

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 20 • Issue 8

THE METRONOME


Discovering the relevance of God's Word

Knights and Mirrors

Who do you look at?

The Heart of a Hero

The secret to courage



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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

INPUT → OUTPUT

In computer science and mathematics, Garbage In, Garbage Out describes the concept that flawed or nonsense input data produces nonsense output or “garbage.” In other words, inaccurate or faulty information at the start will inevitably lead to inaccurate or faulty results.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said something remarkably similar: “A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.”¹

This brief parable invites us to consider what our words and actions say about us and the Savior who lives within us. Do our lives express His care for others or our own self-centeredness? Do we communicate His generosity and justice, or do we default to the human impulse to build walls and exclude?

Like computer code and mathematical equations can be fixed by correcting the input data, Jesus reminds us that Christian living requires interior transformation, the kind that only He can bring about. “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”²

Jesus In, Jesus Out.³

1. Matthew 7:17–18, 20 NLT

2. John 15:4 NIV

3. The editor would like to thank regular *Activated* contributor Chris Mizrany for inspiring the analogy in this intro.

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BY MARIE STORY

WHAT'S YOUR SOURCE?

HAVE YOU EVER PUT A STALK OF CELERY IN COLORED WATER? What happens is that the celery starts to change color as the water is soaked up through the stem. It takes a couple of days to see the change, but soon the celery stalk will take on the color of the water it's in. Celery also very quickly absorbs any poisons and pesticides in the air or in the soil.

Our spirits work in this way, too. The source of our nourishment or input, and whatever we expose ourselves to, will influence us, for better or worse. We're constantly flooded with input—through the Internet, movies, music, books, and of course, through people we interact with. However, how those things influence us isn't always as obvious as the effect of water on celery.

Some things seem harmless, or even good, but they can end up having a negative effect. Other things may be perfectly enjoyable and *be* harmless—they may even feed

our mind and increase our skill and knowledge. But they may still not feed our spirit the sustenance that it needs in order to thrive.

King Solomon was one of the richest men in the world at his time in history. He had access to pretty much anything he wanted—and it seems he tried just about everything his wealth could provide—but in the end, he concluded that “Everything is meaningless!”¹

That's why Jesus tells us to abide in Him, to make Him our source.² He offers us the water of life—the only water that will never leave our spirit thirsty. The first Psalm says that those who delight in God's way and His Word “are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.”³

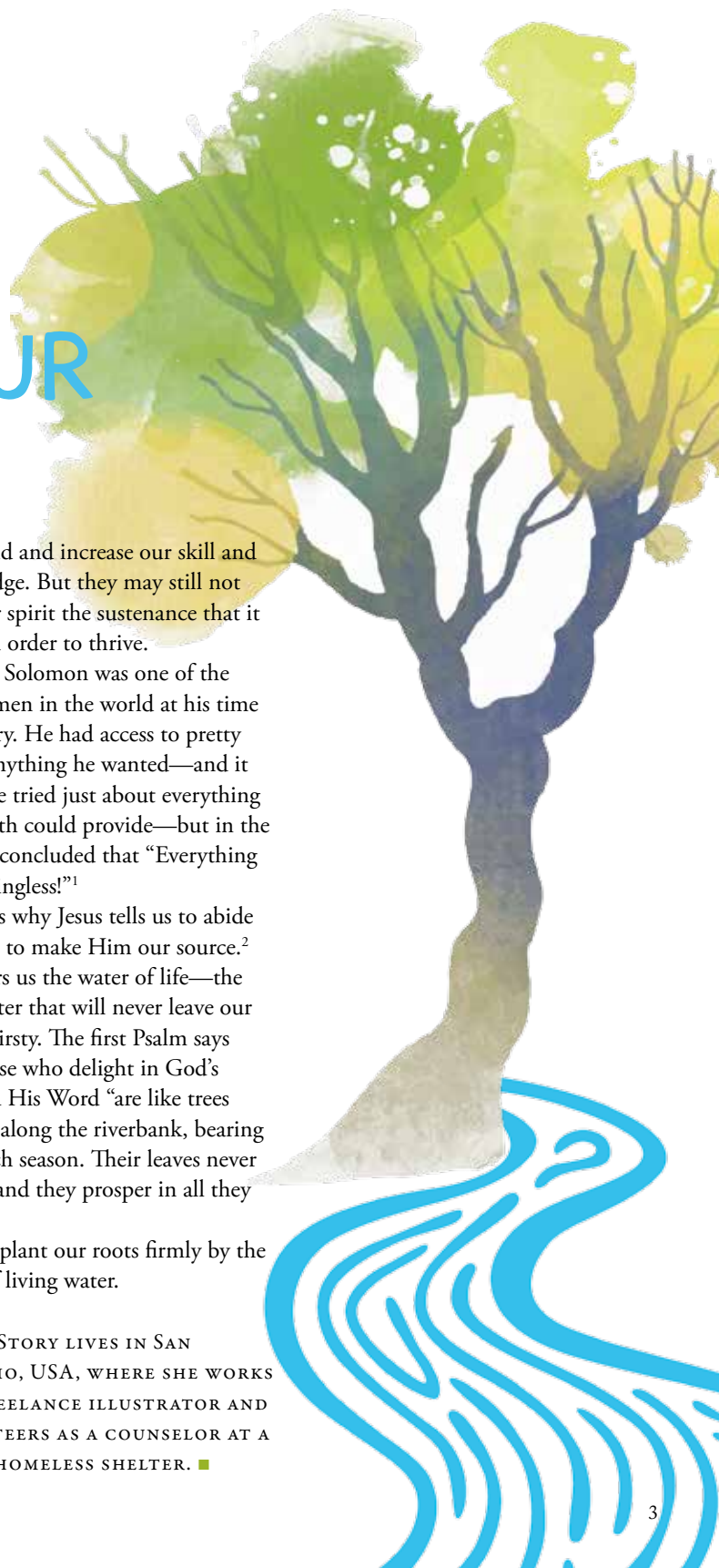
Let's plant our roots firmly by the rivers of living water.

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1. Ecclesiastes 1:2 NLT

2. See John 15:5.

3. Psalm 1:3 NLT





BY MARIA FONTAINE

THOUGHTS ON THE REALITIES OF LIFE

AS BELIEVERS, we can sometimes have unrealistic expectations about our lives. When things aren't going smoothly, there's a tendency to beat ourselves up about it, or feel that God isn't answering our prayers because He doesn't care enough or because we're doing something wrong.

But there's a different approach we can take—one of reminding ourselves that very often, the battles and struggles we go through are par for the course. The difficulty and the hardship and the fight are all part of our learning, training, growth, and gaining endurance, compassion, maturity, and faith.

Many things in life are a struggle, but we can be strengthened through the struggles if we approach them with faith and a positive attitude. If we focus on gaining God's perspective on our situation and believing

His promises, He is always there to help us through. As we look to Him, He'll give us the reassurance that the battles of life are worth fighting and He will strengthen us through them.

When you're going through a difficult time, it takes a lot of faith to hold up your victory flag in the face of the challenges and declare, "I have victory by faith!"¹ But no matter how you feel, God's wonderful Word and His truth are strong and powerful enough to get you on the road to victory again, if you don't give up, if you just hold on, believe, and trust

God to fulfill His Word. Eventually you will receive the reward of your faith.

Following are some thoughts on the realities of life that I hope you will find helpful.


IT COSTS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Every one of the great saints and men and women of God, and anyone who made a difference in the world, made sacrifices in their work or service. Theirs were not easy lives. They narrowed their activities to the most important and judiciously

1. See 1 John 5:4.

2. 1 Corinthians 1:28–29 NLT

3. Malachi 3:6



guarded their time in order to preserve their strength and energy for the things that really mattered. They were dedicated to achieving the goals before them, and most of their waking hours were spent thinking, experimenting, training, teaching, pushing, working, and doing whatever they could to succeed. Everything in life that is really worth something is going to have a cost!

IT'S NOT IN ME

We can't do it on our own. We make mistakes. We're only human. But when we make God our confidence, that's when He can fulfill His plan for our life! "God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God."²

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

There's a spiritual warfare raging, and we're a part of it. The spiritual affects the physical, and the physical affects the spiritual.

To have faith is a conscious choice, a vital one, but no one can

make it for us. We've each got to choose the road of faith and fight to keep our spiritual eyes open so that we're aware of the supernatural realm and remain strong and steadfast.

ALL THINGS CHANGE, JESUS NEVER

Even if everything around us changes, Jesus doesn't change, and His love, care, and promises don't change. "I am the Lord, I do not change."³

TOUGH STUFF HAPPENS

Bad things, difficult things, and hardships of life happen to everyone. Humans aren't perfect, and people will make mistakes that affect us, but it's a personal choice whether we allow those difficulties to make us better or bitter. God can use those things for good in our lives, if we let Him!

We have to remember that problems happen simply because we live in a fallen world. Whether you're a child or an adult, a male or a female, a Christian or an atheist, there are going to be battles, trials, and difficult things, or else we wouldn't build any strength of character. In the end, it's not the circumstances that determine our state; it's our attitude toward them.

GOD'S UNFAILING PROMISES

God has given some amazing promises in His Word. He gives us His promises because He wants us to look forward to the future, to know that He's planning ahead for our good, that He has great things in store for each of us.

He will never break His promises and we can depend on them every time. As we do what He shows us to, they are guaranteed to come to pass—not always in exactly the way we want or think they will, but in the time and ways that God knows are the best for us and others.

How unfair it would be to limit what God wants to do in the future by what we've seen and experienced in the past and in the present. The future is as bright as the promises of God. Let's give Him a chance to fulfill all that He's said He will by following Him closely!

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

THE HEART OF A HERO

BY ROALD WATTERSON

I REMEMBER MEMORIZING HEBREWS 11 AS A CHILD, which detailed quite a few gruesome ways to die: “They were stoned to death, they were cut in two, and they died by being murdered with swords. They went around wearing the skins of sheep and goats, needy, oppressed, and mistreated. The world didn’t deserve them. They wandered around in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground.”¹

It made me wonder how much it hurt to die. I knew that I was quite a pansy when it came to pain, so I tried to figure out, if one had to die, what would be the least painful way to go—as I’d opt for that. You see, I really didn’t want to disgrace God by being a total wimp.

Today I can look back at my childhood worries with amusement. I realize now that the real issue was that I’ve always felt lacking in courage. The other day, however,

I happened to look up the definition of courage when writing an article. “Courage” originated from the French word *cœur* for heart. One etymology site says that the original French word meant “heart, innermost feelings, temper.’ In middle English [it was] used broadly for ‘what is [on] one’s mind or thoughts,’ hence ‘bravery,’ but also [meaning] ‘wrath, pride, confidence, lustiness,’ or any sort of inclination.”² Today, courage is defined as “mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.”³

In the Bible there are countless stories of men and women who did courageous things. Hebrews 11 lists many of these courageous folk. “What more can I say? I would run out of time if I told you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. Through faith they conquered

1. Hebrews 11:37–38 CEB
2. <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=courage>
3. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/courage?show=0&t=1305771775>
4. Hebrews 11:32–34 CEB
5. Daniel 3:16–18 NLT
6. Deuteronomy 6:5 NIV
7. Proverbs 18:10
8. Proverbs 4:23 NLT



kingdoms, brought about justice, realized promises, shut the mouths of lions, put out raging fires, escaped from the edge of the sword, found strength in weakness, were mighty in war, and routed foreign armies.”⁴

Looking at the brave men listed in this chapter, the origins of the word “courage” take on greater meaning—their hearts were in the right place. These men had something wonderful in common—the *source* of their courage.

There’s the famous Bible account of three courageous Hebrew boys who were told to either worship a golden image or be thrown into a furnace. These boys stood firm and refused. The Bible records what they probably thought were their last words:

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”⁵

I read this account in the safety of my house, separated from this scene by thousands of years—but the strength of their belief is still clear in their words. Totally absent is any faltering or trying to negotiate something less mortally dangerous for themselves. But to have the courage to face an experience like this, I think you have to go back a bit. I don’t think their parents ever told them, “One day you’re going to be brought before a scary king, and there’s going to be a furnace, and you’ll have to choose between your life or worshipping an idol. When that happens, remember to choose the furnace.”

Instead, I think they told their sons something more along the lines of, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.”⁶ And, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.”⁷


Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s parents couldn’t know what lay in store for them, or when and how those boys might be faced with needing to act courageously. But there’s one thing they knew they could control—what was stored up

in their children’s hearts. “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”⁸

Even though we may not be surrounded by the same kind of physical danger or difficulty today, we will all go through times that will be emotionally or mentally difficult and that will require moral courage—the will to do what we know is right. And I think that what we’ll do in such a time can be traced to something very simple. I think it will be what we’ve stored up in our heart that will determine the strength of our courage.

Everyone loves a good hero story. But in real life, you don’t get to decide whether you’ll have the opportunity for a huge heroic moment—if you get to rescue someone, or somehow or another save the day—but you do control what you put in your heart. That’s how you can be prepared for these larger-than-life moments, as well as those everyday moments that require courage.

ROALD WATTERSON IS AN EDITOR AND CONTENT DEVELOPER. ■



BY MARA HODLER

KNIGHTS AND MIRROBS

ONE OF THE MOVIES I WATCHED THE MOST OFTEN WHEN GROWING UP WAS *Man of La Mancha*.¹ It seemed that every couple of months, some parent, youth group leader, or teacher decided it was time for a rerun. I'm not a huge fan of musicals, but I do have a soft spot for this film.

It's the story of Alonso Quixano, a rather crazy knight who perceives reality differently than most; in his

alternate reality he calls himself "Don Quixote." He believes he has a dangerous enemy called "The Enchanter" who is out to defeat him, and he's assisted in various fantastical quests by a chubby squire named Sancho Panza. For example, Don Quixote thinks a windmill is the Enchanter, transfigured, so he gallops off to fight it. Don Quixote also has an amazing way of seeing the good and beauty around him, and nothing daunts him.

Another important character in the story is Aldonza Lorenzo. In the

eyes of everyone but Don Quixote, she's a woman with no worth or class. But to Don Quixote she's Dulcinea del Toboso, the fairest of maidens. He sees beauty, dignity, worth, and strength in her. The way he sees her eventually changes the way she sees herself.

Throughout the movie, Don Quixote encounters all kinds of challenges, surprises, and tough stuff, yet nothing gets him down. There are dangerous encounters and some sad moments too.

In one of the last scenes in the movie, Don Quixote meets the

1. Dale Wasserman, Produzioni Europee Associates, 1972
2. See Matthew 14:22–34.
3. www.just1thing.com



Enchanter once again. This time, the Enchanter has a new trick up his sleeve. He comes against Don Quixote as the Knight of Mirrors with a small army of knights each holding a mirror. As they surround Don Quixote, they face their mirrors toward him. “Look in the mirrors,” they cry again and again. Don Quixote has nowhere to look but at the mirrors, and it only takes a few moments of facing himself in the mirror to make Don Quixote collapse. In the end, looking at himself broke his spirit.

That happens to me too. I can be strong in caring for others, fixing problems, conquering giants, and sometimes facing very big challenges. As long as I focus outward I’m okay,

but the minute I look at myself, I begin to run out of steam. I see my inabilities. I see my weaknesses. I see my failures. I feel defeated.

The apostle Peter was there too. The story I’m thinking of is about one night when Peter and some of Jesus’ other disciples are caught in a storm while in a boat on the Sea of Galilee.² Their boat is being buffeted along when the disciples see what they think is a ghost walking on the water. They cry out in fear, but it turns out that it’s Jesus walking on the water. “Don’t be afraid. It’s Me,” Jesus tells them.

Peter, always pushing things a little bit, says, “Lord, if it’s You, tell me to come to You.”

Jesus says, “Come!”

Peter gets out of the boat and begins walking on the water. He’s okay for the first few steps when his eyes are trained on Jesus, but within a few moments Peter realizes he’s walking on the water and panics. He realizes that what he’s doing is totally beyond the realm of his personal capabilities, and it terrifies him. He gets his eyes off of Jesus, loses his steady gaze, and starts to sink.

In his fright, he calls out, “Lord, save me!”

Of course, Jesus reaches down and pulls Peter up. Then Jesus gives him a little chiding: “Why did you doubt?” Jesus and Peter get into the boat and the sea calms.

While Peter was looking at Jesus, he could actually walk on the water. When he looked at the waves and his own incapability, he started to

sink. He realized how crazy it was for him to be walking on water, and it spooked him. The beautiful thing about Peter’s story is that Jesus was there to pick him up.

Jesus promises that when you are weak, He is strong. When you feel incapable, He is capable. Looking in the mirror, focusing too much on yourself, might be the end of you, the way it was for Don Quixote. But you always have the option of looking up again. The option of knowing that Jesus is always there to fill in your gaps.

I have learned that when I feel that way, I need to immediately quiet myself and ask Jesus for His strength. It doesn’t generally come in a huge empowering gust. But I get the strength I need for each moment, often moment by moment.

Don Quixote was done in by looking at his own reflection. Peter began to sink when he began looking at the waves. I go under every time I become overly introspective, or whenever I try to power through without asking Jesus for help. But I’ve learned that I can sidestep that unpleasant collapse by simply turning to Him. I’ve learned that I am not alone. It’s never just up to me and my abilities. It’s Jesus and me. And thank Him for that!

THIS ARTICLE WAS ADAPTED FROM A PODCAST ON JUST 1 THING,³ A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. ■

A photograph of a person sitting cross-legged in a field of tall grass at sunrise. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The person is wearing a red jacket and a blue cap. The background is a misty or hazy landscape with trees in the distance.

BY RAFAEL HOLDING

GETTING GOD'S INPUT

IS GOD PERSONALLY CONCERNED ABOUT YOU? Does He want to provide solutions to your problems, bless your endeavors, help you get the most out of life, and make you the best person you can possibly be? If so, is He able to tell you how? Yes, yes, and yes!

He knows that you have questions and problems, and He wants to give you answers. To that end, He created a means of two-way communication, a channel between Him and you, so that you can talk to Him in prayer and receive messages that He speaks directly to you. God will speak to anyone who has even a little childlike faith—and He wants to speak to you, lead you into a closer relationship with Him, and improve your life in the process.

1. Matthew 7:7

2. See Luke 1:53.

Start by finding a quiet place and taking a few minutes to talk to God, just like you would talk to a close friend. If you have a specific question, go ahead and ask Him. Or perhaps you don't have anything in particular on your mind, but want to hear whatever He might have to say to you. Either way, once you've told Him that you want to hear from Him, do your best to still yourself and listen for His answer.

Sometimes God may speak to you by bringing to mind a familiar verse or passage from the Bible, which when applied to the particular situation you're asking Him about, can be the clear and simple answer that you need.

Other times, God may speak a new message—words that He's never spoken exactly that way to anyone else. It's easy to dismiss this

little inner voice as being your own thoughts, especially when you are first starting to hear from God, but when you've sincerely asked God to speak, He will. "Ask and it will be given to you."¹ He fills the spiritually hungry with good things.²

Try to take a few minutes each day to pray and thank God for His goodness. Follow this with your "question of the day" and a few moments of listening for His insight and whatever else He may want to say to you. As you get in the habit of hearing from God, it will become easier. He has promised to speak to you, and He will!

"GETTING GOD'S INPUT" WAS EXCERPTED FROM *HEARING FROM HEAVEN*, A BOOKLET IN AURORA PRODUCTION'S GET ACTIVATED! SERIES. ■



AS I WAS WALKING ONE DAY, I saw a boy and his father playing together in a field, throwing a ball back and forth. At one point, the father held the ball up and motioned to the far end of the field.

“Go long, son!” he said.

The father hadn’t thrown the ball yet, but the boy started running. Behind him, his father wound up for the throw. Then, as the son looked over his shoulder, the father threw the ball down the field, ahead of where his son was. The boy continued running, occasionally looking at the ball as it flew toward him. Then, at the perfect moment, he reached up, jumped, and caught the ball just as it reached him.

Yes, it’s an ordinary story. And yet recently God managed to teach me a lesson, as He so often does, from this unremarkable event.

You see, I was in need of a miracle at the time and was waiting for God to come through for me. I knew He would, but nothing was happening, so I didn’t act. But what my Father needed me to do was to go long.

I had to get started. God had the miracle ready to send, but when He said, “Go long, son!” I stood there twiddling my thumbs. I had faith, but I wasn’t doing my part.

We need to put feet to our faith and start running. That boy ran a ways before his father even started to wind up. And he didn’t stop. He kept running, knowing that his father knew just how far he needed to run, and would come through for him. That boy had no assurance that the ball would reach him, merely a child’s faith.

But it was an inch-perfect pass, landing at just the right time and in just the right place, so that all he had

to do was reach out, take a leap of faith, and grasp it with both hands.

The next time I ask for God’s help, I’ll remember that sometimes He wants me to do my part, to “go long.”

DAVID MIZRANY IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER AND MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND SOUTH AFRICA. ■

Faith is letting down our nets into the transparent deeps at the divine command, not knowing what we shall draw.—François Fénelon (1651–1715)

Trusting God means looking beyond what we can see to what God sees.

—Charles Stanley (b. 1932)

Mama Worries

BY JOYCE SUTTIN



WHEN MY FIRST PREGNANCY RESULTED IN A MISCARRIAGE,

I wasn't worried, I was angry. For weeks, I held it in, but finally, I literally raised my fist at God and told Him off. "You failed me!" was the gist of it.

Later, I realized I was already a couple of days pregnant when I had ranted. Holding a beautiful baby boy in my arms nine months later, I laughed at myself and my misguided words. I also asked God for forgiveness.

During all of my pregnancies, I had worry dreams. I was too busy during the day to imagine my worries, but in my sleep they appeared in Technicolor. *What if I got distracted at a park and someone kidnapped my baby? What if I checked on the baby in the night and he or she had stopped breathing? What if I somehow caused some terrible thing to happen to my children?*

I never verbalized these worries to other people. I would chalk up the dreams to my vivid imagination and try to shove them out of my mind. I would also do something else, and this is what changed my life.

I would pray. Not just generalized prayers—I would pick apart my worry dreams and commit every single eventuality to the Lord.

"Help me never to get distracted when I'm at a park with my children."

"Keep us safe this night and keep my little ones. Keep their hearts and lungs. Help them grow strong and healthy. Help me be aware of their health and know when something is wrong."

"Help me be a good mother. Help me be kind and gentle and care for my children well. Protect us on our walks and in the car."

Whenever an image would enter my mind portraying some worry I

hadn't thought about or prayed over, I would stop whatever I was doing and pray. I would take apart the new concern and give every part of it to God.

In the end, I realized that, worry-wart that I was, I had learned to fight in prayer. The thing that made me the weakest and that I battled over the most actually became my strength, as I changed from a worrier to a prayer warrior.

My children have now grown up, and I still worry—and I still pray. Whenever I think of one of my children and begin to worry, I put those thoughts into words and give them all to Jesus. And I feel the same reassurance in return as when they were tiny tots.

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



BY ROSANE PEREIRA

BREAKING THE HABIT OF WORRY

ISAAC WAS THE ONLY SON OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH, promised by God and given to them by a miracle in their old age. He isn't as famous as his father, or even Jacob, his son. But I learned a big lesson from him.

During a famine, Isaac moved to the land of Gerar of the Philistines, where he reopened wells that had been dug by his father, Abraham. But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with his men and said the wells were theirs. So he moved again with his family, servants, and herds to another place, where he finally had peace. He never lost hope or faith, and kept seeking and knocking until at last he had the victory.¹

1. See Genesis 26:17–22.

2. Psalm 46:10

My late husband was also full of this persevering faith. Once, we ran out of gas on a back road in the south of Brazil. Only two cars passed by in the first hour, and neither of them stopped to help, so he prayed: “Dear God, make the very next car that passes by stop and help us!” Soon a car passed, but it drove right by. But within a few minutes, it came back. “After I passed you,” the young driver said, “a voice kept saying in my head, *You’ve got to go back and help that family.*”

I have more of a tendency to worry when facing problems, but over the years I’ve developed strategies to help. As soon as I wake up, I fix my breakfast and take it to my office table. I listen to a devotional message, while I eat and write down verses or passages that speak to my soul. Then

I open my prayer notebook and pray for everything I’ve written there for the week. I add anything that’s worrying me on that particular day as well, and mark the answered prayers and accomplishments. This routine brings me peace because I’ve put everything in God’s hands.

I also try to tune in to whatever lesson God is trying to teach me that week. This last week, for example, I came across the verse, “Be still, and know that I am God,”² several times. So I knew God was trying to get my attention. When I finally took the time to read some Psalms and listen to a hymn in nature, I felt God’s peace fill my soul.

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



BY ELSA SICHROVSKY

DIFFERENT BUT DEEPER

I WAS RAISED IN A CHRISTIAN HOME BY DEDICATED CHRISTIAN PARENTS. We prayed before we went out, whenever we got in the car, before we cooked, before we started our homework, and of course, before going to sleep. The bookshelves were full of children's devotional books and Bibles, and we watched Bible cartoons in the evenings.

When I finished high school and entered the secular intellectual environment of academia, I began looking back with ambivalence on the faith that had so permeated my childhood. I knew that I'd always had a Friend I could talk to whenever I needed comfort and strength; and now facing the multiple challenges of academic pressure, social pressure, and soon enough, employment pressure, I needed guidance more than ever. Still, I felt conflicted and confused.

Then I happened on an article from an Internet advice column.

The letter writer was a teenager who had grown up in a Catholic home and was having doubts about her faith. Just like me, she felt lost and uncertain. I identified with her plight and eagerly read the counselor's response. Unfortunately, the counselor encouraged her to find meaning in life's daily pleasures and suggested that religion wasn't relevant or useful in modern life.

Somewhat disappointed, I kept reading the comments. Alongside the voices that concurred with the advisor, one commenter had different advice: "The kind of faith you describe is a very childlike one, which is the same one that I had. And that faith died. But the new faith that I found grew to be even stronger and more meaningful." Even though she'd doubted God's existence, she ultimately rediscovered the joys of having a personal relationship with Jesus.

This commenter's response showed that there were young people

who, like me, had grown up in a Christian home and found that Jesus was relevant to their adult lives as well. I didn't have to go back to the way that my faith had been as a child or to the particular habits of my Christian family in order to have a relationship with Jesus. My conviction could also be strengthened by studying the writings of Christian intellectuals who had battled with doubt and had found spiritual strength and moral courage in their faith.

Jesus and I are still sorting out all that it means to be a Christian in my fast-paced and challenging adult life. I still don't know all the answers, and at times I feel like my faith is trembling, but I know that Jesus is patiently guiding and teaching me to walk with Him in a different, yet deeper way.

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



THE METRONOME

BY MARIE ALVERO

FOUR FRIENDS SIT AROUND THE KITCHEN ISLAND. Each of us has jobs, schedules, responsibilities that pull us in different directions, and it isn't often that we have the opportunity to hang out together. But on this evening we sit together and share life.

Our conversation meanders through subjects—raising kids, travels, life struggles, etc. After a while, we settle in on a topic we four are passionate about—how God's Word has been guiding our lives. What I find amazing is how each of us, with our wildly varied lives and challenges, finds something relevant and valuable in our Bibles.

Not that it's a revelation every time. Mostly, it's a guiding metronome that our lives keep time with. In this day and age, it is often said that the Bible is irrelevant, old-fashioned, and unable to provide insight on how to navigate the issues modern

life presents. But each person in our group can testify that it more than covers the motivations, perspectives, and values that drive our lives.

I love how God has structured His plan for us on relationship rather than regulations. He didn't burden us with hundreds of rules and traditions to live by so that His followers would lose all relevance in this modern world by living as His ancient followers lived. Rather, He made it so that we have to pursue Him and His Word in order to know what He expects and wants from us. He promises that if we seek Him, we will find Him.¹

For me, seeking Him might be in regard to the teenagers I parent. For my friend, it may be for the business he is growing. Our third friend is dealing with the life-altering diagnosis of a loved one, and the fourth is trying to balance corporate life with his Christian calling. Each of us has sought God's heart and mind on these issues and received what he or she needed.


We end our conversation with hugs and farewells, each of us feeling even more confident in our separate journeys with our mutual guide.

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“If you'd like to get started on building a relationship with God, you can do that right now by simply praying the following prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so I can have eternal life. Please forgive me for every wrong and unloving thing I've ever done. Come into my heart, give me Your gift of eternal life, and help me to know Your love and peace. Amen.

1. See Jeremiah 29:13.



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

WINNING THROUGH PRAYER

Prayer shows your faith in Me—faith that I will bring the solutions, show you the way, work in people's lives, and even do the impossible when necessary. It also shows that you are depending on Me, and this pleases Me greatly.

I work through both your spoken prayers and the unspoken prayers of your heart, but when you put your prayer into words, this is a greater manifestation of your faith. This glorifies Me and acknowledges that I am the One who performs miracles, supplies for you, protects you, and guides you.

Prayers always have an effect. When you pray, things happen. I may not always give you the answer that you ask for or expect, but I promise to answer according to what I know is best. I have committed Myself to answer every prayer.