

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

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RESOLUTIONS

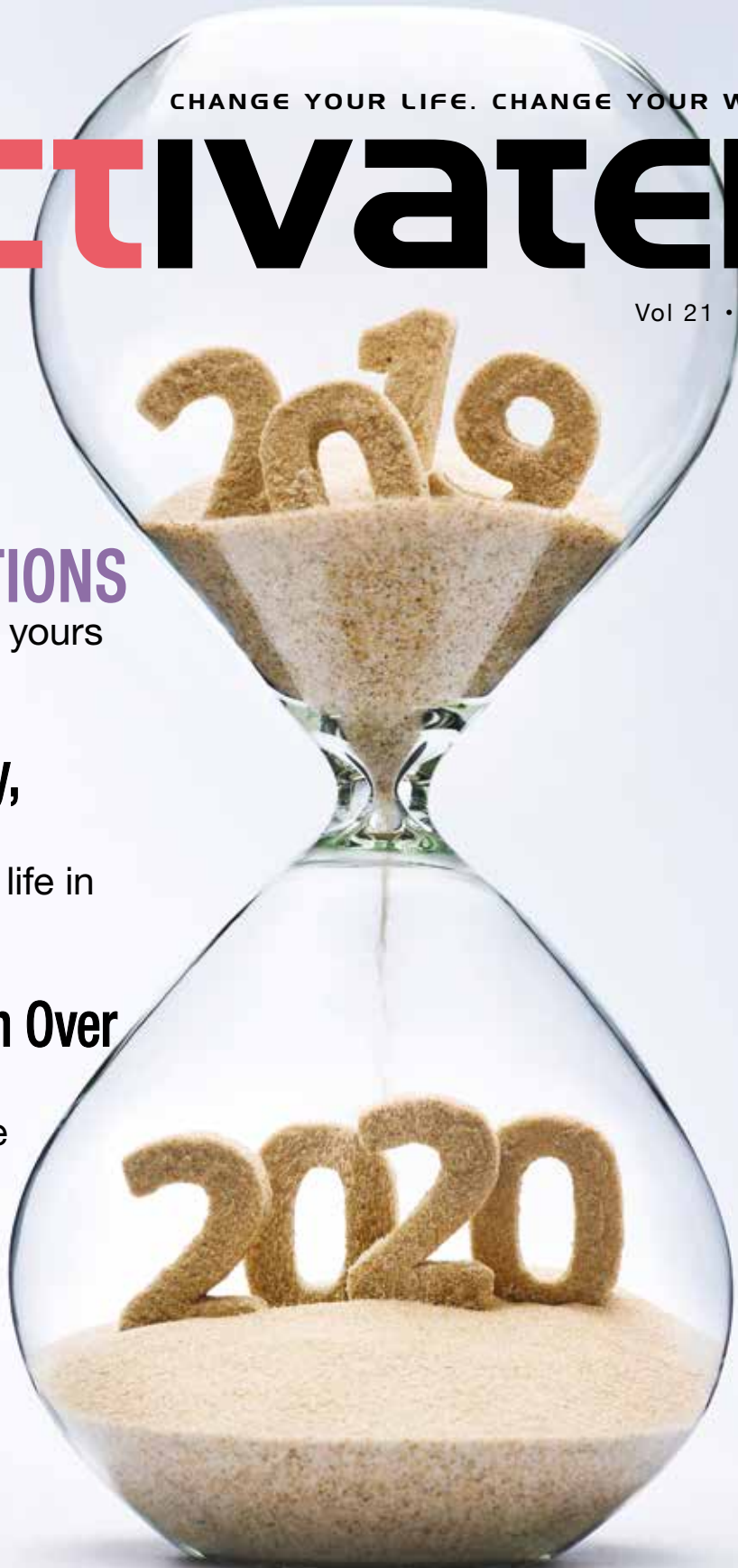
How to make your realities

Don't Worry, Be Happy!

Improve your life in three steps

Keep Watch Over My Hands

The text gone wrong



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

STEPPING INTO THE NEW YEAR

I recently read an anecdote about a teacher who took her primary school students to the assembly hall to attend a presentation. As they waited at the foot of the steps leading up to the stage, she asked, "Is anybody good at jumping?"

Quite a few young hands shot up.

"Could any of you jump from the floor here up onto the stage?"

No hands went up this time.

"I can," said the teacher, "and I'll show you how." Beginning at the foot of the steps leading up to the stage, she hopped onto the first step. From there she hopped onto the second, and so on until she reached the top.

As this story demonstrates, there are many things that can only be accomplished little by little, step by step. When a task looks daunting or the way ahead too steep, just take it one step at a time.

This applies to looking into the future as well. Too often we try to foresee all scenarios, or we find ourselves, like Mara, worrying about what's going to happen weeks or even months ahead (see pp. 8–9), but God tells us, "Take it a day at a time."¹ We aren't equipped to deal with our future cares today, but with God's help, we can face each challenge as it comes.

No matter what happens this year, remember that Jesus loves you unconditionally and He will care for you. "I love you with an everlasting love," He says. "So I will continue to show you my kindness."²

A very happy 2020 to you and yours from all of us at *Activated*.

1. See Matthew 6:34.

2. Jeremiah 31:3 GW

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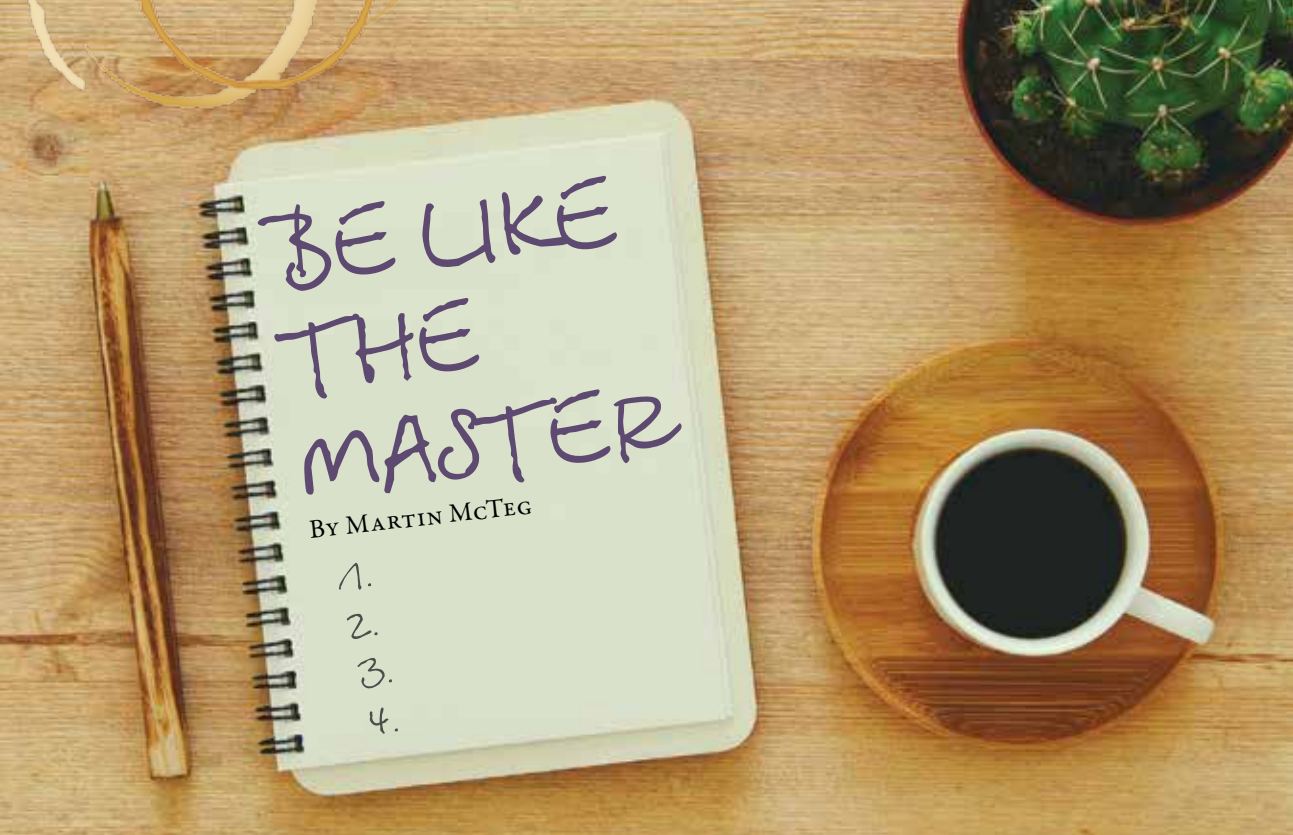
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THE NEW YEAR IS ALREADY HERE and I am still contemplating what my resolution should be. I am not overweight and I get enough exercise, so those won't do for me.

I was actually thinking more along the lines of a spiritual goal or some personality traits that I could try to strengthen, some way to become a better person. In an article I once read, the author made an interesting point: When trying to tackle a problem you face, or grow in some way in your spiritual life, ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?" and go from there.

I was curious to find out more about this now widely used phrase and its origins, so I did a search on the Internet and found that the

1. Philippians 4:13

phrase "What would Jesus do?" and its initialism, WWJD, have been used by Christians for over 100 years as a reference point to follow Christ's example in their daily lives.

So that's my New Year's resolution. I will try to get in the habit of asking myself "What would Jesus do?" I'm not thinking about walking on water or raising the dead. I'm not in that league. But there are some things that I can do to follow His example on a day-to-day basis.

- *I can make time each day for prayer, as Jesus did.*
- *I can love without discrimination, as Jesus did.*
- *I can make time for children, even if I'm busy, as Jesus did.*
- *I can try to handle difficult situations wisely, as Jesus did.*
- *I can humble myself, as Jesus did.*
- *I can serve others, as Jesus did.*

- *I can be a peacemaker, as Jesus was.*
- *I can do my best to conform to God's plan for my life, as Jesus did.*

This "What would Jesus do?" looks like a pretty tall order for me. But I'm going to give it a try. And I think it's going to turn out quite well, as I have memorized a verse from the Bible that tells me that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."¹

And the more I think about it, the more inspired I am to put it into practice. I hope that with time it will become automatic for me to ask myself "What would Jesus do?" and by God's grace, respond accordingly.

MARTIN MCTEG IS A FORMER MISSIONARY VOLUNTEER, NOW RETIRED, AND LIVING IN THE USA. ■



A PRAYER LIST FOR THE NEW YEAR

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW YEAR. Even though January 1st follows December 31st the same as any day follows the previous one, to many of us, entering a new year brings with it the feeling of a new beginning, a fresh start. Last year is now behind us, and there are new horizons ahead.

At the beginning of any new endeavor, it's wise to ask God for His direction, guidance, and blessing. This is equally true as we face the adventures that the next year will bring. There will no doubt be challenges, victories, wins, and losses. And we will need God's presence, help, and comfort through it all.

In pondering about the year ahead, I compiled the following prayer list and Bible verses for the New Year, which I hope will inspire you as it has me.¹

★ TO KNOW GOD AND HIS WILL

I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God.—*Ephesians 1:16–17*

We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.—*Colossians 1:9*

1. All Scripture quotations in this article, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New Living Translation.
2. Acts 26:18

★ TO HUNGER FOR GOD'S WORD

Blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice.—*Luke 11:28*

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.—*1 Peter 2:2 NKJV*

★ TO BEAR FRUIT

The way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.—*Colossians 1:10*

When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.—*John 15:8*

★ FOR PATIENCE, STRENGTH, AND JOY

His glorious power will make you patient and strong enough to endure anything, and you will be truly happy.—*Colossians 1:11 CEV*

★ TO KEEP FROM TEMPTATION AND EVIL

Keep us from being tempted and protect us from evil.—*Matthew 6:13 CEV*

★ TO BE GENEROUS

Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.—*Luke 6:38*



★ **FOR THOSE WHO ARE MINISTERING TO OTHERS**
Pray that the Lord's message will spread rapidly and be honored wherever it goes.—*2 Thessalonians 3:1*

Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.—*Colossians 4:6*

★ **FOR GOD'S PROTECTION**
The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you.—*2 Thessalonians 3:3 NIV*

★ **FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS**
Most of us can practice our faith in peace, but that is not the case for many believers around the world. According to one organization which ministers to persecuted Christians, there are 215 million Christians who experience high, very high, or extreme levels of persecution. Our suffering brethren need our support in prayer.

Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.—*Hebrews 13:3*

★ **FOR THOSE WHO ARE MOURNING**
Many grieve the death of someone they were close to. Those whose lives are touched by tragedy and are filled with grief, who face the loneliness of bereavement, are in need of prayer.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.—*Revelation 21:4*

★ **FOR OUR FAMILIES AND LOVED ONES**
Asking God to protect our loved ones and help them make wise choices is a way to show them love and better their lives. Even if there is conflict within the family, we can pray for the healing of misunderstandings and hurt.

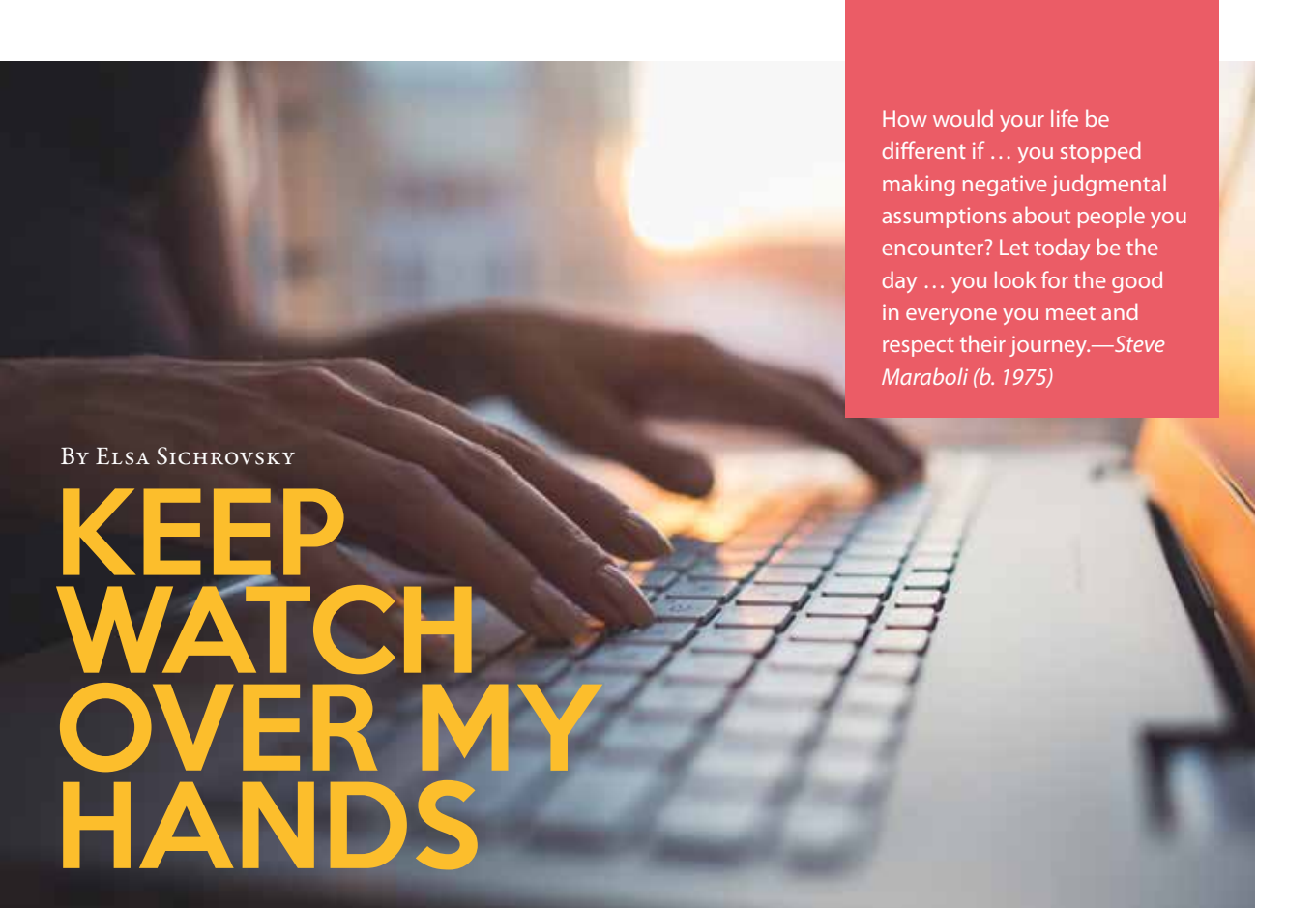
I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them.—*1 Timothy 2:1*

★ **FOR THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW JESUS**
That they will "open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people."²

God wants everyone to be saved and to know the whole truth.—*1 Timothy 2:4 CEV*

I pray that your year ahead will be filled with God's love, joy, and peace, and that His blessings will be abundantly poured upon you and your loved ones.

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



How would your life be different if ... you stopped making negative judgmental assumptions about people you encounter? Let today be the day ... you look for the good in everyone you meet and respect their journey.—Steve Maraboli (b. 1975)

BY ELSA SICHROVSKY

KEEP WATCH OVER MY HANDS

THE BIBLE HAS A LOT TO SAY ABOUT THE POWER OF WHAT WE SAY. One of my favorite verses is “Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.”¹ Obviously, the Bible was written before the current era of social media and messenger apps, so it’s silent about the potential to either help or hurt when I use my fingers to tap out messages. I recently had an experience that taught me that the biblical warnings about the tongue should guide me to text with equal prayerfulness and prudence.

Three coworkers and I were working on a project and, due to our hectic schedules, we frequently had

1. Psalm 141:3 NIV

discussions on Facebook Messenger. On one occasion, John was unexpectedly absent for a crucial online discussion, and as a result, the rest of us were unable to come to any decisions without the information that he was responsible for presenting.

In my exasperation over his unexplained absence and our wasted time, I fired off a text in the group chat: “I hate trying to have group discussions when one of our group members is missing!”

Up to this point, John had been a helpful and responsible team member, but shortly after this absence, he became uninterested. Later, I heard from a mutual friend that on the day of that important meeting John had had some urgent matters come up

and he hadn’t intended to neglect his commitment to the project. He felt hurt by my outburst and had almost decided to leave the group.

I realized that if we’d been having a face-to-face discussion, I probably wouldn’t have burst out with that remark. But with a feeling of safety behind the barrier of my laptop screen, I’d felt free to let loose with whatever came to mind. Regardless of whether my frustration was warranted or not, I realized that I had my own lesson to learn. “Set a guard over my fingers, Lord; keep watch over my hands when I text!”

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

BY MARIA FONTAINE

GOODBYE PAST, HELLO FUTURE

OUR FUTURE ISN'T LIMITED BY OUR PAST. No matter what point we're at now, the future is *still* as bright as God's promises.

If you're not where you want to be, there's time to change that. It's human nature to look back and have regrets about some of the things you did, or to wish you'd done things differently. God understands that and sympathizes. But don't overlook the good that also came from those experiences—the wisdom, maturity, and lessons learned, which have helped to shape your character and prepare you for better things to come.

When you look back on the past, remember those “true, noble, just, pure, and lovely” things that also make up the story of your life.¹ Thank God for the good decisions you made in the past, as well as those that He's going to help you make in the future. ■

1. Philippians 4:8



FORWARD, ALWAYS FORWARD!

Don't let mistakes of the past blur your vision for the future. Focus on the good to come.—*Mottos for Success (MFS)*

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.—*Hebrews 12:1–2*

I am willing to go anywhere, anywhere, anywhere—so long as it's forward.—*David Livingstone (1813–1873)*

Never hesitate to trust the unknown future to a known God.—*MFS*

Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.—*William Carey (1761–1834)*

The New Year is set before us like an unwritten volume, all of its pages blank. Let us write upon each day's page things that at the end of the year we will look upon with rejoicing rather than regret.—*MFS*

Faith gives us courage to face the present with confidence and the future with expectancy.—*MFS*

The world is a book and every step turns a new page.—*Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869)*

Commit your life, your plans, your hopes, your dreams, and your fears to God through prayer every day. In return you will have peace in your life.—*MFS*

The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.—*Proverbs 4:18 NIV*



BY MARA HODLER

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY!

THERE ARE SOME THINGS I'M GOOD AT: I can clean, organize, delegate, and plan like a boss. I can cook well enough to get paid to do it, and I can write pretty well. But I have one skill that I haven't yet figured out how to market, and when I do, I'm fairly certain it will make me rich. I can worry with such skill and creativity that I'm convinced it's worth something!

I can imagine all the possible worst-case scenarios and outcomes for companies and individuals. I can worry about things that are *actual* possibilities, as well as

things that are so far-fetched they would make terrific movie scripts! I'd love to put this skill to work, because at the moment it's really more of a liability—something that robs me of peace and tranquility and wastes a lot of time and energy.

God's Word takes a clear position on worrying: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself."¹ Another passage says, "Do not be anxious for anything."² How come I can so easily and comfortably worry about things when the Bible tells me so clearly not to?

There are times—lots of times—when my worrying steals all the joy out of my life. I've, literally, cried

about tragedies that never happened. I've raged about difficulties that never materialized. I've stressed over problems that never came to pass. Sometimes I feel foolish when after a sleepless night spent crying, worrying, and stressing, I wake up in the morning to a tragedy-free life! I've been through this cycle enough times that I'm starting to realize the futility and uselessness of it. I can't say that I've broken the habit, or harnessed any amazing meditation techniques that have eliminated my worrying, but I'm starting to think that maybe I should simply ... stop.

Here's some advice and techniques I picked up from the American writer and lecturer Dale Carnegie:

1. Matthew 6:34 NIV
2. Philippians 4:6 NIV
3. www.just1thing.com



1. Ask yourself what's the worst that can happen and make peace with it.

That might seem a little scary to do, but I find it's one of the best ways to let go of worry. In the words of Carnegie, "Once you accept the worst that can happen, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. It's the beginning of freedom."

2. Keep busy.


I worry the most at night. Sometimes getting up and doing something, or praying for others and their situations, is easier than just lying there.

3. Set about doing the things that actually can be done to improve the situation.


Sometimes there's something that I can do, like make a phone call, send an email, or just commit the issue to God in prayer.

No matter how bad or difficult things get, there is always something to be grateful for. And eliminating as much worry as we can from our lives will save us time and energy. Time and energy that we can use toward building or working at the things that really matter.


THIS ARTICLE WAS ADAPTED FROM A PODCAST ON JUST1THING,³ A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. ■




It is more fitting for a man to laugh at life than to lament over it.—*Seneca (4 BC–65)*



The reason people find it so hard to be happy is that they always see the past better than it was, the present worse than it is, and the future less resolved than it will be.—*Marcel Pagnol (1895–1974)*



Men spend their lives in anticipations, in determining to be vastly happy at some period when they have time. But the present time has one advantage over every other—it is our own. Past opportunities are gone, future [ones] have not come. We may lay in a stock of pleasures, as we would lay in a stock of wine; but if we defer the tasting of them too long, we shall find that both are soured by age.—*Charles Caleb Colton (1780–1832)*



The value of a smile... It costs nothing, but creates much. It enriches those who receive, without impoverishing those who give. It happens in a flash and the memory of it sometimes lasts forever. None are so rich they can get along without it, and none so poor but are richer for its benefits. It creates happiness in the home, fosters good will in a business, and is the countersign of friends.—*Dale Carnegie (1888–1955)*

TOMORROW

By Major D. W. Whittle

I have nothing to do with tomorrow
My Savior will make that His care.
Should it [come] with trouble and sorrow,
He'll help me to suffer and bear.
I have nothing to do with tomorrow
Its burden then why should I share?
Its grace and its strength I can't borrow,
So why should I borrow its care? ■



BY MARIE ALVERO

JOY AND GOOD TIMES

HERE'S A GREAT VERSE: “The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy.”¹

I have years of Bible study and learning under my belt, but I’m not sure I’ve heard this verse before. At least, its meaning has always slipped past me.

The verse is talking about a period of Israel’s history, during the reign of King Solomon, when there was peace in the land and great prosperity. And what did the people do? They feasted, partied, and were merry!

Sadly, this is a new concept for me. I’m the girl who’s always waiting for the inevitable. When things are good, my instinct is not to enjoy it. Rather, I start to worry,

wondering around which corner my next struggle-slash-tragedy-slash-suffering is lurking. I used to think I was preparing myself, but what if I was forfeiting opportunities for joy?

Obviously, we experience sadness, suffering and even prolonged seasons

of hardship. But the more I learn about the nature of God, the more I understand how vested He is in our happiness. Abundant joy is a blessing from His hand: “This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it!”²

In the hard times and the struggles, which are guaranteed parts of life, I’ll continue to depend on God’s grace, joy, and peace. But in the good times, when there are happy kids, good friends, blue skies, and a good man loving me, I’m going to celebrate life and be happy! I’m going to recognize how wonderful life is, and I hope you will too!

MARIE ALVERO IS A FORMER MISSIONARY TO AFRICA AND MEXICO. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES A HAPPY, BUSY LIFE WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN IN CENTRAL TEXAS, USA. ■

Happiness doesn’t depend on what we have, but it does depend on how we feel toward what we have. We can be happy with little and miserable with much.—*William D. Hoard (1836–1918)*

Our happiness depends on the habit of mind we cultivate. So practice happy thinking every day. Cultivate the merry heart, develop the happiness habit, and life will become a continual feast.—*Norman Vincent Peale (1898–1993)*

1. 1 Kings 4:20 NIV

2. Psalm 118:24



GOD, GREEK, AND GREAT HOPE

BY CHRIS MIZRANY

IN SPITE OF EVERY INDICATION THAT THERE ARE DIFFICULT TIMES AHEAD, I'm excited about this new year! I'm enthusiastic about striving for new goals and pushing myself beyond what I think I'm capable of. The noun "enthusiasm" comes from the Greek word *enthousiasmos*, from *enthous*, meaning "possessed by a god, inspired." And interestingly, it was originally used in a derogatory sense to describe excessive religious zeal.

Sure, I'm not raring to jump out of bed every morning. I struggle with doubts and fears about my life and the world at large. But ultimately my joy stands on a foundation that cannot be rocked by bags under my eyes, or missed deadlines, or family disagreements, or loss of friends, or lack of work or play.

I want to be known as enthusiastic and possessed by God! I want to be seen as zealous for the cause of Christ—excited and fervent about my faith, morals, and convictions. The world is in desperate need of men and women who reach for a higher vision than everyday monotony—the drudge and mediocrity of a weary and frustrated life. Our planet is slipping into collective despair and hopelessness—not to mention ecologically declining at a terrifying rate—and there's *seemingly* no way to prevent either curve from reaching the point of no return.

In the midst of these dreary prospects, I want to be a light that burns with hope—not *my* hope, but the

hope of the One who makes all things new. I plan to be generous with love, kindness, and positivity. I want God's Spirit dwelling fully in me. Because if God dwells in me, then there's no need to be hopeless.

I want to believe that there isn't a point of no return, because Christ made all things new. I can be enthusiastic, full of God, and overflowing with inspiration, because through Him, I have the ability to change things!

It's a new year, full of fresh opportunity. Let us not wait a moment more before starting to change the world for the better—right where we are, and most enthusiastically.

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

If you'd like to experience the "joy of the Lord,"¹ start by sincerely praying a simple prayer like the following:

Thank You, Jesus, for paying the price for my sins, mistakes, and wrongs, so I can be forgiven, put my past behind me, and look forward to the future with enthusiasm. I ask You now to please come into my heart and grant me Your gift of eternal life. Amen.

1. See Nehemiah 8:10.



ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

RESOLUTIONS

Q: *I make resolutions that I feel will help me to be a better person, but no matter how well I start off, I can't seem to keep up the momentum. What can I do to stick with my resolutions and get the results I want?*

A: You're not alone. It's difficult when we feel we're not making progress in the areas we know we need to improve in. As much as we try, and as many resolutions as we make, we sometimes can't seem to break bad habits or form new good ones. That can become so frustrating and disappointing that we eventually lose faith that we can change. Because we've tried before and failed, we feel we might as well give up.

1. See Matthew 24:35.
2. See Luke 18:27.
3. See Hebrews 11:6.

Though you may sometimes feel that way, the change you desire *is* possible. You are God's creation, and like the loving Father He is, He's very interested in every aspect of your life. He's ready, willing, and able to give you what you need to truly make progress and live up to your full potential. So if you're willing to let God help you, then you'll get the results you're looking for. All He needs is your cooperation and for you to put forth effort in the right direction. If you do what you can do, then He will do the rest.

Here are some simple tried and proven techniques for solid progress:

1. BE FULLY CONVINCED THAT THE CHANGE IS NEEDED.

Make a list of reasons for making the change. Start with your own reasons, then study God's Word on

the subject and add *His* reasons. Your own reasons may be good, but Bible-based reasons will reinforce your conviction and give you something solid to stand on when you're tempted to not live up to your resolution.¹

2. ASK FOR AND CLAIM GOD'S HELP.

If you're convinced that a certain change is what God wants for you, you can ask for and expect His help. It *is* possible for you to change in any area, because even the things that are *impossible* for you are *possible* for God.² He is always there to help you. Regularly remind Him of His promises in His Word to answer your prayers. Such reminders are a sign of your faith in Him, which pleases Him.³

3. SET REALISTIC GOALS.

Unrealistic goals are demoralizing and counterproductive. Don't attempt to break the world record in the proverbial high jump on your first try. You'll only become discouraged and quit far short of your potential. Start with the bar at a height you know you can clear with a little work, then raise it a notch at a time.

4. DON'T TRY TO IMPROVE IN TOO MANY AREAS AT ONCE.

Determine what your priorities are, and stick to those. Once you're making consistent progress in the big areas, add the others one or two at a time.

5. PROGRAM THE CHANGE INTO YOUR DAILY OR WEEKLY SCHEDULE.

Unless you set aside specific times to take positive action to enact the change—to get more exercise or go to bed earlier, for example—it will probably get lost in the press of everything else you have to do, like it has before.

6. CONFIDE IN SOMEONE.

Few things encourage and strengthen resolve like sharing your desire to change with somebody who respects you, understands your reasons, and will cheer you on. This is why support groups such as those offered by Alcoholics Anonymous are so successful.

7. BE OPEN TO HELP FROM OTHERS.

It takes humility to ask your spouse, a close friend, or a coworker for their honest opinion about how you're progressing toward your goal, but they can provide insight as well as encouragement. Nearly everyone in the record books and history books had a coach, trainer, mentor, or supportive family member.

8. MAKE A PACT.

Work together with someone who shares the same goal. Challenge each other. Spur each other on. Help one another up when one stumbles. Victories are sweetest when they're shared.

9. BE PATIENT.

Progress usually comes one step at a time, and sometimes that one step is the result of two steps forward and one step back. As long as you're making some forward progress, you're on your way toward reaching your goal. Consistency is the key. According to the experts, it takes six weeks to two months to build a new habit.

10. DON'T QUIT.

If you slip back into your old habits, don't beat yourself up and don't give up. Review your list of reasons for wanting to change. Reevaluate your means for making that change. Fix whatever went wrong. Pray and claim appropriate promises from God's Word. Then get up and try again. Every setback that you don't let stop you actually strengthens you. ■

Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing.

—Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)

BY LI LIAN

RESOLUTIONS AND RESULTS



I WATCHED AN ONLINE VIDEO OUTLINING SEVERAL FACTORS THAT ARE KEY TO LIVING AN ACTIVE, HEALTHY LIFE. One of the points was to compare the effects of sitting for long hours to the effects of smoking.

This issue got me thinking seriously about my daily schedule. Because of my work and online studies, I have to sit at a desk for long periods of time. I wanted to change that, so I decided to set a goal to lessen my sedentary hours.

I downloaded a program to convert my reading material to audio files that I could listen to on my phone while taking a vigorous walk in the fresh air and nature.¹

1. Editor's note: Several such free programs are listed here: <https://www.techradar.com/news/the-best-free-text-to-speech-software>

Since implementing this routine, I've lost weight and feel more energetic than before, which enables me to focus better on my tasks throughout the day.

Another topic was the detrimental effects of refined sugar. As an experiment, I decided to adopt a sugar-free diet for a month by cutting out all sugar, honey, jams, and other sweet treats.

By chance, I happened to start this experiment during the dry season, when sandstorms are frequent and cold winds blow in, covering the city in a fine layer of dust. Every year during this period, due to all the dust particles in the air, I usually end up with a severe cold and sore throat.

This year, though, was different. Throughout the entire dry season, I never caught a cold. It felt great to be able to exercise outside on my balcony in the cool breeze and not be

hampered by coughing or sneezing spells. I think that benefit was in large part due to the changes in my diet and exercise plan.

Since the results were good, I decided to keep it up, and I've rarely had a cold since. (I do sometimes enjoy dessert for a birthday or another special occasion, but my appetite has changed, and for the most part, I no longer have a desire to eat sugary foods.)

I've now challenged myself to continue to make these small resolutions and changes in my life and to monitor the effects on my health in order to build lifelong healthy habits.

LI LIAN IS A COMPTIA CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL AND WORKS AS AN OFFICE AND SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR FOR A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION IN AFRICA. ■



BY GABRIEL GARCÍA VALDIVIESO

NEW YEAR, NEW SOUL

G. K. CHESTERTON ONCE SAID, “The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul and a new nose, new feet, a new backbone, new ears, and new eyes.”¹

But how do we renew our soul? Some people find answers in therapy or personal coaching or the latest self-help book. Several of my friends have gone on a pilgrimage. Any of these may be helpful. But maybe it can be as simple as this: God, “in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind,”² “restores my soul.”³

We can’t physically become another person, but we can have a new disposition, a new awareness, and a renewed consciousness.

In past years, I made many resolutions to change specific areas of my life and replace old habits with new ones, and I was moderately successful.

This year, my prayer is that God would renew me with His Spirit and love and give me new outlooks and perspectives to face the unknown ahead.

Even though the start of a new year can bring expectancy and adventure, in many cases there is also trepidation: *Will I reach my goals? Will I enjoy good health in the months and years to come? Will I have economic stability?*

The New Year is the perfect moment to place these concerns—along with our wishes and expectations—in God’s hands, letting go of our fears and worries. I want to enter this new year with a new soul and renewed faith, putting my life and the lives of my loved ones in God’s hands, asking Him to guide and keep my steps.

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A SIMPLE PRAYER

By Gabriel García Valdivieso

For this new year, dear Lord,
I don’t ask that You award
Me with wealth or stock or cash,
Or that I will with fortune be awash,
For all that will turn to ash.

Keep me from my selfish ways.
Help me not to disobey
Your eternal Word of truth
That You taught me from my youth.
Be with me, my fears to soothe.

I ask to walk close to Thee,
In Your presence filled with glee.
Lead me in the way of love.
Help me not to push and shove,
To be gentle like a dove.

Be my light, be my delight
Keep me for You shining bright
May I live to intercede,
So that folks that are in need
May find You and be freed.

True pure riches I will find
Loving You and being kind.
Those things will bring me cheer,
They will make my pathway clear
And a very fruitful year.

1. A Chesterton calendar, 1976

2. Job 12:10

3. Psalm 23:3



GAME PLAN

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Each passing year opens the door for the new, for the things that are to come. Every year brings with it new gifts and treasures, things that you won't be able to hold in your hands or gain unless you exit through one door and step into the next one.

You could illustrate the coming year by a complex, yet intriguing, board game. You begin the game at a specific spot, and the goal is to make it to the end. Like in most good games, it's not just about making it from square 1 to square 100—it's the adventures, the mishaps, and the prizes you win throughout the game that matter! You have to work your way through the game, deal with the good and the bad things that come up, and persevere to the end.

There are little secrets and tricks to this game that can help you get the most out of it—in this case, spiritual wealth and growth. In this new year's game, as you make your way across the board, there will be things to gain and pick up along the way, to add to your "wealth," which will give you better standing and an ability to withstand the obstacles you may encounter.

While you may enter this new year not completely sure of what it will bring and what you'll need to see you through it, strive to move along at the pace I set for you. There's so much ahead, but the path may only open up to you one roll at a time. So you've got to take it as it comes, gain the most you can out of each turn, and remember to stay close to Me.