

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 11 • Issue 1

PUZZLE PIECES

Sorting out the year ahead

Got Potential?

How to do more and be more

11 Tips for 2010

Making resolutions realities



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

To one degree or another, just about all of us are unsatisfied with ourselves—but that’s not necessarily a bad thing. A certain amount of dissatisfaction is necessary if we’re going to keep making progress. To become all that we can be, we must dream of being more than we are. The problem is that too many of us stop there, in the dream stage. Why do you suppose that is?

I suspect that more often than not it’s because we don’t think we have what it takes to turn our dreams into reality. And we’re usually right about that. We can make some changes by sheer willpower or working harder, like reaching a new sales quota or dropping a dress or pants size. But what about the bigger changes, the changes *inside* that we know would make us happier and better people? It’s that kind of change that is often most elusive.

We’re not good enough, we tell ourselves. We have too many flaws and make too many mistakes. We’ve tried and failed too many times. What’s the use? It’s just not in us! If that’s the way you feel, this issue of *Activated* contains some very good news for you.

Jesus summed it up simply when He said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”¹ The secret lies in putting ourselves in God’s hands and letting Him do the impossible for us and through us and sometimes in spite of us. We may be small and weak and incapable, but there is a very big, strong, capable God just waiting to give us a hand. With His help, it’s easier than you ever imagined to make those “impossible” changes in yourself.

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

1. Mark 10:27

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life's editing

BY SCOTT MONTROSE

I HAD STRUGGLED WITH AND OVERCOME THE DEMONS OF SELF-DOUBT AND FEAR OF FAILURE, LAUNCHED OUT INTO THE DEEP, PUT PEN TO PAPER, AND WRITTEN MY FIRST SHORT INSPIRATIONAL PIECE.

I sat back and read it through several times. Pleased with my modest effort, I submitted the piece to a monthly magazine for possible publication.

Some time later the magazine's editor contacted me, saying he would like to print my article. He also enclosed an edited draft for my approval or further revision. Edited! As I sat and stared at "my" work, now before me in edited form, a strange mix of feelings swept over me. I had seen myself as an up-and-coming writer, but that image vanished like a mirage in a gathering sandstorm.

After the initial shock subsided, I tried to think about the situation

more objectively. The edited version was indeed better. The central idea I wanted to convey was still there, the imagery was intact, and the tone was unchanged, but the superfluous parts had been cut to get to the heart of the piece.

As I contemplated this, my eye caught a picture of a diamond ring in a magazine lying open on my table. I thought about how someone had mined the chunk of rock that had contained that diamond, and about the skilled hands of the lapidary that had transformed that diamond in the rough into a thing of beauty, highly valued and greatly desired. Like a diamond trapped in a chunk of rock, my rough piece had not been the final product. The diamond had been there, but it had taken other skilled hands to retrieve, cut, and polish it.

Life is like this too. We are created as rough drafts that must

go through the editing process. God sees in each of us that spark of promise, like the editor spots a promising thought as he scans the rough drafts that cross his desk. Then God works to transform us step by step into a finished article that will make worthwhile reading. Our substance is reshaped repeatedly by the choices and decisions we make, the superficial and superfluous bits are purged through life's trials, and we are fine-tuned and polished through our daily interaction with others.

Like my roughly penned story, in the hands of the Great Editor my life has become more than it was to begin with—and He's not done yet.

SCOTT MONTROSE IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST. ✂

Perfect Love

BY MARIA FONTAINE



HIS LOVE IS EVERLASTING. IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT WILL BE HERE ONE DAY AND GONE THE NEXT. JESUS' LOVE WILL NOT EXPIRE OR FADE.

These are a few of the words that come to mind when I think about Jesus' love for each of us: Perfect. Free. Unconditional. Everlasting.

His love is perfect. It is the only thing in the world that is absolutely perfect. There are a lot of things that are nice, beautiful, and wonderful, but nothing is perfect like His love. We live in an imperfect world, with imperfect humans, in imperfect conditions, but His love is what makes it possible for us to weather everything that life brings our way. He is perfect, and so is His love.

His love is free. It's not something that we have to work for, or earn, or somehow prove that we're worthy of. That's a good thing, too, because we all sin and make mistakes. If we had to earn Jesus' love, none of us would have it, because we're all men and women of similar weaknesses and human frailties. Jesus, in His divine

foresight and wisdom, knew this and chose to love us with no strings attached.

His love is unconditional. He doesn't only love us through the good times.

He doesn't just love us when we're happy, progressing in the school of life, or making a positive difference in the lives of others. He loves us when we're up and when we're down. He loves us when we're well and when we're sick. He loves us when we do things worthy of His praise, and He loves us even when we do things that sadden Him. To think that there isn't even one condition to His love is truly amazing!

His love is everlasting. It's not something that will be here one day and gone the next. Jesus' love will not expire or fade. It can't be stolen or forfeited. It doesn't get old with the times or go out of style. It's traditional and historic,

but also modern and current. It's always. Even before we knew Him, He loved us. He has loved us from the very beginning of time, and He will love us throughout eternity.

Being confident in how much Jesus loves you won't just make you happier; it will be a stabilizing force in your life. When you are assured of His love for you, when you trust and believe in it, then that knowledge will steady and give you peace, even when you face disappointments, heartbreaks, difficulties, or anything else that life sends your way. His love is strong enough to see you through anything. It's durable, dependable, and forever!

MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND SPIRITUAL OVERSEERS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ❀

got potential?

By PETER AMSTERDAM

WHAT CAN YOU REALISTICALLY EXPECT TO BE OR ACCOMPLISH? That depends in part on how you define “realistic.” Nobody knows what we’re capable of better than God, and often His definition of “realistic” is “potential.”

He knows our limits—“He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust”¹—but He also sees our hearts and continually looks at us from the viewpoint of what we can become.

God expects us to do what we can, but He doesn’t expect us to be perfect. He knows we’ll never be perfect, and if we’re smart we’ll realize that it’s foolish for us to try or pretend to be. We have to do our part, but our part isn’t to be perfect—and that’s the beauty of God’s plan!

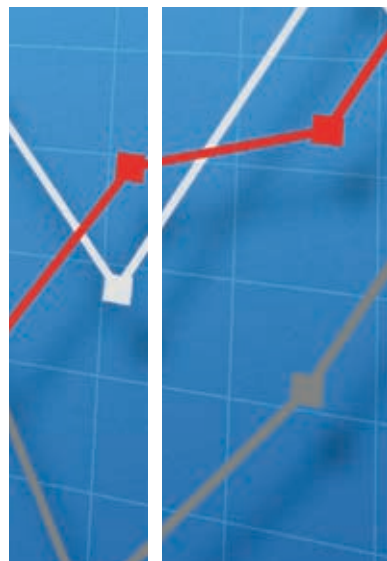
Once we receive Jesus as our Savior, He lives in us. And if we will remember that we’re weak and imperfect and nothing, really, without Him,² He can come through and be our everything. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”³ His strength is made perfect in our weakness.⁴ God loves to do amazing, extraordinary things through some of the most unlikely, imperfect people who find themselves in the most seemingly impossible situations. He does that to show us what He can do. It’s never about how good or strong we are. It’s about God and His goodness and power.

With God nothing is impossible, and He knows that no matter what has happened in the past or what our current weaknesses or lacks may be, we can change; He can make us better. We must learn to see ourselves through the eyes of faith, through the perspective of what we can become, what God’s power can transform us into, what Jesus can be in us.

So what if you aren’t perfect! Who is? You can still be a great success in life if you let the Spirit of God work in you and through you. His Spirit will fill in the gaps of the little problems and imperfections. God doesn’t need perfection from us to work His wonders.

Make room for God to work by not looking at your shortcomings and imperfections, but rather by looking to Him to help you reach your full potential as you do your part and hold Him to the promises He has made to you in His Word.

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND SPIRITUAL OVERSEERS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ✠



1. Psalm 103:14

2. John 15:5

3. 2 Corinthians 4:7

4. 2 Corinthians 12:9



puzzle pieces

BY NYX MARTINEZ

WHEN EVERYONE LIT FIREWORKS at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, did you celebrate in vibrant cheer? Or did the clock's chime bring a kind of melancholy as you silently pondered the future?

As the shouts of "Happy New Year" rang out, was it a joyful moment for you? Or was it tinged with anxiety about the future?

Last year, it was all a little hazy to me. We clinked our glasses and toasted one another with the usual buzz of a New Year's celebration, but as I tossed in my bed later, I wondered what was in store for me.

I was excited about many future prospects; I knew that change was in the air. I was on a high and a low at the same time, and while on the verge of making decisions, couldn't quite come to any.

The following days of uncertainty stretched into a week, then two. I pondered, procrastinated, and prayed. A lot. To no avail.

Then one day, a package arrived in the mail. Along with clothes and chocolates, my aunt had sent me a child's puzzle. Amused, I laid it aside to give to my little brother.

When four-year-old RJ saw it, he excitedly took the box into another room to open. Soon, though, he was back—and he was in a frenzy.

"The puzzle has no picture!" he exclaimed. "You have to *draw* the picture!"

"What?"

"The puzzle has no picture!" RJ repeated.

Looking closer, I realized it was one of those do-it-yourself puzzles, and so, at RJ's insistence, I drew a picture on the not-yet-disassembled puzzle. He was overjoyed.

Just when I thought he would leave me alone, RJ said, "Now you have to help me *do* it!"

He scattered the pieces on the floor, raked them into a pile, spread them out again, and sat there, arms crossed, cheerfully confident that I would do the work for him.

I hesitated, but eventually gave in. "Okay, we'll do it together," I said. "It's easy!"

I had intended for RJ to color the picture before he took the puzzle apart, but he hadn't. The pieces were a mess of black and white lines that didn't seem to fit together. But RJ wouldn't be deterred.

I showed him how to find the corner pieces first, then the edges, and then to hunt for pieces where elements of the picture were recognizable—eye pieces over here with nose pieces, leaf pieces with flower pieces, etc.

Bit by bit, it started to come together.

I watched as RJ slowly found and fitted each puzzle piece into its proper place. He sometimes shook his head in frustration. Other times he threw up his hands in exasperation and said aloud, "Aw, that doesn't go here!"

And each time he was convinced there was something wrong with the puzzle itself. Time and again I had to reassure him that



the pieces would indeed all fit together once he had each one in the right place.

“It’s all part of the same picture,” I would say. “We just need to find where it goes.”

It took a half hour before the picture of a cat playing in a garden was completed, but when it finally was, a look of smug satisfaction spread across RJ’s face.

I was smiling too, because right then I understood that I was like a little child, trying to sort out the puzzle pieces of my life, getting confused and frustrated, wanting to say I couldn’t do it.

All those pieces are part of the same puzzle, whispered a gentle inner voice that I have come to recognize as Jesus’. *We just need to find where they go.*

Just as I had sat with my little brother, hinting where pieces would fit, Jesus would sit with me as I sorted out this pile called my future.

There I was, trying to get rid of parts that didn’t seem to make sense, crying out in a fit

of frustration that I didn’t know what went where. And there He was, all the time reassuring me that it was going to be okay, that all the pieces would come together. He could be certain of that because He was the artist who had drawn it. It would take time and I would have to be patient, but when all the pieces were finally in place, I too would smile with satisfaction.

And that’s just what happened. With a few more hints from Jesus, a few days before I sat down to write this story, the pieces all came together.

Today I look at the puzzle of the next year, and I am excited! Things are already beginning to fall into place. I’m sorting the corners and the edges. I’m seeing something unfold before my eyes. I have learned that all the pieces are needed.

And yes, it’s going to be a beautiful picture.

NYX MARTINEZ IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE PHILIPPINES. ✨

I understood that I was like a little child, trying to sort out the puzzle pieces of my life, getting confused and frustrated, wanting to say I couldn’t do it.

now and forever

By MARIA FONTAINE

AS THE NEW YEAR BEGINS, many people are looking forward with a measure of trepidation to what lies ahead for them and their families and friends, as well as for the world in general. It's comforting to know that whatever the future holds and whatever problems or hardships you may face, Jesus wants to help you through them. If you have received Him as your Savior, you can count on His extra special care.

I've found that some of the most moving passages in the Gospels are in John chapters 14 through 17. Jesus was spending time with His closest followers, talking with them, teaching them, praying for them, and encouraging them—preparing them for the fact that He would soon be leaving this physical realm, and explaining that His Spirit would continue to always be with them.

He reminded them that He was their passage to heaven,¹ and told them about the beautiful mansions He would make ready for them there.² He promised to answer their prayers.³ He told them about the Holy Spirit.⁴ He promised them supernatural peace.⁵

He taught them the importance of remaining close to Him in spirit in order to have the kind of life He wanted for them.⁶ He called them His friends.⁷ He challenged them to share His love and truth with others, and promised to reward them for doing so by answering their prayers and working through them.⁸ He promised grace and peace through tribulation, and confidently proclaimed that He had overcome the world⁹—“the world” meaning the godlessness that prevails in this temporal world.

Then He prayed for His disciples. “Father, I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one [the Devil]. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”¹⁰

It's not easy to live in the world and not be tossed about by the “waves” of this world's woes, but it is not impossible. The secret is to keep your eyes on Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith,”¹¹ and to trust Him to keep you afloat.¹²

He has promised to be with you now and forever, through thick and thin,¹³ and nothing can separate you from His loving care.¹⁴ ✠

1. John 14:6

2. John 14:2–3

3. John 14:13–14

4. John 14:16,26

5. John 14:27

6. John 15:1,3–5

7. John 15:15

8. John 15:8,16

9. John 16:33

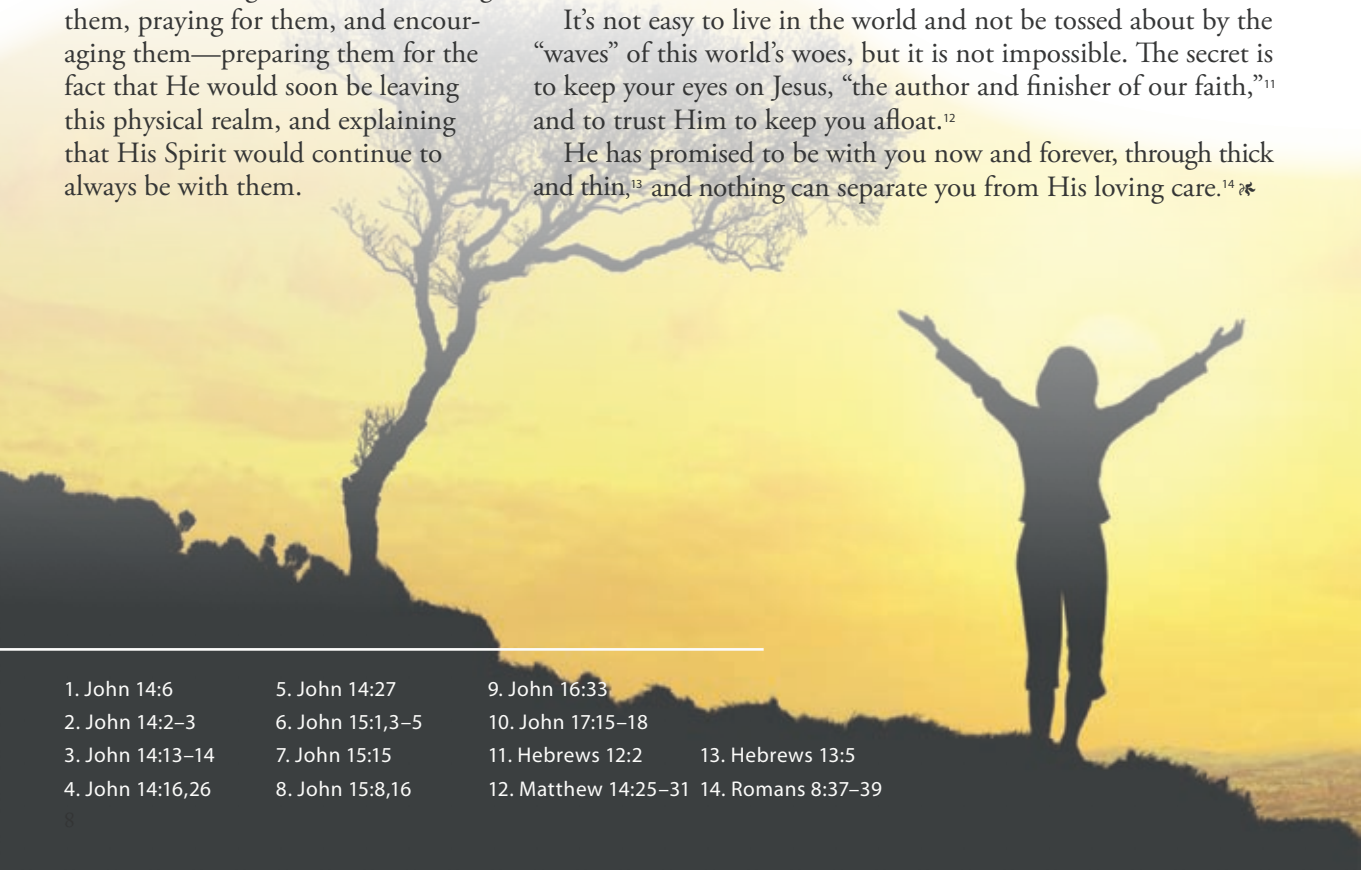
10. John 17:15–18

11. Hebrews 12:2

12. Matthew 14:25–31

13. Hebrews 13:5

14. Romans 8:37–39



RESOLUTIONS

BY IAN BACH

This year...

I'll take more time to laugh and smile,
To feel the wind upon my face,
To learn true wisdom from a child,
Give my soul the needed space,
To live life pure and clear...
...this year.

This year...

I'll learn to turn off my computer,
Interact with human beings,
Spend less time in online stupor,
More time learning, breathing, seeing
All that life holds dear...
...this year.

This year...

I will resolve to write that letter
That I have too long neglected,
Make an aching heart feel better,
Cheer a friend who feels dejected,
Bring someone some cheer...
...this year.

This year...

I'll not be hijacked by my deadlines,
Or imprisoned by ambitions.
Or let dismal, gloomy headlines
Dictate my heart's disposition.
I'll choose faith, not fear...
...this year.

This year...

I'll see the struggling flower beneath
The hard, frosty exterior
Of one who lets frustration seethe
Because they feel inferior.
I'll try to draw them near...
...this year.

This year...

No high-and-mighty resolutions
Fit for presidents and kings.
I'll start a quiet revolution,
Seek these simple loving things
Above wealth or career...
...this year.

IAN BACH IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY
INTERNATIONAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST. 

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU

"I have come that you may have life," Jesus said, "and that you may have it more abundantly."¹ And He wasn't talking *only* about eternal life in heaven. If you have received Jesus, things you never dreamed possible are possible for you right here and now! In fact, *anything* is possible.² With His help, you can reach goals that have eluded you and overcome bad habits and weaknesses that have held you back.

His power is unlimited,³ but He needs your cooperation. How much and how quickly you change depends largely on how much you desire it, how much you ask for His help, and how much you depend on Him. It's not a matter of trying to bring about the change yourself through willpower or self-effort, but rather of learning to let Jesus do the work. You do that by spending time with Him, reading His Word and meditating on it, and then applying it as you go about your day. Jesus promises, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."⁴ Now *that* is power to change!

1. John 10:10

2. Mark 9:23

3. Matthew 28:18

4. John 15:7

11 Tips

MAKING RESOLUTIONS REALITIES

1. **MAKE A LIST OF YOUR GOALS** and select the top three to five that are the most important to you. Pray for God's guidance in the process. He knows best.

2. **BE REALISTIC.** Reaching for a goal should stretch you, but it should also be doable. Decide on a reasonable time frame for reaching each goal.

3. **DON'T TRY TO DO EVERYTHING AT ONCE.** Focus on your top goal for a set period of time. Then move to goal number two, while maintaining the progress made toward reaching the first one, and so on.

4. **PRAY.** Prayer brings into play the spiritual help you need to reach your goals.

5. **WORK WITH GOD.** Change involves overcoming past thought and behavioral patterns. This is never easy, but change for the better is possible if you ask God to help and follow His lead. "With God nothing will be impossible."¹

6. **CHART YOUR PROGRESS.** Keep track of how far you've come, using a journal or chart. Keeping records and reviewing them periodically can also help you to identify weak spots.

7. **GET HELP FROM OTHERS.** Share your plan with a friend and ask for his or her help. Being accountable to someone will give you added

incentive to stick to your resolutions even when it's tough.

8. **DON'T BE DISCOURAGED BY YOUR MISTAKES.** You will have some setbacks and "off" days. Take these lows as a reminder that you can't do it on your own. Draw closer to God and depend more on His help. Tomorrow is a fresh chance to do better!

9. **BE IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL.** If you are truly serious about making a change, you will be willing to see it through, no matter how long it takes.

10. **VISUALIZE VICTORY.** Periodically visualize what your life will be like once your goal is reached. Picture the advantages you will gain and how much happier, healthier, or more productive you will be.

11. **REWARD YOURSELF FOR EACH GOAL YOU REACH.** The real reward will be the feeling of accomplishment and the benefits you'll experience from the change you've made, but having a physical treat attached to a specific goal can make it even more enjoyable. ✂

"NOBODY CAN GO BACK AND START A NEW BEGINNING, BUT ANYONE CAN START TODAY AND MAKE A NEW ENDING."

—MARIA ROBINSON

1. Luke 1:37



Seize the Day!



One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today.

—*Dale Carnegie*

The only limits to the possibilities in your life tomorrow are the “buts” you use today.

—*Les Brown*

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow.

—*Albert Einstein*

What is not started today is never finished tomorrow.

—*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Today is a most unusual day, because we have never lived it before; we will never live it again; it is the only day we have.

—*William A. Ward*

Build to-day, then, strong and sure,
With a firm and ample base;
And ascending and secure
Shall to-morrow find its place.

—*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*
(“*The Builders*”)

You had better live your best and act your best and think your best today; for today is the sure preparation for tomorrow and all the other tomorrows that follow.

—*Harriet Martineau*

I, not events, have the power to make me happy or unhappy today. I can choose which it shall be. Yesterday is dead, tomorrow hasn't arrived yet. I have just one day, today, and I'm going to be happy in it.

—*Groucho Marx*

Never let yesterday use up too much of today.

—*Will Rogers*

I am not afraid of tomorrow, for I have seen yesterday and I love today!

—*William Allen White*

The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today.

—*H. Jackson Brown, Jr.*

Light tomorrow with today!

—*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

GO FOR GOLD IN 2010

By the apostle Paul, writing from the 1st century

In a race everyone runs, but only one person gets first prize. So run your race to win.¹

I do not count myself to have apprehended [attained]; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.²

Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.³



1. 1 Corinthians 9:24 TLB

2. Philippians 3:13–14

3. Hebrews 12:1–2

The Dawn of a New Year

BY ANDREW MATEYAK

ON THE FIRST DAY OF EACH NEW YEAR, I get up at around 5:00 am to watch the sun rise, and go to a spot I have already picked out, where there is a good view. This year I have chosen the roof.

As I sit down, I think about all of the good things that happened to me in the past year. I thank God for each one and then tuck them away—wonderful memories that I can recall whenever I need a boost.

Of course, there were also other experiences that weren't so happy. I thank God for these too, because even though not easy or pleasant, He has promised that "all things work together for good to those who love Him."¹ I know these events have already been good for me because I learned from them, and more good may yet come from them.

As the sun begins to break over the horizon, I say my last goodbyes to the old year and welcome the New Year with a short prayer to our heavenly Father. I ask Him for guidance and wisdom in the year ahead. I ask Him for strength and courage to make it through the tough times that are inevitable. I ask Him for more love, as well as the ability to better show love and consideration to my family and friends and new people I will meet. Most importantly, I ask Him to help me think more in terms of what He wants me to do and what will please Him, rather than be led by my own thoughts and desires, because then I know I have nothing to fear and can look forward to a wonderful, fulfilling year. "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."²

ANDREW MATEYAK IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE PHILIPPINES. ✨

1. Romans 8:28

2. Psalm 37:4–5

FEEDING READING

Changing for the better

God wants only the best for us.

Psalms 84:11b

Jeremiah 29:11

Matthew 7:9–11

Luke 12:32

God can and will help us change for the better, if we let Him.

2 Timothy 1:12b

Philippians 1:6

Philippians 2:13

But the natural man resists change.

Mark 7:9

Luke 5:39

Yieldedness to the Lord's will is the key to beneficial change.

1 Samuel 3:18b

Psalms 40:8

Isaiah 64:8

Jeremiah 42:6a

Matthew 6:10b

During the changing process, we must do two things: not worry about the past and keep our eyes on the goal ahead.

Philippians 3:13–14

2 Corinthians 4:18

Colossians 3:2

Hebrews 12:1–2



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

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for all the wrongs I have done. I now open the door of my heart and I ask You to come in. Give me Your gift of eternal life, fill me with Your love, and help me become all I can be. Amen.

“Sorry-ness”

BY JOSIE CLARK



I THINK I HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF SAYING “I’M SORRY” TOO MUCH, AND THAT SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN MY CHILDREN THE WRONG IDEA. Years ago, for example, when my five-year-old fell off his bike, I said I was sorry. I had specifically told him to not ride up the hill on his newly acquired used bike until his dad had checked the brakes and taught him to use them, but he went up the hill anyway.

The brakes worked fine, as it turned out, but he didn’t know what to do and panicked. He sailed down the hill, veered into a cornfield, and caromed back onto the road, where he crashed. He doesn’t remember anything after that, but he was found chin down on the asphalt and needed some stitches. When I arrived at the scene of the accident, I said I was sorry.

Of course, I was sorry. I felt terrible for not having watched him more closely. I felt his pain as we rushed him to the hospital. I still feel sorry every time I notice the scar it left. But somehow, my “sorry-ness” caused a misunderstanding.

A few weeks ago we talked about this event that took place years ago, and he still thought that accident was somehow my fault. He didn’t remember the clear warning. He didn’t remember disobeying. He only remembers me saying I was

sorry, which he took at the time to mean that I had been to blame, not him.

Sorry-ness is an easy habit to fall into, and it can develop into a pattern where teens blame their parents for the consequences of their own bad decisions. In reality, if the parents have been doing their job of teaching their children to make smart, responsible decisions, when accidents happen or things go wrong, it is usually the children’s fault for not listening to their parents.

I’m sorry my son disobeyed. I’m sorry he got hurt. And I’m sorry I allowed that misunderstanding to happen. I’m sorry for my sorry-ness. I should have said, “I’m so sorry *you* disobeyed. I’m sorry *you* didn’t listen. I’m sorry this happened, but I’m sure you learned a good lesson and won’t make this same mistake again.”

The happy ending to this story is that I was able to clear up this misunderstanding with my son, who is now a teenager facing much bigger decisions than where to ride his bike. He knows he will always have my help, love, and sympathy, but he also understands that ultimately he bears the responsibility for his decisions.

JOSIE CLARK IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S. ✨

The Seasons of Life

A MEDITATION ON ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8

BY ABI F. MAY

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven...

Thank You, God, for the seasons of my life, each having its own special beauty.

"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."—Psalm 118:24

A time to be born, and a time to die...

Thank You for the gift of life, and thank You that one day I will pass from this life to the next, carried onwards through Your love.

"My times are in Your hand."
—Psalm 31:15

A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted...

Thank You for both success and failure; experience is a hard but faithful teacher.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand."—Psalm 37:23-24

A time to kill, and a time to heal...

Thank You for the sicknesses and other troubles that You have allowed in my life, so that I could rely more on You. Thank You for bringing me through them all.

"To you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings."

—Malachi 4:2

A time to break down, and a time to build up...

There have been disappointments and losses; thank You for how they have made room for better things.

"We know that all things work together for good to those who love God."—Romans 8:28

A time to weep, and a time to laugh...

Thank You for seasons of sorrow and of joy, for the sunshine that is even more appreciated after a storm.

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

—Psalm 30:5

A time to mourn, and a time to dance...

Thank You that despite the sadness I feel at the loss of loved ones, I have the enduring comfort of knowing they are happy in heaven and we will be together again.

"You have turned for me my mourning into dancing."

—Psalm 30:11



A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones...

Thank You for changes, which remind me that You are the one constant in my life.

"[Nothing] shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
—Romans 8:38–39

A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing...

Thank You for the company of friends and loved ones, and thank You also for times of loneliness when I experience the comfort that You alone can give.

"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."—Deuteronomy 33:27

A time to gain, and a time to lose...

Thank You for the times of need as well as the times of prosperity, each in their own way teaching me to appreciate my blessings.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."—Job 1:21

A time to keep, and a time to throw away...

Help me to let go of pride, selfishness, and other sins of the heart. Whatever the future holds, help me to hold onto what are most precious—You and Your love and truth.

"He who has begun a good work in you will complete it."—Philippians 1:6



A time to tear,¹ and a time to sew...

Even when I go astray, You never withdraw Your love. Your mercy and forgiveness make me want to do better.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—1 John 1:9

A time to keep silence, and a time to speak...

Thank You for always being there to listen to my problems, offer solutions, and put me on a positive path. Help me to be more like that with others.

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak."—James 1:19

A time to love, and a time to hate...

Help me to forgive those who wrong me—to "love the sinner but hate the sin"—as You do with me.

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you."—Ephesians 4:32

A time of war, and a time of peace.

War will be with us as long as evil exists in this world, but thank You that one day You will put a stop to all that. In the meantime, help me to be a peacemaker.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."—Matthew 5:9 KJV

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1. In Bible times, tearing one's garment was a sign of grief or repentance.



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

The Climb to Victory

The rugged climb doesn't dissuade the determined mountain climber; he revels in the challenge. Nothing can stop him from pressing on until he reaches his goal. No adversity can cause him to turn back. When he looks at the steep cliffs ahead, he doesn't focus on the danger but on the toeholds and narrow rock ledges that will take him to the peak. He isn't held back by the harshness of his surroundings or the toll the climb is taking on his body; he is propelled onward and upward by the thought of triumph.

There are many obstacles to surmount in life, but each one you conquer is another one behind you. When the going gets tough, lean on Me. Let Me lead the way and guide you up the rugged cliffs. I know all the danger spots and how to get past them. Together we will surmount each obstacle, together we will reach the summit, and together we will plant the flag of victory!