then I'll get dressed, eat breakfast,

1. Psalm 63:6 NLT
2. Psalm 77:12 NIV
3. Psalm 119:15
4. See Exodus 34:28.
5. Mark 1:35 NIV
6. David Brandt Berg (1919–1994)
7. Psalm 46:10
8. Isaiah 30:15 NLT
9. KJV

and then I'm off to work.


My day is full of sounds and action; I'm listening, thinking, speaking, typing all day long, and when the day is over, I relax by reading or talking with a friend or watching something humorous. I even listen to audiobooks as I fall asleep. Life is constant mental processing. I'm receiving input and information and reacting and thinking all the time. I don't experience silence unless I carve out space for it, which I try to do daily.

For me, meditation is taking time to still my mind, to be silent, to breathe deeply, to be grateful and reflective. It's not a time when I try

to accomplish or achieve anything mentally. Meditation is something I'm naturally drawn to, and if I go for a few days without some form of meditation, I begin to feel it.

I grew up in a large family of 10 with lots of bustle, excitement, and noise. So from an early age I sought out solitude and quiet. During my teen years, I would climb onto a small ledge adjoining our balcony that overlooked our garden and giant jackfruit tree. There I would read and write, or sometimes just sit and think.

Lately, however, I've chosen to multitask my meditation with my exercise routine. While running or



walking, usually in a beautiful, peaceful place, I slip into meditation mode.

The world is full of information, music, media, and distractions. There's so much that can take you away from thinking—like watching something lighthearted after an especially grueling day. And while activities that take your mind off the day or your troubles can be relaxing, the purity and beauty of meditation is that it not only relaxes you, but it can also energize you to face the challenges of life.

I once read that meditation is a bit like pouring liquid into a strainer. Sometimes you have to wait for a liquid to pass through the strainer slowly before you can add more. As we meditate and reflect on God's Word, it's as if those words and that information is being poured into our hearts and minds slowly, and its reach is thorough and deep. This allows His Word to get beneath the surface of our mind and seep into our heart, and there water the seeds of change and growth.

Much like with eating, our body needs time to digest and assimilate the nutrients from the food in order

for us to benefit from it. Meditation on God's Word is like spiritually digesting what we read so that we can benefit from it fully.

The Bible talks a lot about meditation, especially in the book of Psalms, as King David was obviously an avid meditator: "I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night."¹ "I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds."² "I will meditate on your precepts, and contemplate your ways."³

Here's something I read recently:

Moses also knew a thing or two about getting alone with God. He had several million people sitting out in the middle of the desert, waiting on him and tearing their hair out, wondering, "What are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? Where are we going? What are we going to do?" And what did Moses do? He climbed to the top of a mountain and stayed there alone with the Lord for 40 days!⁴

Jesus also had to take time away from the crowds, and even away from His disciples and friends to commune with God and receive the strength

He needed to go forward and accomplish His purpose: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."^{5 6}



IT CAN BE HARD WORK GETTING QUIET!

God says to us, "Be still, and know that I am God"⁷ and "in quietness and confidence is your strength!"⁸ We have to make time to be quiet, though. 1 Thessalonians 4:11 even says that we need to "study to be quiet."⁹

Maybe you've tried taking some quiet time with God, and the minute you're still and waiting, your mind gets hit with hundreds of thoughts, worries, or reminders. If that's the case, it may help to have some props to help you to get into that restful mode. I've found that music clears my mind, so I've put together a playlist of songs that help me do this. Each person is different, though, and you'll have to discover how you enjoy meditating and what works best for



you right now. Just realize that those preferences or methods may change as you or your situation changes.

For example, if sitting still and doing nothing makes you antsy, then you could try meditating while on a walk or a bike ride. Or if being outdoors doesn't do it for you, find a cozy spot in your house or someplace else you enjoy being, and take your quiet time there. It doesn't matter what you do or where you are when you're meditating, the idea is to take some time alone, where it is just you and God. Don't put pressure on yourself to accomplish anything during this time or to experience any specific feelings; just enjoy the quiet, think on God's love and goodness, and see what it does for you.

Here's a meditation exercise you could try, to help you to get into that quiet mood:

10. Maria Fontaine

Imagine a scene of a confusing, noisy city in rush hour, with horns blaring, hundreds of people rushing along the sidewalks and crossing the streets, just general mayhem and confusion. But now close the door on that scene and open another door that introduces you to a scene of fields of grass and beautiful flowers, or a scene of undiscovered waterfalls where everything is lush and pure and clean. Or a scene of towering majestic mountains with their snowcapped peaks, where views are breathtaking and there is always a refreshing breeze.

The world is here for you to enjoy, to appreciate, and to help you connect with God. He is in all of the beautiful creation around you, and by appreciating it, you are appreciating Him.¹⁰

I think there is something magical about meditation. When I'm alone

and silent with God, I feel Him nearer. Meditation helps to bring my mind and heart closer to God's. It gives me greater understanding of His Word and helps me align my perspectives with His and live my life as I believe He wants me to.

I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the
roses.
And the voice I hear,
Falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses.
And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own.
And the joy we share, as we
tarry there
None other has ever known.
—Charles Austin Miles
(1868–1946) ■

DRAWING ON GOD'S STRENGTH



BY ALLAN TABARO

JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS A FEW YEARS AGO, I was involved in a car accident that almost took my life. I sustained a spinal cord injury to my T4 vertebra, leaving me paraplegic, paralyzed from the chest down, and confined to a wheelchair.

Nothing can prepare anyone for coping with paraplegia and disability, especially to the extent that you have to rely almost completely on others for assistance. Suddenly the things you'd taken for granted, like getting out of bed and walking to the bathroom, are no longer possible because your body refuses to function. Questions flood your mind, and fear, doubt, and anxiety can get the better of you. It was like being in a bad dream, struggling to come to terms with what was happening, and hoping to wake up.

My family and friends were encouraging and stood by my side; but in the end, the difficult choice to stay positive and carry on with life is always a personal one. In my experience, though, it *is* possible to carry on and pursue your dreams.

It's tough to deal with disappointment, and we always want to figure things out, but if faced with something man or money cannot fix, who do you turn to for answers? I had nowhere to turn but to God. My girlfriend gave me a Bible and told me I would find the answers I was looking for in it.

"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else," I read, "and he will give you everything you need."¹ I set out to keep my end of the bargain, and God has been faithful to keep His. I've learned that He isn't surprised by our moments of pain in the valleys; in fact, He's quietly waiting for us to call out to Him so He can enlighten

our darkness. It's one thing being a Christian, and another truly knowing who Jesus is.

God showed me that He cared as much about the condition of my spirit as that of my paralyzed body. Before my injury, I was easily distracted by the things of this world, and got my happiness and security from them. Now I know that none of this compares to the love of Jesus, which comforts to the uttermost.

He will heal the wounds and sicknesses of our souls and plant seeds of hope in the most difficult conditions. His light will shine into the deepest valleys. "[He] is our refuge and strength and a present help in times of trouble."²

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1. Matthew 6:33 NLT
2. Psalm 46:1

JESUS IS MY WALKTHROUGH

BY MICHAEL MONTGOMERY



COMPUTER GAMES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A PART OF MY LIFE. I can remember playing with my younger brother until the joints in our thumbs hurt. My favorite ones to play were extreme sports and adventure/fantasy, complete with magical weapons, levels, and evil henchmen.

But many times while gaming, I would either encounter a particularly difficult level, come up against an adversary with seemingly no weakness to exploit, or find myself in a chamber or room that had no way of escape. During those frustrating moments, my characters would pace back and forth, completely lost, or I'd lose and have to start the chapter over. When it got to a point that I just couldn't take it any longer, I would pause the game, go online, and look up what gamers call a "walkthrough."

To put it in a nutshell, a walkthrough is a meticulously detailed log or video from a gamer (usually a very good gamer) who has already played and beaten the game. He or she will describe exactly how to get past certain points. They will go on to explain how to best get past the bad guys, tell you special things to look out

for, as well as give clues and hints to discover hidden treasures you would have previously missed. By following the instructions, one can breeze through levels that would otherwise have caused hours of frustration.

The Bible is my walkthrough. And I have my very own Grand Master. Anything that I go through in my life, Jesus understands. It was tough for Him too, and at one point, it almost seemed like He'd lost the game. But then, in a dramatic comeback three days later, He obliterated His enemy and triumphed as the undisputed Victor. So He truly knows the score and is more than happy to share His tips, comments, and suggestions. Not only that, but He has a vested interest in my success.

As a young and amateur gamer in life, I don't know what my next trial will be, or even what next month will bring. But I do know that when I'm really stuck, when I'm totally and completely at the end of my rope, I'm going to stop, pause the game, and look up a walkthrough by my Best Friend and Gaming Champion.

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1. www.HelpingHandSA.org

He Cares!

BY KOOS STENGER



I HAD SUNG FRANK E.

GRAEFF'S HYMN, "Does Jesus Care?"

many times before and always felt comforted by its grace and beauty. But the words really came to life after our one-year-old son Martin passed away. Martin had always been frail, from the day he was born, half an hour after his twin brother. They were born in Brazil two months early and had to be on life support. His brother quickly overcame that difficult start in life, but not Martin. He had a heart defect and underwent surgery at six weeks, which he struggled to recover from.

We pleaded with God, mobilized a prayer chain, followed every bit of advice from doctors, and did all we could to sustain his little life, but it was becoming increasingly apparent Martin would not be with us for long.

Then somebody received a vision in prayer. "Martin is going to be healed," this person said excitedly. "I saw him running in fields of green. He was so happy." But we knew it was a vision of our son in heaven to prepare us for his homegoing, a vision of the world that was calling Martin to leave his suffering behind and where he would be free from pain and hardship.

A few days later, God took him peacefully as he lay in his mother's lap. We knew it was coming; God had prepared our hearts. But it was still heartbreaking. Parents are not supposed to outlive their children and bury them in little caskets in a foreign country.

People often ask us, "Where was God when your son needed Him? Couldn't He have healed Martin so he would still be with you today?" Of course we know He could have. But that's not the point.

The point is that God *was* there; holding us every step of the way, providing peace, grace, and even joy in the knowledge that our little one was safe in His arms.

What's more, we will see Martin again when we too cross that river and throw out our anchors on the shores of eternity.

KOOS STENGER IS A FREELANCE
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Does Jesus care when I've said "goodbye"
To the dearest on earth to me?
And my sad heart aches till it nearly
breaks—
Is it aught to Him? Does He see?

Oh, yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights
dreary,
I know my Savior cares.
—Frank E. Graeff (1860–1919)

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

ETERNAL SUNSHINE

Keep your eyes on Me no matter what you face. The skies may be dark at times, the winds may blow, the waters may be deep and murky, and the waves may crash all around you. There may be no apparent way of escape. But I am your escape. I am the sunshine that chases away the dark clouds. My voice will still the tumultuous waves. My rays of sunlight will make the waters clear so that you can see the wondrous coral and all of the splendor that lies under the surface of the ocean of life.

So when all around you seems dark and gloomy, turn your eyes toward Me, your eternal sunshine. I will shine brightly upon your life and I will calm the seas, helping you to find peace and security.