

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 20 • Issue 1

RAISING THE SAILS

The effort is worth it!

The View

Achieve your goals

Bouncing on the Bow of a Bangka Boat

An adventure with God



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ACTIVATED!

This introduction page has traditionally served to present the issue's topics, highlight an article or sometimes to share an anecdote or personal reflection.

In keeping with the calendar, this month's issue is primarily focused on the challenges and possibilities of the New Year.

But I'd like to also take a moment to let you in on another milestone this issue marks.

Exactly 20 years ago, *Activated* was born—the very first issue was published in January 1999. Now, over 220 issues later, *Activated's* thousands of articles to date have been translated in dozens of languages and have been read by tens of millions in print or digital format.

These two decades have been a tremendous adventure, and we're grateful to everyone who participated in the production process and who contributed articles. Above all, we're grateful for our readers, both old and new, and especially to all of you who spread the word and share articles with your friends and loved ones or on social media.

We may not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. And we know that He's on our side. So we can look forward to 2019 with great hope and expectation in God's promises: "I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."¹

God bless you, and may you have a wonderful year filled with His care and blessings!

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. Jeremiah 29:11 NLT

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Flowers, Projects, and Dreams for the New Year

BY JOYCE SUTTIN



I LOVE TENDING MY GARDEN, but I have a problem sometimes with flowers. I love to buy a few each spring and enjoy them through the long summer days, tending them and watering them and admiring their beauty. I just have a hard time letting go of them as they begin to turn yellow and die.

When I see the devastation of my plants at the end of the season, I almost feel like giving up on my garden altogether, but I'm always amazed by spring. I see the first tiny new sprouts shoot up from the ground and realize that life is still there. The germ of the seed is still there. I just need to be patient. I need to trust in the seeds. All they need is to be allowed to do their thing and be born into a glorious new plant.

This is like my ideas, dreams, and goals for each new year: sometimes I just need to let them go or put them on hold for a time. I need to trust that when the time is right, all those thoughts will begin to germinate again and I will have a project. Then if I tenderly and diligently care for the project, it will come to life.

So this year I'm going to stop mourning dead plants and projects. I'm going to let them be and give them time. Then when the moment is right, when the sun shines bright and the gentle rains begin to come again, I will have the blessing of beginning something new and beautiful.

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

NEW YEAR'S WISHES

What shall I wish you?
Treasures of earth?
Songs in the springtime?
Pleasures and mirth?
Flowers on your pathway,
Skies ever clear?
Would this ensure you
A happy new year?

What shall I wish you?
What can be found
Bringing you sunshine
All the year round?
Where is the treasure,
Lasting and dear,
That shall ensure you
A happy new year?

Faith that increases,
Walking in light;
Hope that's abounding,
Happy and bright;
Love that is perfect,
Casting out fear;
These shall ensure you
A happy new year.

Peace in the Savior,
Rest at His feet,
Smile on His countenance,
Radiant and sweet.
Joy in His presence!
Christ ever near!
This will ensure you
A happy new year!

—Frances Ridley Havergal
(1836–1879), adapted ■



BY PETER AMSTERDAM

RAISING the SAILS

ANYTHING THAT WE WANT TO DO WELL AT IN LIFE REQUIRES EFFORT, including growing in Christlikeness. It takes work to consciously and deliberately *develop* godly beliefs, habits, attitudes, thinking, and behavior. It also calls for intentionally *letting go* of wrong beliefs, harmful habits, ungodly attitudes, erroneous thinking, and bad behavior.

Throughout the New Testament, we read about the concept of “putting off” or removing aspects of our lives—both inner thoughts and feelings, and the resultant outward actions—which fight against Christlikeness. Meanwhile, we are to be “putting on” or adding to our lives those things which develop godliness. Both ideas clearly call for a decision to be made and action to be taken.

PUTTING OFF

Now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.—*Colossians 3:8–9 NLT*

Stop being bitter and angry and mad at others. Don't yell at one another or curse each other or ever be rude.—*Ephesians 4:31 CEV*

Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up.—*Hebrews 12:1 NLT*

PUTTING ON

Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love.—*Colossians 3:12–14 NIV*

Put on the armor of light [and] clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.—*Romans 13:12,14 NIV*

Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.—*Ephesians 4:24 NLT*

These qualities are the fruit of a life transformed and empowered as we follow what Scripture teaches and apply our faith to our life. None of these happens easily, but once one has put in the time and effort to train, to break old habits, and to build new ones, it becomes more natural.

1. Zigarelli, *Cultivating Christian Character*.
2. *Ibid.*, 39.
3. See Galatians 5:22–23.



Of course, we must rely on God's help or grace to develop new habits. But we can't expect the Holy Spirit to change us without any effort or action on our part. While God forgives us for our sins, we are expected to endeavor to avoid sinning. We are to put away those things which draw us away from Christlikeness, to put on a new self, to live as best we can as the new creature that we have become in Christ. As we do so, we gain greater happiness, relationship with God, sense of fulfillment, and joyful living.

I recently read the analysis of a survey by Christian author Michael Zigarelli, showing comparisons between what the author called low-virtue, average-virtue, and high-virtue Christians.¹ His results showed that most of the 5,000 Christians surveyed were average-virtue Christians. The minority he identified as high-virtue were those who put effort into doing specific things that resulted in Christian character growth.

Zigarelli pointed out that each Christian has a vital, active role to play in his or her own spiritual growth:

The more complete conceptualization of the growth process is that God has a role and we have a role. The interplay of those roles has been likened to the task of sailing a boat from one place to another. To get a sailboat from point A to point B, two crucial elements are required: we need some wind blowing toward our destination, and we need to put the sail into position to catch that wind. You can probably guess the analogy here. God's Holy Spirit is the wind, seeking to gradually move us toward Christlikeness. We are the sailors, needing to raise the sail; that is, to do something that puts us in the position to catch God's Spirit, so that the Spirit will move us along toward the desired destination.²

If we seek more Christlikeness in our lives, we need to "raise our sails" by doing the things that help to develop Christlike character. Practically speaking, becoming Christlike means altering some aspects of our present character, and such change is difficult. However, it is well worth the cost.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is both future and present. Living within the kingdom in the present means that we allow God to rule and reign in our lives and seek to live in a way that honors and gives glory to Him.

In order to become more Christlike, to live more kingdom-centered lives, we need to align our lives, decisions, actions, and spirit with God and His Word. That means "putting off" some aspects of ourselves and our character, and "putting on" aspects of Christlikeness. It means cultivating the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.³ As we do our part to raise the sails, we grow in Christlikeness.

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



THE BIG LEAP

BY IRIS RICHARD

IT WAS SNOWING WHEN WE PACKED THE LAST ITEMS INTO THE CONTAINER that was waiting at an appointed lot in an industrial area, almost ready to be shipped. This was the last trip to the container before it left on its journey across the ocean with a load of personal effects and donated items that would help us build our new lives. We'd sold everything we couldn't take along, moved out of our home, said goodbye to relatives and friends, and were now ready to take off. We were moving to Kenya!

There were voices of caution, but also good wishes and prayers offered for our big move. Some thought it brave of us to make such a drastic transfer with five children, some said that it was a crazy undertaking, and others warned us gravely about sickness, dirt, and heat. But God's call to venture out into mission work was strong in our hearts, and as we researched,

tossed it around in our minds, listed pros and cons, and prayed, we found the confidence that God was the one guiding us to take this leap of faith.

Looking back to the day 22 years ago when we first arrived in Kenya, it hasn't always been smooth sailing.

There have certainly been times of dire testing and challenges, when our faith was thoroughly shaken. The temptation of giving up has been present, but during those moments, hanging on to the promises of protection and provision in God's Word has strengthened our faith again and again. Testimonies of faith heroes have cheered

us onward and given us the courage to hang on when the going got tough, when progress was slow, and when opposition blocked our way.

As we learned volumes of lessons of faith and endurance, we

realized that it had been worth it to let go of those familiar shorelines that day to heed God's call. In spite of our initial apprehension and concern, we experienced countless faith-increasing miracles, as we stepped into a brand-new world that became our home and where we've set up a work that has helped countless poor and needy families.

IRIS RICHARD IS A COUNSELOR IN KENYA, WHERE SHE HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER WORK SINCE 1995. ■



FLOW WITH IT

BY ELSA SICHROVSKY

A FEW YEARS AGO, I was involved in a volunteer project that operated a meal center for underprivileged students. For the first two years, I helped with cleaning the kitchen, shopping for food supplies, and meal preparation. I felt a sense of pride in helping to produce well-balanced, delicious, yet economical meals. My diligence was recognized by the organization's leaders and I was given greater responsibility managing the funding and designing the menu.

However, in the third year that I was part of this project, the new management transferred the organization's focus to providing remedial classes in English and science to academically struggling students in at-risk neighborhoods. The meal center was dramatically downsized and a significant number of the kitchen staff, including myself, were redeployed as teacher assistants. Most of the former cooks were glad to

leave their unseen labors as kitchen staff and enjoyed directly interacting with the children, but not me.

The vegetables and the pots had never argued with me, but in the classroom I faced rambunctious and unpredictable students and a teacher who had his own opinions as to how I should assist him. The fluidity and uncertainty of the classroom, in addition to the loss of my cozy nest, the place where I felt accomplished and in control, was unnerving, and while I fulfilled my basic duties, I wasn't giving the classroom the same enthusiasm and conscientiousness I had given the kitchen.

One day, I was complaining to one of my fellow ex-cooks about the new management. He sympathized, "Yes, it hasn't been easy for me to see the organization that I'd given so much time to take on a different face." Then he continued. "But change is an integral part of life, and sometimes it's worth adjusting to the flow."

"But I don't like the way the flow is going!" I protested. "I feel like a fish out of water."

"Remember how the kitchen was once a new place for you too?" he reminded me.

"Oh my, that seems like ages and ages ago!" I exclaimed.

"Exactly. You learned a lot about the kitchen, and you'll learn a lot about teaching if you're willing to move out of your comfort zone."

Years later, I am grateful for my friend's advice, and I still recall it to help me weather the painful processes of life's constant changes. As long as I limit myself to doing things that I like and excel in, I stunt my personal growth. But if I flow with the current of change and allow it to propel me forward, I can gain new skills and enjoy new experiences.

ELSA SICHROVSKY IS A FREELANCE WRITER. SHE LIVES WITH HER FAMILY IN TAIWAN. ■

JONAH AND ME

BY SCOTT MCGREGOR

ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN STORIES IN THE BIBLE IS ALSO ONE OF THE STRANGEST. Nearly everyone, it seems, knows about Jonah and the whale. It's a Sunday school favorite. But it's also one of those perplexing tales that makes one wonder, *Why, God, why?*

The first mention of Jonah in the Bible¹ establishes that Jonah was alive circa 800–750 B.C. and was from the town of Gath-hepher in Israel, a few miles from Nazareth. He apparently already had a reputation as a prophet when God called him to prophesy against Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

I can understand Jonah's reluctance. Nineveh was a wicked city and the capital of a cruel empire. The

Assyrians have a deserved reputation in the annals of history as having been particularly nasty and vicious. Moreover, being a prophet of doom is always going to be a risky venture.

Jonah doesn't see much hope in the assignment, so he heads off in the exact opposite way. Instead of going east to Nineveh, he decides to head west, by boat, to Tarshish, reportedly the furthest trading post of the mercantile Phoenicians, who were the neighbors of Israel.

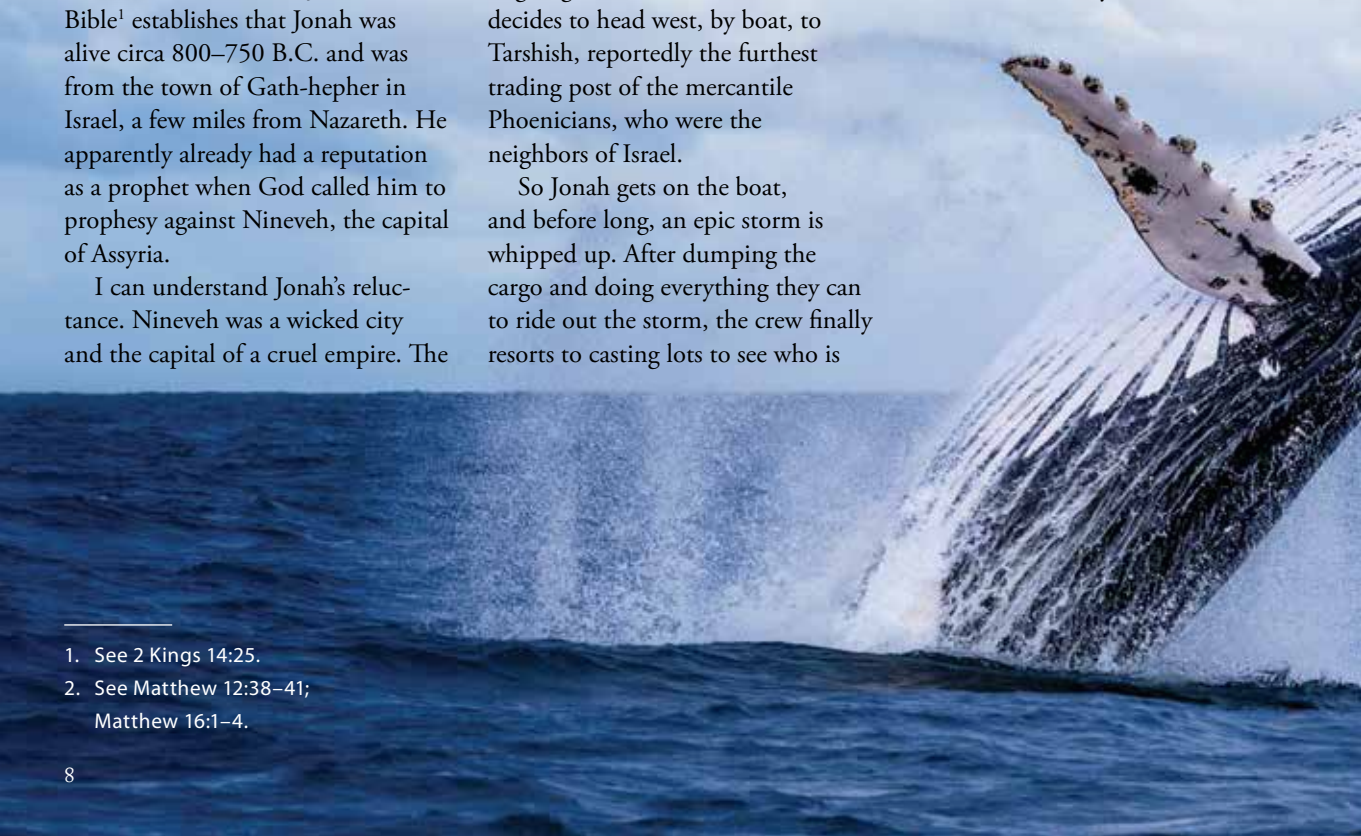
So Jonah gets on the boat, and before long, an epic storm is whipped up. After dumping the cargo and doing everything they can to ride out the storm, the crew finally resorts to casting lots to see who is

bringing this curse upon them. The lot falls on Jonah, and he confesses that he *is* the problem and tells them to toss him overboard. Apparently the crew was reluctant to do this, and first they tried rowing to shore, but that was all in vain. So Jonah “walked the plank.”

But the story didn't end there, because a mysterious “big fish” swallows him. There are a number of theories of what exactly happened, but when it comes down to it, the whole episode is improbable under purely natural circumstances. The situation has to involve supernatural intervention for Jonah to survive three days in such an

1. See 2 Kings 14:25.

2. See Matthew 12:38–41; Matthew 16:1–4.



environment—not to mention, compose the prayer related in the book of Jonah, chapter two. After the three days, God had the big fish vomit Jonah up on the coast, apparently just about where he'd boarded the boat at the beginning of his trip.

And sure enough, God *again* calls him to go prophesy against Nineveh. Having realized that the assignment was apparently not optional, Jonah heads off to that great and wicked city. Once he enters the city, he spends the day crying out, "Nineveh will be destroyed." But surprise, surprise, the Ninevites realize that they have been a bad lot, and at the king's command, everyone repents and fasts

in sackcloth and ashes, including the livestock.

Meanwhile, Jonah has taken shelter at a vantage point outside of Nineveh to watch the impending fireworks. When God tells him that He's changed His mind and is now going to spare Nineveh, Jonah is livid and more or less tells God, "What?! You dragged me through this ordeal and then You changed Your mind?! What was the point of it all?"

You've got to have a little sympathy for Jonah, because he *did* go through the wringer and he was hoping for a little recompense. The Assyrians were a bunch of thugs, and he was apparently looking forward to seeing them get their due punishment. But now he even had to give up on *that*, and he wasn't at all happy.

So what *was* the point? And why is this account even in the Bible?

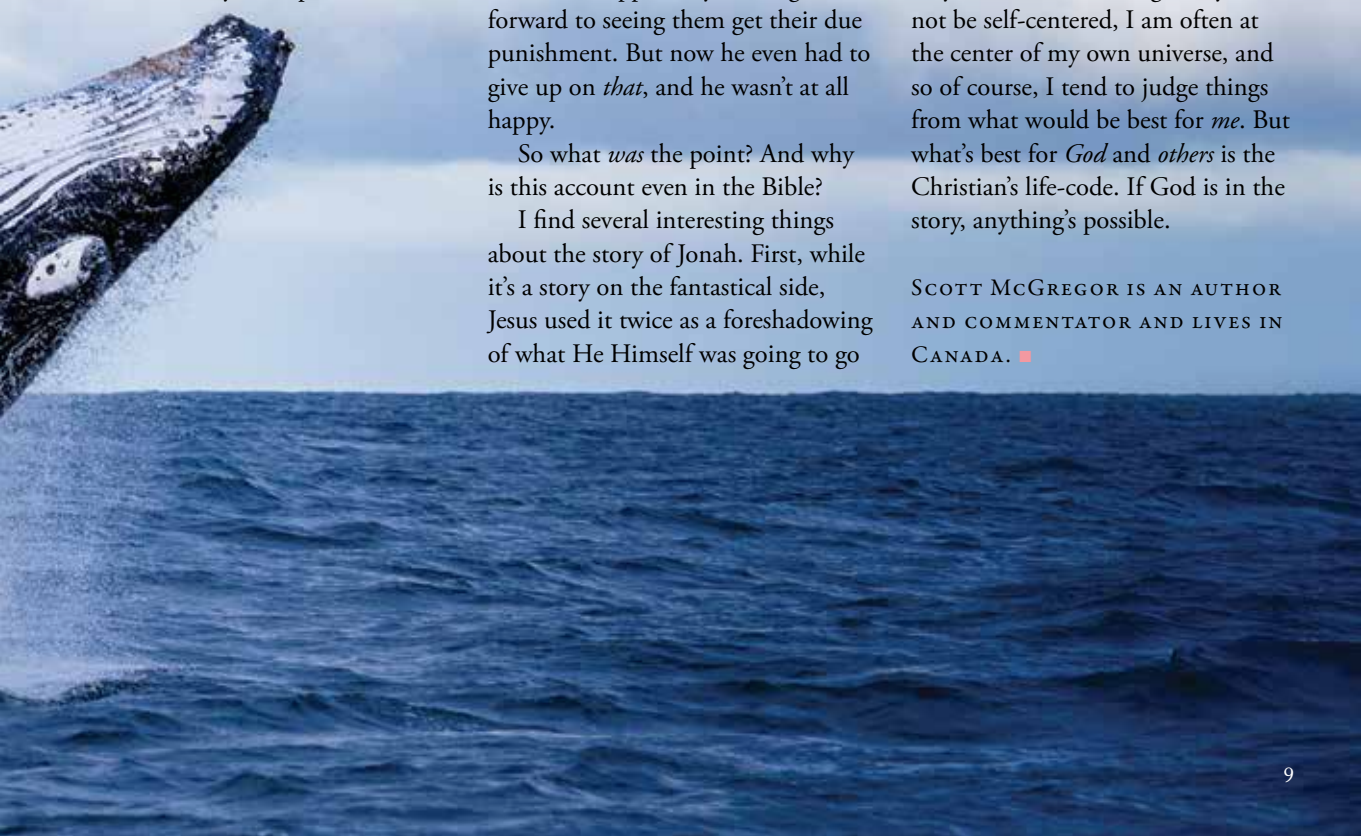
I find several interesting things about the story of Jonah. First, while it's a story on the fantastical side, Jesus used it twice as a foreshadowing of what He Himself was going to go

through.² And I think He did so for not only the obvious reason that He was going to die and rise again in three days, but also to imply that if they could believe the story of Jonah, then why couldn't people believe in *Him* and what He was saying?

It's also a terrific story about doing what God asks and not putting Him off.

The biggest lesson I take from it is to not get angry with God if, when circumstances change, He doesn't do what I feel He'd indicated He would. There've been times in my life when I was pretty frustrated when things didn't pan out as I thought they should. Even though I try to not be self-centered, I am often at the center of my own universe, and so of course, I tend to judge things from what would be best for *me*. But what's best for *God* and *others* is the Christian's life-code. If God is in the story, anything's possible.

SCOTT MCGREGOR IS AN AUTHOR AND COMMENTATOR AND LIVES IN CANADA. ■



By CHRIS MIZRANY

CRACKED!

MY NEW YEAR LITERALLY STARTED WITH A BANG! On December 31st, my phone leaped out of my hand in an apparent dive of depression.

I picked it up immediately, not really expecting anything to be wrong. It had fallen on a carpeted floor, and I'd dropped it several times before without damage.

Well, this time was different. As soon as I turned it face-up and saw the Spiderman-strand cracks across the whole screen, my heart sank. It still works, but in a rather unusable way. And out of warranty by far.

Anyways, I'm not here to whine and get sympathy. (Well, maybe a little.)

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1. See Matthew 28:20.
 2. See 1 Corinthians 13:12.

This accident actually taught me something, and right on time for the new year. First of all, don't rely on yesterday's plans or experiences too much. Today, things might just be different, and in fact probably will be. We need to go along day by day, being open to the new things God might bring into our lives, or we could find ourselves surprised and unprepared.

Second, this taught me that in life, stuff happens. Life is by definition moving and changing. Maybe our Father allows these things because, in His wisdom, He knows they will make us better. We must never get discouraged when rough stuff is thrust into our face. Maybe we'll overcome it in a glorious victory and see just how amazing our God is. Or maybe we'll get hit hard by it, barely

able to get up, feeling like we must have handled it wrong, and *still see just how amazing our God is!* Our future is sure and our help is constant.

I don't know all that you're going through. It could be one massive problem, 1,000 little ones, or anything in between. Maybe you even feel a little "cracked" yourself. That's where Jesus comes in. He knows every individual repair need and technique, and He'll restore us as He knows best. His guarantee is "forever" and "with you always."¹

So even if I'm seeing through a "glass unclearly" right now, I know for sure that "it will all be right at last."²

CHRIS MIZRANY IS A WEB DESIGNER, PHOTOGRAPHER, AND MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA. ■



BY ESTER MIZRANY

I RECENTLY CLIMBED TABLE MOUNTAIN, here in South Africa, and what a wonder it is! A flat-topped mountain smack-dab in the middle of a city, overlooking two oceans, and with a mountain range dubbed “The 12 Apostles” right behind it. It’s over 3,500 feet (1,066 m) high and teeming with gorgeous vegetation, birds, wild animals, rocks and cliffs, but my favorite thing about it is the breathtaking *view!*

We set out for the climb in the early morning and arrived at the starting point just before dawn. As we walked up, we watched the sun rise and the city begin to wake. We encountered others also making their way to the top, equally determined to take advantage of an early start.

At first, the climb felt grueling. I was out of breath and had to make a few stops to rest and drink water. The rest of the group kept going, and I felt as if I were being left behind. My husband (a Table Mountain veteran) stayed by my side, giving me encouragement and reassurance that I was doing well. A couple of times, we even caught up with the rest of the group at a rest stop before they went on.

With aching limbs and much laughter in good company, we, the slow ones, made it to the top in just under two hours. There it was: *the view!*

From the top, you can see the whole city of Cape Town, the surrounding mountains, both oceans, valleys,

fields and plains beyond the city, and—even farther in the distance—the next mountain range. The sense of being amidst God’s beautiful creation overwhelmed me and I was enthused with a feeling of achievement.

Then I realized, the summit was my goal, and I had to take many steps to get there—over 10,000 according to my pedometer—but there were also psychological steps, like planning, overcoming fears and apathy, and persevering when I didn’t feel like it. These are similar to the steps to reaching personal goals: calculate, plan, execute, and keep moving forward, even when the going gets tough. There will always be the temptation to give up along the way, but with my goal in mind and with the help of like-minded people, my goals become achievable.

Table Mountain isn’t the only mountain there is to climb, just as there are many goals waiting to be achieved and many views waiting to be seen. So, we tackle one at a time, gaining experience along the way. With good company and lots of encouragement, taking it one step at a time, and not giving up, we can all reach our personal “summits.”

ESTER MIZRANY IS A TEACHER AND FULL-TIME MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND IN SOUTH AFRICA. ■

BEGINNING AGAIN

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

I wish there were some wonderful place
Called “The Land of Beginning Again,”
Where all our mistakes
And all our heartaches
And all our poor selfish greed,
Could be dropped
Like a shabby old coat at the door
And never put on again.

I wish we could come on it all unawares
Like the hunter who finds a lost trail,
And I wish that the one
Whom our blindness has done
The greatest injustice of all,
Could be at the gate
Like an old friend who waits
For the comrade he’s gladdest to hail.
—*Louisa Fletcher Tarkington*

1. 1 John 1:5,7,9 NLT
2. 2 Peter 1:4 NIV
3. Psalm 37:4
4. Matthew 11:28–30
5. 1 John 1:9
6. Proverbs 28:13
7. Romans 8:32 NLT

I’m glad to say there is such a place as The Land of Beginning Again, and you can find it, no matter who you are or what your past has been. You’ll find that place in these verses from the Bible:

“God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. . . . if we are

living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins to him”—here is that place where you can drop the shabby old coat of your past life—“he is faithful and just to forgive us

If you haven't yet experienced God's love and forgiveness, you can right now by sincerely praying a simple prayer like the following:

Thank You, Jesus, for paying the price for my mistakes and wrongs, so I can be forgiven and put my past behind me. Thank You that You cleanse me from all sin by faith. I ask You now, dear Jesus, to please come into my heart, forgive me, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen.

our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”¹

That passage, like so many others in the Bible, contains a wonderful promise from your heavenly Father to you, His child whom He dearly loves. God has given you “very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.”²

God will back His promises with all of His power and ability, but there are conditions attached to these promises—conditions that you must meet. God sets His own terms, but how blessed you become when you meet God's terms! When you submit to His conditions, the wealth of His blessings and riches come tumbling down on you. These are the keys that unlock the treasure vaults of Heaven: knowing and meeting the conditions attached to each promise.

God not only wills, but longs for you to have your every need supplied and the deepest desires of your heart fulfilled. King David wrote in the Psalms, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”³ But note the

condition: “Delight yourself in the Lord.” God will give you the desires of your heart—He said so and it *is* so—but the terms must be met. First you delight yourself in Him by loving Him first and foremost and doing your best to please Him, and then He grants your desires.

God's terms aren't hard. Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”⁴

So many wonderful things are promised in the Bible—forgiveness of sin, joy, peace, eternal life—that I couldn't begin to list them all! Those promises are there for you and could change your life completely. But you must meet the conditions, and the first condition is that you come to God and humbly confess that you need His help and forgiveness.⁵ He can and will forgive anything, but only if you ask Him to.

God's Word says, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever

confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”⁶ Don't be like Emmy the housekeeper who, when the woman she worked for asked her, “Emmy, did you sweep under the rug?” answered, “Yes, ma'am, I sweep *everything* under the rug!”

Things swept under the rug have a way of coming back to haunt us. It doesn't pay to pretend all is well when it's not, but if you will humbly accept God's terms for forgiveness, you've got it! As soon as you confess you are a sinner and turn to Jesus Christ, the Savior, for help, He will come into your life and give you change and freedom like you've never known! “Since [God] did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?”⁷—including a new beginning!

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). ADAPTED FROM ORIGINAL ARTICLE. ■

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

BOUNCING ON THE BOW OF A BANGKA BOAT

ON A TRIP TO ATTEND MY SON'S WEDDING IN THE PHILIPPINES, I had the joy of riding on a bangka boat, a Filipino vessel that looks like a catamaran and has a pontoon on both sides, which gives it great stability. This sleek, swift, slender design has been in use for thousands of years and continues to be used extensively today.

Sitting on the bow is exhilarating, as the boat splashes up and down, drenching you. Your feet dangle, skimming the waves as the boat tosses like an amusement park ride.

Some of us on the boat preferred to enjoy the ride sitting under the canopy in the stern, while the adventuresome thrilled to the experience

of sea spray in their faces at the bow. Some young people stood like surfers on the front deck and tried to balance there as the waves heaved us up and down.

When we got to our destination of a fish sanctuary, some of us were content to bask on the deck, soak up sun rays, enjoy a good book, or just watch the day go by slowly.

Others dived off our safe haven into another dimension, to snorkel among the rich marine life that inhabited the coral. Blue starfish lay on the white sandy bottom. Schools of small fluorescent fish ate donuts right out of our hands. A clown fish nibbled on my foot in a friendly fashion. Myriad fish darted in and out of vibrantly colorful coral. To see all of this was worth the trip halfway around the world.

Perhaps you're like those who enjoy the security of the cabin, or maybe you're one of those who want the excitement of the bow—either way, life is an adventure when God is your Captain. We who believe in Him have a special bond of fellowship—we are fellows on the same ship, bound for the same port.

God also has a lot of pleasures for us to enjoy as we delve into the waters of His Word, where there are marvels that even the most incredible, otherworldly underwater scenes can only mimic. When we venture into His territory and follow the path He's laid out in His Word, we won't be disappointed.

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A SCRIPTWRITER AND MIME ARTIST¹ IN GERMANY. ■

1. <http://elixirmime.com>

Embracing Change

BY MARIE ALVERO



I'VE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY THE STORIES OF PEOPLE WHO JUST UP AND CHANGE THEIR LIVES. The successful surgeon who becomes a baker, the beggar who becomes a Wall Street tycoon, the soccer mom who becomes a backpacking mountaineer, the high-powered corporate couple who embrace minimalism and travel the world living out of a suitcase. I must like the comfort of believing that if it's ever necessary, I too can change when I need to.

Recently, our family decided on a course of change, one we'd always said we would never do: moving from our home in the country to an urban neighborhood with lots of houses and tiny yards. We made the decision for several reasons—some more cerebral,

1. Attributed to American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971).

others more emotional. But one of the biggest surprises has been the actual experience of change. The way that opening wide the window in a musty, dusty room ushers in light and fresh air and reveals the cobwebs, change brings new energy and shows up the spots in your life that were growing creaky for lack of movement.


I realized how fearful I was about losing control, and how small I force my life to be in order for me to be able to guarantee a specific outcome. I learned a lot about trusting God on this adventure we call life. When we lose the illusion of being in control of everything, we remember how much we need God.

Through this season of change, I made a pledge to myself to keep changing, to stir up my life somehow on a regular basis. I don't want to move houses again for a very long

time, but lots of other things are up for revision. I have a new love for this prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."¹

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Change is inevitable in life. You can either resist it and potentially get run over by it, or you can choose to cooperate with it, adapt to it, and learn how to benefit from it. When you embrace change you will begin to see it as an opportunity for growth.—Jack Canfield (b.1944)



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

TAKE THAT STEP

I do not force anyone to walk through the doors I lead them to, because I want My children to make their own choices. But the door is there, and if you walk through it, you'll find a great light, for I am the way, the truth, and the life.¹

So don't be afraid to push the door open and walk in. As you take the first step, I will give you the faith to take another step, even if you can't see where the path is taking you. If you're walking down the road that I have for you, there is no higher calling or greater fulfillment.

I have not taken My eyes off you since the day you were born, but have cared for you and planned for you and loved you every moment, from the beginning of time and to the end of time. So don't be afraid to ask Me about My plans for your future.

1. See John 14:6.