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CONTENTS

1 FOREWORD

BLUE: THE PLACE OF PEACE 3

27 YELLOW: TOWARD THE SUN

INDIGO: VALLEYS AND SHADOWS 57

87 GREEN: FORWARD MOTION

RED: STOP, LOOK, LISTEN 111

133 VIOLET: THE UPHILL CLIMB

ORANGE: CHEERY RAYS OF GRATITUDE 157

AFTERWORD: THE SEASONS OF LIFE 179

187 FINALLY...
In times of trouble, it is as though the skies darken; thick clouds gather overhead. There is the rumble of thunder; down pours the rain. “Will it ever stop?” Mark Twain was asked. His reputed response: “It always has.” And indeed, the rain does stop. The sun peeks through the clouds, and if we are fortunate, we will see the rainbow.

It is only in relatively recent centuries that the seven colors of the rainbow have been explained: We are told they are pure white light split through a prism. A powerful image of hope, a rainbow can also symbolize each of our lives, with its intermingling of joys and sorrows, bright moments and bleaker times.

In this book I have chosen to represent the seven colors as follows:

**Blue:** The peace of blue reminds us that we can rest securely in God’s love.

**Yellow:** Bright yellow sunflowers draw their strength by turning to face the sun; so can we turn to the Son of God to find our strength to face life’s challenges.

**Indigo:** When the skies fill with an omen of the approaching storm, the clouds hang heavy and dark. Indigo represents the difficult times that come to all of us. (But even the darkest clouds have silver linings!)
Chapter 1

Blue: The Place of Peace

The peace of blue reminds us that we can rest securely in God’s love.

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!
For my soul trusts in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,
Until these calamities have passed by.

Psalm 57:1

Because You have been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.

Psalm 63:7

Green: Green represents the hope of tomorrow. Regardless of what has happened in the past, we can step forward to the future.

Red: Red signals a warning—there is danger up ahead. In these pages, red represents the unhelpful attitudes and outlooks that we should refrain from if we want to gain peace of mind.

Violet: Bluebells and tiny violet woodland flowers fight their way up through the frosty ground; we know spring is around the corner when their bright colors peek out. Violet in these pages represents the uphill climb of faith.

Orange: A happy color. I have chosen the cheery rays of orange to represent gratitude and a positive outlook that can illumine our days, bringing brightness even during dark times.

No matter what life is throwing at you right now, my hope is that this book will provide you with quiet moments for when you need them most; rainbows after rain.

Abi May
June 2011
There is a place of quiet rest,  
Near to the heart of God.  
A place where sin cannot molest,  
Near to the heart of God.

O Jesus, blest Redeemer,  
Sent from the heart of God,  
Hold us who wait before Thee  
Near to the heart of God.

There is a place of comfort sweet,  
Near to the heart of God.  
A place where we our Savior meet,  
Near to the heart of God.

There is a place of full release,  
Near to the heart of God.  
A place where all is joy and peace,  
Near to the heart of God.  
*Cleland Boyd McAfee*

From the end of the earth I will cry to You,  
When my heart is overwhelmed;  
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.  
For You have been a shelter for me,  
A strong tower from the enemy.  
I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;  
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.  
*Psalm 61:2–4*

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**The sun still shines**

HE MAKES HIS SUN RISE ... AND SENDS RAIN.  
*Matthew 5:45*

As far back as I can remember, I didn’t like cloudy days, especially in wintertime. They seemed endless and without hope, chilling both body and soul.

Still, they are a part of life, so I decided to learn to like them—and now I do. My secret? Actually I have several.

Sometimes I take advantage of those days to bake a cake, cookies, or some other treat to enjoy with my coffee. The entire house smells of freshly brewed coffee and homemade goodies, and that creates a warm, satisfied feeling.

I’ve also learned that I can help brighten the day by what I wear, like a favorite brightly colored sweater or a little extra jewelry.

Most of all I’ve learned to thank God for those days. I’m still not crazy about them, but I have a warm house that doesn’t leak, a cozy bed, food on the table, and someone to enjoy my blessings with.

Not too long ago, I was out on one of those gloomy days. Although it was overcast, I didn’t expect it to actually rain, so hadn’t taken an umbrella. Mid-morning I was 25 blocks from home when I was caught in a downpour. By the time I got home, I was sure I had more water in my clothes and hair than was left in the clouds. A hot shower and lunch put it all behind me, though, and I felt much better.
When I had been caught in the rain, I had prayed for all the people who were at that moment victims of some disaster. Not a disaster like burning the chicken or having their hair dye turn out wrong—I mean a real disaster like being left homeless by an earthquake, with no hot shower, dry clothes, and warm meal to set things right.

When bad weather or some other circumstance has you down, praying for others who have it worse puts things in perspective and does the soul good, like a hot shower warms the body after getting caught in the rain, or the smell of homemade cake lifts the gloom of a dark day. When we remember that we have a very big God who sees and knows everything, who loves us dearly, and who will never let us be tested beyond what He knows we can handle with His help, this lifts the spirit, like the aroma of freshly brewed coffee.

Even when the sky is overcast, the sun is still shining above the clouds. That’s a fact. The clouds might keep us from seeing it, but it’s there, just as round and bright as on any other day. When darkness closes in around us, the sunshine of God’s love is still there, as constant as ever, waiting for just the right moment to dissipate the clouds and warm our souls once again.

Victoria Olivetta

The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing. 

Zephaniah 3:17

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 are aware that He is intimately concerned about your welfare and happiness, then that knowledge will give you peace in your heart and steady you, even when you face disappointments, heartbreaks, difficulties, or anything else that life sends your way.

Maria Fontaine

1 Corinthians 10:13
Flight tracker

The eyes of the Lord are in every place.
Proverbs 15:3

This morning my husband Simon left suddenly to the USA, after receiving word that his elderly mother’s health had taken a turn for the worse. We couldn’t afford trans-Atlantic airfare for two, so here I am, home alone and already missing Simon.

I’ve been combating loneliness by keeping busy, and between catching up on housework and checking email, I came across a real-time “flight tracker” on the Internet. Since then I’ve gone back to that screen every couple of hours to follow Simon’s progress as his plane passed over the vast expanse of ocean, reached landfall, and is now making its way down the eastern coast of North America. Even though Simon has no idea I am “watching” in this way, knowing where he is at the moment gives me a curious sense of comfort.

A few minutes ago the thought struck me that this is how God is with us. He’s always watching and knows right where we are in our flight schedule, and unlike me, He doesn’t take His eye off the “screen” even for a moment. “His eyes are on the ways of man, and He sees all his steps.”

Three thousand miles across ocean and land. That’s how far Simon has traveled since he left home. But with God, there is no such distance. He is always right here with us. The psalmist David wrote, “If I ascend into heaven, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.”

The flight tracker is showing his approach to Philadelphia now. The Lord is always tracking us too. Are we heading in the right direction, walking in the path of His choosing, the path that leads to happiness and Him? “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy.”
I just checked the screen again. Simon’s plane is descending. *Dear Lord, please give them a safe landing.* “The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in.”

No matter where life takes us, we have an invisible guide who is watching, loving, never neglecting us for a moment, and taking care of us each step of the way.

I’m considerably cheered up—and look, my prayers have been answered. The plane has landed.

*Abi May*

1 Job 34:21
2 Psalm 139:8–10
3 Psalm 16:11
4 Psalm 121:8
Have you ever wondered what the purpose of praising God is? Why does the all-powerful God even want or need our praises? Does He even appreciate them? I’m convinced that He does, based on the simple truth that we are made in God’s own image. We love to be appreciated, and since God patterned us after Himself, certainly He must enjoy our thanks and appreciation just as much.

*Curtis Peter van Gorder*

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Over the rainbow

**The Lord is a close companion to all those who call upon Him**

Nevertheless I am continually with You;
You hold me by my right hand.

*Psalm 73:23*

Fear not, for I am with you;
Be not dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

*Isaiah 41:10*
Come!

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 11:28–29

What exactly does it mean to “rest in Jesus”? It means trusting that once you have asked Jesus to provide solutions to your problems or to help you with the work at hand, He will take charge and do just that. It means trusting that He will show you what you can do to help the situation, that He will empower you to do your part, and that He will do the rest, whatever you can’t do. It means stepping back from your problems or work, shutting out the world around you, and letting your spirit be strengthened through communion with Him.

In short, resting in Jesus means turning matters over to Him and then trusting Him for the outcome. That way, you’re not under such pressure because He is carrying the weight, not you. You’re still busy, but most of your “work”—and your most important work—is the spiritual part, the praying, believing, and trusting. When you focus on that, you set wheels in motion in the spiritual realm that have the potential to bring about far greater results in the physical realm than would be humanly possible—miraculous results.

Not taking time to rest in Jesus perpetuates a vicious cycle. The more you concentrate on working in the physical realm, the less time you have to rest in Him, which makes your work harder, which leaves you with even less time. But making the change from trying to do it all yourself to stopping and asking Jesus to help can start a positive cycle of strength, relief from pressure, and real progress. Soon it will be easier to stop and take that time with Jesus, because you will experience firsthand the rewards of doing so. More will be getting done, with less wear and tear on you, and you will feel more rested and spiritually recharged.

Maria Fontaine
Love to the core

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

1 John 4:9

Life can be rough, and it’s not always easy to understand why things happen the way they do. When everything seems to be going wrong, it’s natural to question My love, but it’s during those very times that I want to be closer than ever to you. My love is what will get you through the tough times, and it’s always there for you.

Unconditional love in its purest form comes from Me. Even when you blame Me for the troubles that have befallen you, I love you and don’t condemn you. Even when you question My love, I still love you and I’m not going to give up on you. I’m still going to be right there beside you when you need counsel, when you need some company, when you are desperate for a listening ear, or when you need a friend.

I want to ease your mind with the knowledge that there is always someone who loves you and sees endless possibilities in you, someone who enjoys you as you are—and that someone is Me.

No matter what, I will always love you unconditionally. That love will see you through anything. It will be a light in dark places, a compass when you are lost, an anchor to hold you fast in the storm, and a warm blanket to comfort you when you are alone and cold.

And it doesn’t cost you anything, but is freely given by someone who loves you to the core.

A message from Jesus received in prayer
The presence

I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter’s power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

Henry F. Lyte

Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton (1874–1922) was an Irish explorer who is best remembered for his Antarctic expedition of 1914–1915 in the ship Endurance, described in his book South. Less well known is that Shackleton had an unseen source of strength to draw from—his faith.

The journey over the frozen deep was fraught with danger. The Endurance became trapped in pack ice and was ultimately destroyed by it. The crew had to abandon ship. After trekking over the ice, dragging three of the ship’s lifeboats they had salvaged from the wreck, they managed to get to Elephant Island. From there, Shackleton and four other men set out to summon help. In the largest of the three boats, they journeyed 750 miles (1200 km) through rough seas to the southern Atlantic Ocean island of South Georgia, where Shackleton and two others crossed glaciers and razorback ridges to reach a whaling station. Of that epic journey, Shackleton wrote:

“When I look back on those days I have no doubt that Providence guided us. I know that during that [final] long and racking march of thirty-six hours over the unnamed mountains and glaciers of South Georgia, it seemed to me often that we were four, and not three. I said nothing to my companions on the point, but afterward Worsley said to me, ‘Boss, I had a curious feeling on that march that there was another Person with us.’ Crean confessed to the same idea. One feels ‘the dearth of human words, the roughness of human speech’ in trying to describe things intangible, but a record of our journeys would not be complete without a reference to a subject so very near to our hearts.”

Shackleton made one last expedition, from which he did not return. Just before leaving, he repeated his testimony concerning their unseen companion and quoted the Bible. “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me.”

On his last voyage, Shackleton took a recording of the song “Abide with Me”—another testament to his belief in his unseen Companion. A London writer commented at the time, “Just think of those words—’I need Thy presence every passing hour’—ringing out across the icebound wastes of the Antarctic!”

Abi May

1 Psalm 139:7–10 (kJV)
**Jesus and me**

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

*John 3:16*

Faith in Jesus Christ is the soul’s flight into the city of refuge.

*Hugh Binning*

Union with Jesus Christ is the foundation of our hope.

*Jean-Jacques Pictet*

All the peace and favor of the world cannot calm a troubled heart; but where this peace is which Christ gives, all the trouble and disquiet of the world cannot disturb it.

*Robert Leighton*

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

*John 15:4–5*

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**Perfect love**

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.

Maria Fontaine

I love You, Jesus, for who You are—my Savior, and the bright and morning star. I love You for what You are—the light of the world and the hope of my life. I love You for where You are—with me always, inside my heart.

I love the way You speak—so soothingly, so lovingly, so freely. I love the way You listen—so eagerly, so attentively, hearing and attending to my every prayer. I love the way You care for me—providing my needs and even my wants when You know they’re good for me.

I love the way You can look into my heart and see my innermost desires, my secret longings, my hidden wishes, and make them come true. You see the longings of my spirit—some of which never even reach my heart or mind before You fulfill them, because You know better than I do what I need and what is good for me. And when my heart is overwhelmed within me, in the midst of sorrows, Your comforts delight my soul.1

Author unknown

1 Psalm 94:19
**Quiet moments**

A spiritual exercise

Trust ... in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.
1 Timothy 6:17

The next time you feel flustered or overwhelmed, find a quiet spot and take five minutes to try this: Close your eyes and focus your thoughts on a restful scene. It can be as elaborate as a sandy beach with warm waves washing over your toes and a balmy breeze rustling the palm trees and your hair, or it can be as simple as relaxing in your favorite chair on your day off. Now picture Jesus joining you for the experience, happy, relaxed, and looking forward to a little downtime with you. Once you have that picture firmly in your mind, try to “be there” for a few minutes. Feel your body, mind, and spirit relax. When you return to the “real” world, you’ll feel more rested and be in a better state of mind for whatever the rest of the day may have in store for you.

*Abi May*

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**Out in the fields with God**

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
Matthew 6:28–29

The little cares that fretted me, I lost them yesterday, Among the fields above the sea, Among the winds at play; Among the lowing of the herds, The rustling of the trees; Among the singing of the birds, The humming of the bees.

The foolish fears of what might happen, I cast them all away Among the clover-scented grass, Among the new-mown hay; Among the husking of the corn, Where drowsy poppies nod, Where ill thoughts die and good are born— Out in the fields with God!

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*
Chapter 2

Yellow: Toward the Sun

Bright yellow sunflowers draw their strength by turning to face the sun; so can we turn to the Son of God to find our strength to face life’s challenges.

As your days, so shall your strength be.
Deuteronomy 33:25

Blessed is the man whose strength is in You.
Psalm 84:5

Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face evermore!
Psalm 105:4
Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

_Ephesians 6:10_

Rest of the weary,
Joy of the sad,
Hope of the dreary,
Light of the glad;
Home of the stranger,
Strength to the end,
Refuge from danger,
Savior and Friend!

_John Samuel Bewley Monsell_

Thus says the LORD, who created you…
And He who formed you…
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by your name;
You are Mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned,
Nor shall the flame scorch you.
For I am the LORD your God … your Savior.”

_Isaiah 43:1–3_

Be Lord
within me to strengthen me
without me to preserve me
over me to shelter me
beneath me to support me
before me to direct me
behind me to bring me back
around me to fortify me.

_Lancelot Andrews_
Sanity savers

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.
Proverbs 3:5–6

Every morning I wake up to what seems like a list of two million things I think I need to get done before the sun sets. I used to push myself to the limit physically and mentally, but still rarely accomplished everything I had planned, and that left me frustrated and stressed. My solution? I came up with a list of five things to help me get more done without feeling so pressured. Believe it or not, none of them are “work harder” or “go faster.”

’Tis easy enough to be pleasant,
When life flows like a song.
But the man worthwhile
Is the one who will smile
When everything goes dead wrong.
Ella Wheeler Wilcox
1. Pray for solutions. When we ask God in prayer for the help He has promised us in His Word, this sets heavenly forces to work on our behalf. So when I begin to feel pressured, I stop and ask Him to work out whatever situation is putting me under stress. This is getting at the root of the problem, not just dealing with the symptom, the stress.

2. Still my spirit. All prayers aren’t answered instantaneously, of course, so I also pray for God to still my spirit and help me to trust Him for the outcome. I spend a few moments meditating on God and turning my worries and concerns over to Him. Jesus says, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and you will find rest for your souls.”¹

3. Plan and organize. The Bible advises, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”² I have found that by planning my day the night before, I can free myself of much of the stress on even the busiest of days. I start with a list of everything I need to do or would like to do, set priorities, and pare down the list to what seems realistic. Then I plan the order in which to do them, including my route and travel times, estimating on the outside to allow for the unexpected. If everything doesn’t fit, I cut some more. Having a solid plan sets my mind at ease.

4. Take breaks. Friends who work in offices, banks, schools, and other busy workplaces tell me, “That’s impossible! I don’t have the time for breaks.” But I’ve found that a break doesn’t have to take 30 minutes or an hour to be effective. Five minutes or less will usually do. I drink a glass of water and step outside for a deep breath of fresh air. Or if I can’t do that, I look out a window or lean back and close my eyes. Relaxing physically helps to calm my mind. The next hour or two usually go so much better that it’s clear those five minutes were a good investment.
5. Stay positive. No matter how carefully I plan my day, there are times when things go wrong or the unexpected happens. Instead of panicking or getting frazzled, I make a conscious effort to look for the good, to focus on possible solutions, not the problem.

Andrew Mateyak

“For the mountains shall depart
And the hills be removed,
But My kindness shall not depart from you,
Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,”
Says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

Isaiah 54:10

The pottery exhibition

Who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it,
“Why have you made me like this?”
Romans 9:20

The display cases at a pottery exhibition I visited recently were filled with items, large and small, some functional and some decorative, but all crafted with care. Practical coffee sets and elegant vases, ordinary fruit bowls and intricate ornaments, plaques and plates and figurines, mugs and jugs, jam jars and soup tureens, teapots, coffeepots, and sugar bowls—each item spoke of its creator’s passion and attention to detail. The art of fashioning clay into bricks, tiles, or porcelain objects is one of the oldest known to the human race.

1 Matthew 11:28–29
2 1 Corinthians 14:40
Each item started off as a lump of clay, more or less. What made the difference? A pair of skillful hands, to be sure, but more than that: a purpose and a design. Will this item be a slender vase to display bouquets of flowers, or a set of dishes? Will the craftsman fashion a tiny pitcher to pour cream for coffee, or a large jar for pickling vegetables?

God is a potter. We are the clay vessels of His design. He fashioned each of us to be a unique vessel for a unique purpose. He knew exactly where to place each part, each handle, and each spout. He knew which areas needed to be solid and strong.

No matter how inadequate I feel, and how many talents and qualities I lack, God knew what I would need for the purpose He created me to fulfill, my destiny. To grumble about or belittle what He has given me is as ridiculous as the fruit bowl lamenting, “I’m missing a spout,” or the vase complaining, “I’m too tall,” or the teapot moaning, “I’m just too fat.” And what about the plate? Would he gripe, “Why am I so flat and plain?” No, each of these items is designed to fulfill its function.

I saw some beautiful examples of pottery at the exhibition, but when I got home, I didn’t regret not owning any of them. I was happy to pick up my old favorite coffee mug, which faithfully fulfills its purpose each day.

I have a feeling that’s how God sees us. He made us and equipped us for what He wants us to be and do in this life, and nothing pleases Him more than seeing us live up to that potential.

Time for a refill.

Abi May
The real thing

I am not a fabrication, a figment of the imagination, or a fable. I am real—and I am what you need. I am the great problem-solver. If you want to know how to overcome life’s trials, come to Me. I will give you comfort to replace anxiety, faith to replace fear, rest in place of struggle, peace in place of worry, happiness in place of sadness, and answers to your questions. I will be your strength, your help in time of need, your friend and companion. That does not mean you will never have another problem or challenge in life, but I will be able to help you with life’s problems. You will no longer have to try to handle things on your own, because you can call on Me.

I have all that you need, but you must open your heart to receive My blessings and love. Reach out and receive My love, and there you will find fulfillment.

A message from Jesus received in prayer

Stress relief has become a multifaceted, multi-billion-dollar industry. Armies of experts have emerged, dispensing advice of every sort. Some say the key is better time management: Reduce stress by doing a better job of juggling everything we need to do. Others say the key is patience: Be ambitious, but focus on less daunting short-and mid-range goals. Others tell us to reexamine our priorities from the quality-of-life angle and major on the things that count most. Still others take a more spiritual approach: Relieve stress through yoga, meditation, or other disciplines. It reminds me of the story of the five blind men who were asked to describe an elephant. They each felt a different part of the animal before giving their answer. One grabbed ahold of the tail. “An elephant is like a rope,” he said.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:7
The next grabbed a leg. “No,” he said, “an elephant is like a tree.”
The third man felt the elephant’s side. “No, an elephant is like a
wall.” The fourth felt the trunk and said, “No, an elephant is like a
serpent.” The last man felt an ear and said, “No, an elephant is like a
leaf.” They were all right, but none of them was completely right or
the only one who was right.

When it comes to our lives, God alone has the whole picture. He
knows exactly what each of us needs to lead a happy, well-balanced,
stress-free life. And that’s not all. He also wants to be personally
involved to show us what we can do to make that happen, and He is
ready, willing, and able to do for us what we can’t do for ourselves.

He will do that for you and heap His love on for good measure.
All that He asks is that you turn to Him, tell Him what you need,
and thank Him for His help.

Keith Phillips

Life’s editing

Every branch that bears fruit He prunes,
that it may bear more fruit.
John 15:2

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
Looking forward to heaven
A spiritual exercise

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews lists some heroes and heroines of faith.

One thing these men and women had in common was that they “waited for the city whose builder and maker is God.”¹ Their focus wasn’t on their immediate circumstances, but on the heavenly reward. That’s how they were able to endure the tests and tribulations they went through.²

This has practical applications for us. It’s easy to become so weighed down with the concerns of daily living that we lose sight of what’s waiting for us at the end of the road. On the other hand, thinking more about heaven helps us to bear some of the things we have to go through now, so we’re wise to heed the scriptural advice, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”³

Find a quiet place for this exercise, outside in nature if possible. You may want to start by reading about heaven from the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, which give an idea of what is waiting for us. Then think about some of the aspects of heaven, like these:

I will bring the blind by a way they did not know;
I will lead them in paths they have not known.
I will make darkness light before them,
And crooked places straight.
These things I will do for them,
And not forsake them.

Isaiah 42:16

Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,
“This is the way, walk in it,”
Whenever you turn to the right hand
Or whenever you turn to the left.

Isaiah 30:21

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

Jeremiah 33:3

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 1:5

Over the rainbow

Guidance

I will bring the blind by a way they did not know;
I will lead them in paths they have not known.
I will make darkness light before them,
And crooked places straight.
These things I will do for them,
And not forsake them.

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Jeremiah 33:3

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James 1:5
• There will be no tears, pain, sickness, or sorrow (Revelation 21:4).
• Heaven is a place of joy (Isaiah 35:10).
• We will be reunited with our loved ones (2 Corinthians 5:8; Revelation 7:9).
• We will live in a perfect environment (Revelation 21:23).
• All of our needs will be filled (Revelation 7:16).
• There will be no more death (John 11:25–26).
• We will be rewarded for our good works (Matthew 16:27).
• We will have a new body that does not bear the disabilities we may have now (Philippians 3:20–21; Luke 24:36–40).
• We will meet Jesus face to face and get to know Him as He knows us (1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2).

Abi May

1 Hebrews 11:10
2 Hebrews 11:26,35
3 Colossians 3:2

In the middle of a difficulty lies opportunity.
Albert Einstein
I realized recently that I had been giving myself a “grouch allowance” when certain things happened. They were mostly trivial things like having to clean up a mess when I was tired or my husband being late—things that I could have easily gotten through if I hadn’t predetermined that I had the right to get grouchy in those circumstances.

Jesus tells us, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Grace, I realized, is a choice. I could choose to avail myself of the grace Jesus freely offers and plug into His infinite power, or I could gripe and try to muddle through on
my own. As soon as I told myself that a particular situation was too much, it was too much. And if I allowed myself to gripe about it, the situation became even more difficult. But if I maintained the position that Jesus’ grace was sufficient, it was. He always came to my rescue and made the situation bearable or even enjoyable.

Sometimes the concept of relying on Jesus’ grace and strength—also known as “resting in the Lord”—seems quite abstract. How cool it would be, I have thought, if there were an actual couch that I could plop down on and, by virtue of simply being there, rest in the Lord.

Well, there is such a place where grouchies like me can go—a nice little spa where I can get fixed up so nicely you would hardly know how awful I really am, if only I would visit it often enough. You women know what I mean. Think of how relaxed you feel in the hands of your favorite hairstylist. You know he can fix your worst hair day, and you hardly need to look in the mirror when he’s done, because you know you look your best. It’s like that.

What works best for me is before the day starts and again whenever one of those problem situations begins to unfold, I close my eyes and go to that spa. I say to the stylist, “Jesus, I’m a mess, but Your grace is sufficient. Fix me up with some of that!” Then I know it’s done, and I act like it.

Some days are better than others, of course, but I know where to go when things begin to go wrong. Jesus’ spa is always open.

Maria Doehler

1 2 Corinthians 12:9
The source of joy

When I died on the cross, I paid the price for the sins of the world—including every wrongful deed you have ever committed. And because I did that, whoever believes in and receives Me will live forever—and that includes you too. When you understand what that means, when you realize that all is forgiven, that I love you unconditionally, that I will be there for you through thick and thin, that I will never give up on you, and that no matter what turns this life may take, you can look forward to eternal happiness in a truly perfect world—now that is something to get happy and excited about!

Happiness is knowing that the nagging problems and imperfections of this present world will soon pass away, and then everything will be made perfect in love. You come to that realization by focusing on Me and My power and My promises.

A motivational speaker started off his seminar by holding up a $20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked, “Who would like this $20 bill?” Hands started going up.

He said, “I am going to give this $20 to one of you, but first, let me do this.” He proceeded to crumple the bill.

He then asked, “Who still wants it?” Still the hands were up in the air.

“Well,” he replied, “what if I do this?” And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty. “Now who still wants it?” Still the hands went into the air.

“Who still wants it?”

Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

“My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth $20.

“Many times in our lives, we are crumpled, dropped, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value in God’s eyes. To Him, dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless.”

Author unknown

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

I grew up in the era of black-and-white television (1950s), when Westerns were the most popular action genre. There were no computer graphics or other hi-tech special effects in shows like The Lone Ranger, Gunsmoke, and Wanted: Dead or Alive—and no cars for the now-obligatory car chase. Instead, the action often peaked when a stagecoach or train was attacked by bandits in black hats (to distinguish them from the white-hatted good guys). Horses pulling a heavy stagecoach didn’t stand a chance of outrunning bandits on horseback, but trains did. As the music reached a crescendo, the tension mounted and the scene alternated between the hero holding the bad guys at bay, the engineer gritting his teeth, and the fireman frantically shoveling coal into the furnace that powered the train’s steam engine. The more coal the fireman could pile on, the hotter the fire and the faster the train would go. As long as there was coal to feed the fire, there was hope.
Our spiritual well-being is a bit like that. When bad things happen, negative thoughts and emotions descend and threaten to undo us. Unless we can escape, they will rob us of the fighting spirit we need to make it through. On our own, we don’t stand any more chance against that negativity than a stagecoach had against outlaws. But faith in God is like a steam engine, far more powerful than mere willpower. We fuel the engine by affirming God’s power and goodness, by thanking Him for the help we know He will give, even before He steps in. The more we do that, the faster and farther we are distanced from the negative.

The next time bad circumstances befall you and negativity closes in, put your faith into action by focusing on God and His unfailing love and help. Stoke the engine. Outrun the bandits.

Keith Phillips

Indigo: Valleys and Shadows

**Indigo: When the skies fill with an omen of the approaching storm, the clouds hang heavy and dark. Indigo represents the difficult times that come to all of us. But even the darkest clouds have silver linings!**

Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him on high, because he has known My name.
He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honor him.

*Psalm 91:14–15*
Jesus lay in the boat sleeping.\(^1\) The waves rose, the wind blew and the storm battered the small vessel about. His disciples were afraid: afraid of the wind, afraid of the waves, and fearful for their lives. They came to Jesus, woke Him up, begging for His help. The answer lay in His power. He said, “Peace, be still,” and there was peace. The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. No matter the turmoil of our life, we too can find peace if we turn to Jesus for His help.

Abi May

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.  
Psalm 50:15

“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,  
“Therefore I hope in Him!”  
The Lord is good to those who wait for Him,  
To the soul who seeks Him.  
Lamentations 3:24–25

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.  
Romans 10:13

“One advantage of passing through trying times is that we are drawn closer to God by being drawn closer to Jesus, our Savior and friend. We seek safety and security in His arms, and we find that and more. He loves us with a love that is everlasting and never changes. He has so much to give us, and He desires to help us in so many ways. He wants to spend time with us, and He longs to have us close to Him, always by His side, to teach us, and to make us more like Himself.

Unfortunately it’s just part of human nature that when everything goes right, we don’t feel such a pressing need for God and His help and strength in our lives. When everything is going our way, we often get the very wrong idea that we’re strong and sufficient in ourselves, that we don’t need Him. We’re living happy, successful lives, so we don’t need any help—or interference.

\(^{1}\) Luke 8:22–25

“If God loves me, why does He let bad things happen to me?”

Though I walk in the midst of trouble,  
You will revive me.  
Psalm 138:7
We don’t see what we’re missing, but He does. He knows that we truly do need Him, and He knows how much more He has to offer if we depend on Him.

He wants to teach us to lean on Him and avail ourselves of His strength, which is infinitely greater than ours. But how can that happen if we ignore Him or shut Him out of our lives?

If we didn’t have troubles and tribulations, we wouldn’t feel the need for or find refuge in His arms, and we wouldn’t learn to find strength and comfort in communion with Him and study of His Word.

This may not sound like good news to you, but it is: God not only allows hardships, but He often sends them. He fashions them specifically for us, and He does so for the express purpose of bringing us closer to Him. He puts the squeeze on so we will call out to Him for help. He does this not to hurt or punish us, but to strengthen us. He knows that in depending on Him, our spiritual strength and resilience to life’s difficulties will grow, and that as we draw closer to Him and become more like Him, we will be much happier and more fulfilled in the long run.

If we will turn to Jesus in our times of trouble, He will prove to us in those trying moments how much He loves us. The problem may not go away instantly, but He will give us “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,” and help us appreciate the good that He is working in our lives.¹

Alex Peterson

¹ Philippians 4:6–7
A prayer

Jesus, You said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”1 Right now I’m worn out and weary, so here I am, coming to You. Please give me that rest of spirit You promised. Take my mind off of my work and problems for the next few minutes, and help me relax.

Thank You for never being too busy for me. Any time of the day or night, I can stop and direct my thoughts toward You, and You always know just what I need. I feel such peace in Your presence. When I get so stressed that every obstacle seems like a mountain, You help me put things in perspective and the mountains melt away. When I’m confused or frustrated, You bring things into focus. Just a few minutes with You changes everything. I love You, Jesus!

I understand

I understand the trying of men’s hearts—the despair, the discouragement, the desperation. 

I understand the pain of leaving loved ones, for first I had to leave My Father to go to earth, and then I had to leave those that I loved so dearly on earth to return to My Father.

I understand what it’s like to feel betrayed, for one whom I had befriended betrayed Me with a kiss.

I understand fear of what lies ahead, and so I prayed, “Father, let this cup pass from Me!”

I understand what it’s like to feel ridiculed and abused, for I was ridiculed and abused.

I understand pain, for I felt excruciating pain as the nails pierced My hands and My feet.

1 Matthew 11:28
I understand what it’s like to feel abandoned, for I felt abandoned by those I loved, who also loved Me. For a moment I thought that even My Father had abandoned Me.

Though My Father did not let that cup pass from Me, though one who I had loved betrayed Me, though I saw My loved ones flee from Me in time of trouble, though I was beaten and spat upon, though the nails pierced My hands and feet, though I felt My Father had abandoned Me, though I had to die an agonizing death, though it looked like a great defeat, it all brought about a great victory and great salvation—a great resurrection that changed the course of history and all eternity!

I died to save you, but I went through all the rest to understand you better.

_A message from Jesus received in prayer_
Hard knocks

Those who sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.
Psalm 126:5

Have you ever wondered why it is that from time to time you find yourself going through the school of hard knocks? Just when you’re thriving on some “ups” in your life, something happens that brings you down a few notches on the happiness scale. “Why me?” “Why this?” “Why now?” Instead of helping to turn things around, those questions only make matters worse. Finally you remind yourself that even if you don’t understand and can’t see anything good coming from your present struggles, God can. He’s always got a plan. So you decide to trust Him and hold on, and He works things out in the end.

Not long ago, I was somewhere between the questioning and trusting phases of that cycle when my husband, Ivo, returned from his daily jog and told me about something he had just seen. We live in a hilltop neighborhood with lots of flowering trees and lovely gardens. That’s perfect for Ivo, since he is both an avid exerciser and a skilled gardener.
Each morning he passes a certain glorieta—a square with a fountain, some flowers, and lush grass—and that day he had noticed a patch of grass that was turning brown due to lack of water. The rest of the lawn was receiving plenty of water from the sprinkler system, but one failing sprinkler was causing this section to dry out and die.

Just as Ivo stopped to investigate, the neighborhood gardener passed by and also saw the problem. The gardener walked over to the defective sprinkler, pulled a hammer from his bag of tools, and gave a few short, sharp knocks to the sprinkler head. Apparently some dirt had made its way into the sprinkler system and clogged the head, but those few knocks shook it loose. Right away the water started flowing through the sprinkler again, and with enough pressure to cover the neglected area. In time, that patch of grass would be green and beautiful again, like the rest of the lawn.

God, like that gardener, sometimes allows life to give us a few hard knocks to cleanse us, so we can do better at beautifying our part of His garden.

*Marie Boisjoly*

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**Face the storm**

*Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble,*  
*And He brings them out of their distresses.*  
*He calms the storm,*  
*So that its waves are still.*  
*Then they are glad because they are quiet;*  
*So He guides them to their desired haven.*  

*Psalm 107:28–30*

Some years ago, when our children were small, my husband and I were on a freighter sailing from Europe to our new field of service in South America. Due to long delays in the loading of the ship’s cargo, we found ourselves setting sail in the dead of the Mediterranean winter, close to the time of year when the apostle Paul was shipwrecked off the coast of Malta. We prayed that our fate would not be the same as his.

Two days out of port, we were caught in a storm. Even though our ship was heavily laden and lying deep in the water, the Force 12 gales caused it to reel violently. The children thought it was great fun, but the rest of us struggled to keep our composure and our stomachs where they belonged. Even the seasoned crew members were seasick.
We heard radio reports that a couple of other ships had already sunk. Would this be our end? If so, I wasn’t going to go down without a fight. There was nothing I could do physically to change the situation, but I could pray. And so I did, like I had never prayed before! “Jesus, please help us!” I implored. “You’re our only hope! Calm the sea! Give our captain the wisdom, faith, and courage he needs to get us through this. And help me to get over this horrible seasickness so I can think straight and pray better.”

“Go to the bridge.” I recognized that voice in my mind immediately. It was Jesus. “The captain is also praying. Pray with him and encourage his faith.”

When I stood up, Jesus gave me the strength to make my way to the bridge. The captain was alone there, and yes, he was also praying desperately. We held vigil together until we passed below Sicily, where we found refuge from the storm. The ship and its contents had sustained some damage, but no one had been hurt. Our prayers had been answered.

The Lord reminded me of this experience after some recent difficulties, and He showed me an important lesson from it: Face the storms of life unafraid. Climb up on top of the situation. Rise above! Get up there on the bridge, and take firm hold of the captain’s hand. Jesus is our pilot, and together we will soon be in safer waters. It takes faith to pray and gumption to act on those prayers, but faith coupled with action gets results.

It’s human nature to resist difficulty, to hide from it and hope it goes away, but that’s not the way of winners. Don’t take the storms of life lying down. Get up and fight! The battles of life may sometimes seem overwhelming, but the victory is yours, waiting right around the corner, and it is worth fighting for.

Anne Spring

For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

Isaiah 25:4 (kjv)

1 Acts chapter 27; 28:1
More power to you
A spiritual exercise

What a difference an outside source of power can make! Before the invention of the threshing machine in the late 18th century, separating grain from the stalk and husk took considerable time and effort. Today, in most of the world, the combined tasks of reaping, binding, and threshing are usually done by a diesel- or gasoline-powered harvester, and one farmhand can harvest more in a day than a hundred farmhands could previously.

You can apply the same principle to your own work, whatever it may be. You may think you are working efficiently and accomplishing a lot through your own efforts, like the hand-threshers of a bygone era no doubt did. But like them, the various challenges you face each day probably leave you feeling exhausted and drained.

Why thresh out life’s problems “by hand” when there’s a great “machine” available, driven not by your own blood, sweat, and tears, but by God’s infinite power? The machine is activated by prayer.

Stop now and list the main tasks ahead of you today, then ask God to help you with them. Before beginning each task, ask God to give you the guidance, strength, skill, patience, love, or whatever else you may need to do it right, and claim one of these Promises of Power. As the task progresses or new factors enter in, pray again accordingly. And if an unexpected challenge should present itself, rise up to meet it with God’s power—pray. Make an effort to do this over the next few days, and see what a difference prayer makes.

Abi May
Promises of power

God is my strength and power,
And He makes my way perfect.

2 Samuel 22:33

Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many
or with those who have no power.

2 Chronicles 14:11

God has spoken once,
Twice I have heard this:
That power belongs to God.

Psalm 62:11

He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might He increases strength.

Isaiah 40:29

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

Happy resurrection

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.

John 11:25–26

When I was eight or nine, my family bought Franco Zeffirelli’s six-hour miniseries Jesus of Nazareth (1977) on video and we spent quite a few Sunday mornings slowly going through the series, learning about the life of Christ. During the last hour, Jesus’ trial and crucifixion are portrayed. I knew the basic story, having heard it retold each Easter for as long as I could remember, but seeing it portrayed so vividly was a different matter. I watched with horror as Jesus was tried, mocked, beaten, and crucified. Watching Jesus die was too much to bear. My heart broke and tears flowed.

My mother saw my anguish and pulled me near. “But honey,” she said, a smile lighting up her face, “the best is yet to come. He is alive!”
Sure enough, after that terrible death came His glorious resurrection, and with it all my anguish was washed away. After we had finished the video and our discussion, I drew a picture of Jesus smiling down from heaven. I was so thankful that the greatest story ever told had a happy ending!

I believe day-to-day life is a bit like Easter. We experience disappointments, sorrow, and pain, but through our Savior we can find sweet relief and “resurrection.” Our troubles won’t last forever. In those moments when we feel like we are dying, when we feel burdened and full of sorrow, we need to remember that the “best is yet to come.” Just as Jesus’ death was not the end, only the beginning, so the problems of life that threaten to undo us can signal a new beginning, the turning of a new page. That’s Easter—the joy of starting again.

Ariana Andreassen ■

Preventive maintenance

Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.
Psalm 119:105

We all go through situations that leave deep imprints on our spirits. I had one such experience a couple of years ago.

While on a humanitarian aid mission to a remote area of Burkina Faso, West Africa, I found myself upside down in a Land Rover that had run off the road and rolled into a ditch.

The next few days were a blur of hospitals, phone calls, recounting the accident, and thanking God for His protection. Five of us had been involved in what could have been a fatal accident, and the worst injury that any of us sustained was a broken collarbone.

God is able to bring some good out of every situation, and this accident was no exception. We experienced the hospitality and empathy that are common among African people; everyone from taxi drivers to doctors to ambassadors expressed sincere concern...
for our well-being. I also gained an even greater appreciation of my coworkers, who didn’t let their bumps, bruises, or broken collarbone stop them from delivering aid to orphanages and remote villages.

What left the deepest impression on me, however, was something God taught me about my spiritual life. Like the wheel alignment on the Land Rover, which had been faulty and caused our accident, my spirit also needs maintenance. If I don’t regularly check my spirit, it can get knocked out of whack by rocks and potholes in the road of life—problems, disappointment, loss, and so on. And if that spiritual misalignment is not corrected, when I hit another particularly rough spot I could lose control, veer off the road, and wind up upside down in a ditch.

Maintaining our spiritual lives through prayer, quality spiritual input, and godly living is as important to our happiness and well-being as servicing our vehicles is to safety on the road. When we work at keeping our spirits in good shape and are mindful of our strengths and limitations, we can respond better to whatever situation we find ourselves in. Our faith in God’s love and care, like shock absorbers, will lessen the bumps in the road; proper alignment will keep us on the straight and narrow; and our lives will take us where God wants us to go.

Have a safe trip!

Fátima Porras

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.

Hebrews 12:1–2
**Inner strength**

Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.

*Psalm 84:5*

They go from strength to strength;
Each one appears before God in Zion.

*Psalm 84:7*

But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

*Isaiah 40:31*

I can do all things through Christ
who strengthens me.

*Philippians 4:13*

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**Jesus, the great problem solver**

A PRAYER

Thank You, dear Jesus, that You’re the greatest problem solver. You came to solve mankind’s biggest problem—our need for salvation, to be freed from having to pay the price for our sins. But You didn’t stop there. During Your earthly life You solved so many other problems. When there was no wine at the wedding, You created more wine.¹ When people came to You with their health problems, even ones they’d had for many years, You healed them.² When there was no food for the multitudes You were teaching and everyone was hungry, You multiplied the loaves and fishes.³ When the adulterous woman was about to be stoned, You had a big problem on Your hands, but with great wisdom, humility, and love You put the hypocrites in their place and not only saved but changed the woman’s life.⁴
And every day You make Yourself available to help me solve my problems. Thank You for that! I know that I’m a mess. I’m only human. I make mistakes. I say and do the wrong things at times. Sometimes I hurt others without meaning to. That’s why I need Your help so much.

Please help me to see problems as challenges, not as dead ends or disasters, knowing that You’re there to help and that no problem is too big for You. Thank You for how You manage to turn every problem and difficulty I face into a steppingstone to greater progress. I know You have the power to solve the problems I face today, so I call on that power now. Amen.

Maria Fontaine

1 John 2:1–11
2 Matthew 12:15; Luke 4:40
3 Matthew 14:15–21
4 John 8:3–11

God is a tranquil Being, and abides in a tranquil eternity. So must thy spirit become a tranquil and clear little pool, wherein the serene light of God can be mirrored.

Gerhard Tersteegen
The aurora phenomenon

The aurora borealis, also called the northern lights, is one of the most magical sights of the night sky. When I lived in Iceland, I saw it many times. One memory stands out.

It was February 2009, and I was about to leave Iceland. I had spent most of the day trying to make arrangements to send my belongings ahead, and it hadn’t gone well. Each phone call to find out customs procedures had ended in frustration.

As the day went on, things seemed to go from bad to worse. Even a walk in the park had ended badly when I tripped and injured my knee. By the evening I was in tears and could hardly make sense of my thoughts. I knew I’d feel better if I could manage to look at things from the bright side, but I couldn’t find anything to be positive about. How could I be thankful when darkness was all around? How could I find something to be thankful for when everyone was telling me why the things I was trying to accomplish wouldn’t work out?

Just then the phone rang. It was a friend calling to tell me that she had heard there would be a magnificent aurora that night. Since I was leaving in a few days, it would probably be my last chance to see one for a while.

Prayer is like the silent flight of eagles. It’s only you and God and the heavens above. Up there, you know that nothing is impossible because you’re in a heavenly realm.

Maria Fontaine
I grabbed my coat, called another friend, and off we drove to a spot outside of town, where the city lights wouldn’t diminish the effect. It was colder and windier out there, but the view would make up for that.

As we sat and watched vibrant pinks and greens and blues dance across the night sky, new thoughts came to me. These natural light displays are mostly seen near the poles, where it gets very cold and dark. Getting the best view usually involves some hardship or sacrifice.

In that remote spot, I was surrounded by darkness and cold, but the aurora was at its most brilliant. My overall situation hadn’t changed, but my heart danced to its gentle rhythm. In what seemed like the darkest hour, God had not only lit up my world and given me something to be thankful for, but He had reminded me once more that every dark night has a beautiful view if we will only look up.

Anjali Miles

Chapter 4

Green: Forward Motion

Green represents the hope of tomorrow. Regardless of what has happened in the past, we can step forward to the future.

I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, “Fear not, I will help you.”

Isaiah 41:13

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

Mottos for Success
“When you pass through the waters … they shall not overflow you.”1 God doesn’t open paths for us in advance of our coming. He doesn’t promise help before help is needed. He doesn’t remove obstacles out of our way before we reach them. Yet when we are on the edge of our need, God’s hand is stretched out. Many people forget this and are forever worrying about difficulties which they foresee in the future. They expect that God is going to make the way plain and open before them miles and miles ahead, whereas He has promised to do it only step by step as they may need. You must get to the floodwaters before you can claim the promise.

Author unknown

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.

Mottos for Success

Never hesitate to trust the unknown future to a known God.

Mottos for Success

The path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

Proverbs 4:18

As I strolled along the river, swans and other birds added to the beauty of a sunny Sunday afternoon that was wasted on me. The past few years had been a nightmare. Alcoholism was taking its toll. Guilt, negativity, and discouragement hung over me like dark clouds. I was separated from my wife and had lost my job. I had also lost the respect of all my friends and coworkers. I felt like a worthless failure.

A few joggers passed me up. A group of young people raced by on bicycles. I hardly noticed them either, as my mind relived the events of the past few years, trying to figure out where I had taken the wrong turn that had led me to this awful place.

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

1 Isaiah 43:2
Then a young voice called out. “Don’t give up! Keep going! Don’t give up!” The words rang in my ears.

I turned to see a boy of about seven, running my way. As he passed, he yelled again over his shoulder to his younger sister, probably five, who seemed about to give up in what was apparently a race between them.

“Don’t stop now! You have to get to the finish line!”

It reminded me of a scene from the film *Chariots of Fire* (1981), where Eric Liddell, one of the runners in a 440-yard race leading up to the 1924 Olympics, was bumped by another runner and fell to the infield. As all of the other runners passed him, I imagined what must have gone through his mind in that moment. Give up! You have lost! Don’t bother to finish the race! Instead, Liddell picked himself up, got back on the track, and ran as though he was destined to win—and he did!

I smiled for the first time in a long while. A beam of light had broken through my darkness. So what if I had fallen into the depths? The only way out for me now was up! I could get up, I told myself. I could get back on track and run. I might not win in dramatic fashion like Liddell, but I could finish the course, the great race of life.

Time has passed. I’m still running and have gained some important ground. I am now a recovering alcoholic, and have found renewed purpose and fulfillment in a life rededicated to sharing God’s love and hope with others.

It’s never too late to get up and try again.

Scott Montrose
The tapestry

I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. Psalm 139:14

Each event in a person’s life, each thought, each decision, each bit of love, and each interaction with someone else is like a thread in a tapestry. Day after day, dark threads and bright threads are woven together, often, it seems, without rhyme or reason, but in the end they form a picture. I’m looking at the tapestry of your life now, and it’s beautiful! All the good things—the happiness and fulfilment, the love you gave and received, the lives that were better because of you—these are bright threads. The dark threads are the difficulties and disappointments, the trials and the tears. These are also necessary because they make the bright threads look all the brighter and help give your tapestry its rich, warm glow. No one else has ever woven a tapestry quite like yours, and no one could have. Your life is unique.

A message from Jesus received in prayer ■

They rose higher

So they said, “Let us rise up and build.” Then they set their hands to this good work. Nehemiah 2:18

Look at all the men and women throughout history who rose above seemingly insurmountable odds to become great. They had to fight harder to overcome those obstacles, but in so doing they became stronger. Instead of complaining that life had given them a “lemon,” a bad deal, they “made lemonade out of their lemons.” Because of their supposed handicaps, they rose higher than they would have otherwise.

Beethoven was stone deaf when he composed some of the most beautiful music ever written, and Thomas Edison was deaf when he invented the phonograph. Alexander the Great was a hunchback. Homer was a blind minstrel. Renoir painted some of his finest masterpieces when his fingers were so twisted by rheumatism that his artist’s brush had to be strapped to his hand. Handel’s right side was paralyzed when he composed his greatest work, “The Hallelujah Chorus!”
Very often it’s also the people who have overcome difficulties who are in turn able to help others have the courage and faith to overcome theirs. Their personal examples are proof that it is possible to rise above seemingly impossible situations.

If Helen Keller hadn’t been blind and deaf from infancy, she never would have had the opportunity to become the inspiration that she was and continues to be to millions, and she never could have said, “I thank God for my handicaps, for through them I have found myself, my work, and my God.”

Booker T. Washington was born a slave and worked in coal mines and salt mines before becoming an educator, a spokesman for African American causes, and founder of a college for young African Americans.

Jerome K. Jerome lost his father when he was 12. At 14 he had to go to work to support his mother and sister. His life got even harder when his mother also died, but eventually Jerome became a writer, not of sad stories but of humor. After such a hard beginning in life, he said, “It is from the struggle, not the victory, that we gain strength.”

**Maria Fontaine**

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**Breathe deep**

A spiritual exercise

God is like the air we breathe—all around us, invisible, and vital to our health and happiness. Just as we need to breathe clean, fresh air to be strong and healthy physically, we need to partake of God’s Spirit to be strong and healthy spiritually. Under normal circumstances, breathing is an unconscious, involuntary act. God would like our relationship with Him to be that natural, and He created us with all the necessary equipment. But unlike breathing, for most of us, making that connection with God doesn’t come so easily; it requires a conscious effort on our part. Actually, it’s easier than it seems, and with a little practice it becomes even easier. Try this:

Go outside, preferably to a natural setting. Take long, deep breaths. Imagine that you are inhaling God’s energy, light, love, and peace. Then exhale slowly and imagine that you are expelling stress, worries, negative feelings, or whatever may be troubling you. Look around at God’s creation, and continue to breathe deeply as you think about His infinite love and care. Turn your worries and concerns over to Him, and thank Him in advance for working everything out.

A few minutes of that and you will feel rejuvenated.

**Abi May**
Over the rainbow

**Hold on to your hopes; tomorrow is a new day!**

His favor is for life;
Weeping may endure for a night,
But joy comes in the morning.
*Psalm 30:5*

I rise before the dawning of the morning,
And cry for help; I hope in Your word.
*Psalm 119:147*

Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.
*Lamentations 3:22–23*

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**On the rebound**

It had been a satisfying day.
The world was a wonderful place, I thought, as I made my way to the office where my computer sat. Its keyboard beckoned my fingers to make contact.

As soon as the screen lit up, I knew something was terribly wrong. My hard drive had crashed.

It took a moment for the scope of the disaster to register in my slow-computing brain, but then it hit me. No, it slammed into me with the force of a bulldozer on a razing mission. My stomach did a back flip. My vision went hazy. My mind became clouded. The room spun.

The last six months of hard work—articles, graphic design, all that precious mental energy that had been stored on the computer’s hard drive for safekeeping—was gone.

Forever.
My worst fear, like a meteor falling from the sky, came crashing down on me. Frustration, confusion, tragedy, and loss engulfed me.

Why, oh why, hadn’t I copied all that stuff onto a backup device? Now bits and pieces of creativity were lost, floating somewhere in cyberspace, far, far from home. And I couldn’t get them back.

But then I remembered the story of when Thomas Edison met a similar tragedy. His workshop caught fire, and months, years, even decades of hard work on numerous unfinished inventions went up in smoke.

“There go all my mistakes!” he said with amazing cheerfulness. And then he went right back to work.

I wondered if there was enough positive energy left in me to start again as bravely as Edison had. Contemplating these things somehow eased the pain and melted away that woozy feeling of defeat. I struggled to stand up from where I had fallen to my knees in frustration, and I forced the corners of my mouth into a smile.

Oh, some things in life seem totally unfair! But I refused to let defeat overcome me in that moment or have any bearing on my future efforts. I decided to see this situation not as the tragic end to all the projects that were lost, but rather as a new beginning for each of them in a future that was yet to unfold.

This is the first I’ve written since Demolition Day. “There go all my mistakes,” I’m saying. And I’m not going to quit. I’m on the rebound, back at my computer and ready to start again.

With backup files.

Nyx Martinez

When the impossibilities of life loom large, take God’s hand and take it one step at a time.

Ariana Andreassen
The climb to victory

Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.

Isaiah 2:3

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!

A message from Jesus received in prayer

What is defeat? Nothing but education, nothing but the first step to something better.

Wendell Phillips
When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you till it seems you could not hold on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn.

Harriet Beecher Stowe

The truest strength

You will keep him in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You.

Isaiah 26:3

I cannot look, I cannot see,
I cannot understand.
I lay myself down helplessly
In the hollow of Your hand.
The clouds that now encompass me
And seem to block my view,
Are sent by You, unfailing Love,
To draw me close to You.

I cease from all my struggling,
I rest from all the strain.
I only live to love You, Lord,
And glorify Your name.
There is no great achievement now,
No great works done for You,
But somehow in the stillness sweet,
My spirit is renewed.
When pain has overtaken me
And human strength is gone,
Emotions cloud all over me
And days and nights are long,
I look up into Your eyes
And find strength within Your smile.
Your Spirit gently comforts me
And holds me through each trial.

And though my body trembles now
My spirit is at peace,
For I hold to the Master’s words
Which cause the storm to cease.
Your power stands unfailingly,
Your every promise sure.
You give me faith, You give me grace,
Sufficient to endure.

I lift my heart in praise to You
For all that You have done,
For every battle we have fought,
Each victory we’ve won!
And though my body pains me still
My spirit is at ease
For I have found the truest strength.
In You is perfect peace.

*Misty Kay*  ■

*He makes His sun rise ... and sends rain.*

*Matthew 5:45*

Many normal natural things in life are seen positively by some people, but resented by others. Take a rainy day, for example. Some might complain about it, while others might consider it a blessing because it waters their crops or grass. On the other hand, there are some things that are not merely a matter of personal attitude, which we would all agree are not good or desirable in the natural sense: a physical handicap, a car accident, a house burning down, etc. If you have a physical handicap, that is something that has obviously caused you a lot of pain. It’s not your imagination, and it’s very natural for you to be down about it. Yet even our handicaps can be turned into stepping stones to a better life; like rungs of a ladder, they can help you climb higher than you could otherwise.

*Maria Fontaine*  ■
Changing mindsets

My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. 
“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways,  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.
Isaiah 55:8–9

W e sometimes limit God’s power to work in our lives because we lack faith. We look at things too much from our own perspectives instead of trying to see them as He does. Our outlook is trapped on an earthly plane. When we find ourselves in that situation, it’s time to change our mindset about some things.

The definition of mindset is: a set of beliefs or a way of thinking that determines somebody’s behavior and outlook. What this means is that the way we look at things, our attitudes, the things we think and believe, determine our behavior.

A major factor in making progress is shedding any mindset that holds you back and taking on a new mindset that will have a positive effect on your behavior and outlook. We all have some wrong attitudes, so we need to find out what those are and fight to change them into positive ones.

Consider the story about two shoe salesmen who were sent by their company to Africa. The first salesman wrote the home office saying, “Nobody wears shoes here,” and turned in his resignation.

The second salesman was thrilled with the potential and wrote, “Everybody here needs shoes!”

The first fellow’s mindset, his negative attitude, caused him to resign. He had the wrong mindset about the situation, and this mindset determined his behavior, which in this case was to give up in despair. Now contrast that to the other fellow who had a positive mindset. “Everyone needs shoes!” What a difference! The positive mindset brought faith. Where one man saw an impossible situation, the other saw endless possibilities. Clearly, our mindset affects our outlook and, most importantly, our behavior.

It’s important that we shed any negative mindset that holds us back, and instead embrace a new, positive mindset that will change our behavior and performance for the better. To get the most from life and give the most in return, we should focus on the unlimited power of God, which He has put at our disposal. When we do that, we see the potential instead of the problems. That positive mindset will help us to act in a positive, full-of-faith manner—and with faith, anything is possible.1

Peter Amsterdam

1 Matthew 17:20
Some problems are short term, such as a bout of flu or a temporary falling out with someone at work. Others may last much longer: a chronic illness, a disability or an addiction, the loss of someone dear, or an ongoing battle to overcome a personal weakness such as anger or moodiness. You may have to struggle with such difficulties for weeks, months, or even years.

Sometimes problems persist even when you feel you’ve already done all you could: You’ve been praying, reading and following God’s Word, claiming His promises, and trying to trust Him. Still you see no answer, which can be discouraging.

In cases like that, God may be testing you to see whether you will continue to trust and believe and thank Him for all the other good things He sends your way, even when it seems He is not answering your prayers about a certain thing. “We walk by faith, not by sight. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” God loves to see His children’s faith manifested, and He promises to greatly reward those who bravely endure the trying of their faith.

If God is working in your life to bring out a special quality, the process may take some time. Lumps of coal aren’t turned to diamonds overnight; so it is with our lives.

When you think you’ve reached the end of your rope, just hold on a little longer. Patience is often the key that opens the door to God’s blessings, and sometimes we must be content to wait for His answer. While we may expect God to put an end to our problems right now, He may know that later is a better time. God’s timing is impeccable. Trust Him!

Faith is believing. Faith is trusting. Faith doesn’t quit. Faith refuses to call anything impossible. Faith refuses to be robbed of its joy and peace by circumstances or battles.

If we refuse to concede defeat, but rather hold on to God no matter what, if we determine to believe His promises, even though we may not see the fulfillment immediately, victory will be ours in the end. Such faith cannot be defeated. God will always come through for us.

Shannon Shayler

1 2 Corinthians 5:7; John 20:29
Chapter 5

Red: Stop, Look, Listen

Red signals a warning—there is danger up ahead. In these pages, red represents the unhelpful attitudes and outlooks that we should refrain from if we want to gain peace of mind.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Philippians 4:8
“Why should I forgive anyone who doesn’t say they are sorry?” people often ask me. And I tell them, “Life is too short for me to hang around waiting for someone to say sorry to me.” My saying, “It’s okay—I forgive you,” does not depend on others saying they are sorry. For me that’s not a precondition. The Our Father [Lord’s Prayer] doesn’t say, “Please forgive me so I can go and forgive others.” Jesus taught us that we need to forgive others before we can ask to be forgiven.

Stella Sabiti

Dear restless heart, be still, for peace is God’s own smile,
   His love can every wrong and sorrow reconcile;
   Just love, and love, and love, and calmly wait awhile.

Edith Willis Linn ■

The rage route

Bridle your anger, trash your wrath, cool your pipes—
it only makes things worse.
Psalm 37:8 (THE MESSAGE)

According to research, nine out of ten motorists admit to having experienced road rage to one degree or another, from excessive honking and abusive gestures to physical attack. Aggressive driving contributes to a third of motor accidents. When the Old Testament prophet Nahum saw a vision—about 2,600 years ago—of “chariots raging in the streets, jostling one another in the broad roads,” he could well have been seeing this modern phenomenon.

Anger is, of course, neither a new condition nor limited to driving. Everyone has experienced how a minor nuisance can easily grow into an irritation, then an annoyance, and finally cause us to erupt in fury. When that happens, the consequences are not usually very happy for us or for those around us.
There is an interesting example in the Bible of a man who lost a lot through anger. After Moses had led the Israelites out of Egypt, they were forced to survive for years in the wilderness. On one occasion when they were desperately in need of water, God instructed Moses to speak to a rock, promising him that water would come out. However, Moses had lost patience with the people’s incessant complaining, despite all the miracles God had already done to protect and supply for them, so instead of simply saying the words that he had been instructed to, Moses struck the rock in frustration. Water came gushing out, as God had said it would, and everyone’s thirst was quenched. However, this display of temper cost Moses dearly. God told him, “Because you did not believe Me”—Moses’ impatience showed that he didn’t believe things would work out if he simply did what God had told him to do—“therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”1 In the end, Moses was only allowed to see the Promised Land from a nearby mountaintop before he died. As Roman emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius wrote, “Our anger and impatience often prove much more mischievous than the things about which we are angry or impatient.” Besides the strain on our relationships with others, medical research shows that negative emotions can damage our blood vessels, increase the likelihood of heart attacks, and reduce our resistance to infections, among other problems.

The good news is that we don’t have to keep traveling on the rage route. Peace of mind is within our reach if we will only pause, pray, and remain positive.

Abi May

1 Nahum 2:4
2 Numbers 20:7–8,10–12; Psalm 106:32
Reflections on the route back from rage

1. Pause and put things in perspective.

By your patience possess your souls.

Luke 21:19

When you have been pushed to the point that you’re about to scream, step back from the situation for a few minutes. Breathe deeply. Try to see things in perspective. Then face the world again.

Mottos for Success

Put time into proper perspective. Every difficult experience you may be dealing with now, circumstances that tend to make you angry and bitter, will in time pass away.

Jim Henry

The greatest remedy for anger is delay.

Seneca the Younger

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

1 Timothy 6:11

2. Ask God for help.

At the end of every day, take stock. If anger or any other negative emotion is in your heart, ask God to take it away. He will.

Mottos for Success

Do you sometimes feel that you are in a deep hole? And what’s more, do you feel that somebody just keeps throwing dirt on you? You can turn the bad to good by looking up and seeing that Jesus is there through it all. Take His hand. Ask Him to pull you up and to help you see His purpose in it all. He can help you see the events around you from His perspective. He can give you His calm and stop the panic. And then He can help you find solutions that will enable you to step triumphantly out of that deep well and onto the path of a brighter tomorrow.

Chloe West

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

Isaiah 26:3
3. Make an effort to adopt a positive thought pattern.

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

_Ephesians 4:31–32_

When I forgive, I am not to carry any bullets forward on the journey. I am to empty out all my explosives, all my ammunition of anger and revenge. I am not to “bear any grudge.”

I cannot meet this demand. It is altogether beyond me. I might utter words of forgiveness, but I cannot reveal a clear, bright, blue sky without a touch of storm brewing anywhere.

But the Lord of grace can do it for me. He can change my weather. He can create a new climate. He can “renew a right spirit within me,” and in that new atmosphere nothing shall live which seeks to poison and destroy. Grudges shall die and revenge shall give place to goodwill, the strong genial presence which makes its home in the new heart.

_John Henry Jowett_

(Continued on page 121.)

Growing spiritually can be like a rollercoaster ride. Take comfort in the knowledge that the way down is only preparation for the way up.

_Rebbe Nachman_
4. Turn good thoughts into good actions.

There is a strong connection between thinking the right thoughts and doing the right things. You must act on the victory, live the victory, and let the change be manifested in your actions, not just your thoughts. If you’ve prayed against anger, for example, then you have to accept the victory by not only entertaining positive thoughts, but also by acting on those thoughts. Even if it would have been impossible to do such things before, if you’ll exercise your faith by trying, you’ll see Jesus come through for you. What you weren’t able to do before will be possible, because He will have changed you. As you do what He shows you day by day to live your victory, you’ll see it manifested more and more in your reactions, actions, and daily life.

Positive thoughts are not enough. They must become action. They must translate into positive deeds. As you combine your new thought patterns and reactions with behavior that reflects the victory Jesus has given you, you will go from strength to strength.

Maria Fontaine

If you know all this, blessed are you if you act accordingly.

John 13:17 (WEY)

If we knew—really knew—how much God loves us, we would never feel unloved. If we knew how unconditional His love is, we would never feel insecure. If we knew how accepting He is of us—blemishes, blow-its, and all—we wouldn’t worry so much about what anyone else might think. If we knew how much He appreciates our love for Him and others, we would find fulfillment in that, first and foremost. If we knew what He has planned for us, we wouldn’t fear the future. If we only knew how much He loves us for who we are, we wouldn’t want to be anyone else.

Keith Phillips

LEVITICUS 19:17–18

Psalm 51:10 (KJV)

1 Leviticus 19:17–18

2 Psalm 51:10 (KJV)
Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

Mark 11:25

The power to forgive is one of the greatest powers given to man. It’s part of the nature and essence of God, and when you exercise it you assume godlike stature. You have the power to forgive and thus rise above the pettiness of mortals.

Choosing to forgive another is one of the hardest things most people ever do, especially if it’s undeserved. It’s hard because it’s not human nature. Human nature cries out for revenge and retribution. But why get stuck in human nature?

I came to bring forgiveness and salvation from sin, but I also came to save you from human nature. When you received Me as your Savior, you received a measure of My superhuman nature. Once you’ve received Me, how much that superhuman nature rules in your life is up to you, and that is reflected in your choices. Since one of the most outstanding traits of My nature is a readiness to forgive, how quick you are to forgive others is a pretty good indication of whether or not you’re letting My superhuman nature take charge.

Whether that person who wronged you deserves forgiveness or not is not the central issue. The central issue is you doing the right thing. No one really deserves forgiveness. If others have done wrong, they deserve a just punishment. But forgiveness is greater than justice. Justice is human; forgiveness is divine.

Forgive others who have wronged you, even as your heavenly Father forgives you.

A message from Jesus received in prayer
Enlarge the future

Judge not, and you shall not be judged.
Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.
Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

_Luke 6:37_

Forgiveness does not change the past,
but it does enlarge the future.

_Paul Boese_

If a rattlesnake is cornered, it can become so frenzied that it will accidentally bite itself with its deadly fangs. In the same way, when a person harbors hatred and resentment in his heart, he is often hurt by the poison of his own malice. He thinks he is injuring his enemies by displaying his wrath, but the real harm is inflicted deep within his own soul. Nothing is ever gained by giving way to the dark passion of bitterness and anger. When someone wrongs us, we must learn to forgive and ask God to let His love fill our heart.

_It’s the only way to keep from being hurt by bitterness, wrath, and anger._

_Henry G. Bosch_

Without forgiveness life is governed by an endless cycle of resentment and retaliation.

_Roberto Assagioli_

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.

_Mahatma Gandhi_

He that cannot forgive others, breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass … for everyone has need to be forgiven.

_George Herbert_

A Christian will find it cheaper to pardon than to resent.
 Forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits.

_Hannah More_

Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

_Mark 11:25_
Extinguish the anger
A spiritual exercise

Imagine two large volcanoes. The first volcano is dormant. It is covered with lush vegetation and teeming with wildlife, but within it the magma has not cooled and solidified. Seemingly peaceful on the outside, one day it will erupt again with force and power, spewing out rocks and ash and destroying all that grows and lives nearby.

Vegetation and wildlife can’t be found on the second volcano, because it is active, constantly spewing sulfuric gasses and churning out hot lava that destroys everything in its path.

Anger is like a volcano. Heated frustration seethes within, and when let loose it will cause hurt and pain. Sometimes we let it show, like the active volcano, when we’re frustrated, annoyed, or feeling misunderstood. Hot, angry words spew from our mouths, hurting those we direct them at.

Other times we hold anger in, hesitating to communicate honestly about the things that frustrate or irritate us. Slowly the anger builds up, like the magma gradually building pressure within the belly of the dormant volcano, until one day we explode in anger, spouting off angry, hurtful words and acting in an unloving manner.

A verse in Proverbs says, “A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle.”1 In the end, our anger places barriers between us and our loved ones, and we hurt ourselves most of all.

But the good news is that anger can be dispelled by letting God’s Spirit work in us, helping us to see things from His perspective and cooling the hot, magma-like spirit of anger.

The next time you feel anger rising, determine to neither hold it in or to explode. Take a deep breath. Wait before putting your grievance into words. Pray. Ask God to bring peace to your spirit. Eventually you may need to speak with the person who has upset you, but wait until you’ve calmed down and you can choose your words with care. Treat others as you would have them treat you, and you’ll be much happier.

Adapted by Abi May

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

Proverbs 16:32

Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry,
For anger rests in the bosom of fools.

Ecclesiastes 7:9

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear,
slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:19–20

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1 Proverbs 18:19

2 Matthew 7:12
Over the rainbow

Restoring peace of mind

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

2 John 1:3

Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble.

Psalm 119:165

My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you.

Proverbs 3:1–2

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

The safety bubble

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

Our heavenly Father offers us incredible security and peace from the evils of this world. Through His divine care and intervention, we can live in a bubble of protection from the bad things that go on around us and that could also happen to us if He wasn’t constantly keeping them at bay.

God can protect us from anything, but only when we give Him our cooperation. We do that by staying close to Him in spirit—by loving Him and doing our best to live by the principles He’s laid out in His Word—and by taking the necessary physical precautions. When we do those things, we have nothing to fear and can count on Him to deliver us from harm.

Greater is He who is in us than anything this world can throw at us.¹ His love in our hearts will cast out any fearful thoughts or worries, because His Spirit will fill us with power, love, and a sound mind.² We are surrounded and sheltered by Him and His angelic forces.³ We don’t have to fear anything the devil or bad people
can try to do to us, because our great protector has promised that not a hair of our head can be touched without His permission.\(^4\) We can rely on Him to fulfill all of those promises and more, and through faith in them we can have peace of mind, regardless of the circumstances around us.

Sometimes, for one reason or more reasons, He lets something get through that bubble of protection, but even then “all things work together for good to those who love God.”\(^5\) When those seemingly bad things happen, there is usually a lesson for us, and often it is that we need to be more prayerful and more vigilant in the physical realm. People do desperate things when they’re at the end of their rope, and there are also people whose hearts are very evil. We live in dangerous times, but as long as we do our part, we can count on His unfailing counsel, forewarning, protection, and care. We are blessed!

\[ Maria Fontaine \]

1 John 4:4
2 Timothy 1:7
Psalm 34:7
Luke 21:18
Romans 8:28

**Protection**

The eternal God is your refuge,
And underneath are the everlasting arms.
*Deuteronomy 33:27*

The LORD is good,
A stronghold in the day of trouble;
And He knows those who trust in Him.
*Nahum 1:7*

Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place,
No evil shall befall you,
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling.
*Psalm 91:9–10*
And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

2 Timothy 4:18

Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; “For Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.”

Isaiah 12:2

Bluebells and tiny violet woodland flowers fight their way up through the frosty ground; we know spring is around the corner when their bright colors peek out. Violet in these pages represents the uphill climb of faith.

Fight the good fight of faith.

1 Timothy 6:12
“Oh, my lord, what shall we do?” Elisha’s servant asked.¹

The king of Aram (present-day Syria) was at war with ancient Israel and had sent an entire army to the city of Dothan to capture the prophet Elisha. They came by night, so when Elisha’s servant woke and went out early in the morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city.

“Don’t be afraid,” the prophet said. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.”

Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

In this story, the angelic army was already there, but Elisha’s servant was afraid because he hadn’t yet seen them.

*Misty Kay

Faith has its rewards. If we can believe that “impossible” things have happened to others, then perhaps we can believe that they can happen to us too.

*Curtis Peter van Gorder

¹ 2 Kings 6:8–17

**Run the race**

*I have not run in vain.*

*Philippians 2:16*

Two hours, five minutes, and ten seconds: the time it took Kenya’s Samuel Wanjiru to finish first in the 26.2-mile (42 km 195 m) London Marathon in April 2009.

Thirteen days: The time it took Major Phil Packer, a British soldier who became a paraplegic following a spinal injury, to complete the same marathon, finishing last out of 36,000 competitors. This feat of perseverance raised over £600,000 (about US$1 million) for charity.

Wanjiru made the headlines for his speed. Packer made headlines not for speed, but for his courage and determination. A thousand-strong crowd gathered to welcome him at the end of a race that he had defied odds to enter, let alone complete. Following his injury a year earlier, he had been told he would never walk again. In fact, he only relearned to walk with crutches a month before the marathon.
While both men are respected for their accomplishments, there was something special about Packer’s triumph. He was never alone during the exhausting and painful six hours it took him to walk two miles each day. Well-wishers—both friends and strangers—accompanied him on the course, walking beside him and cheering him on, from the starting gate to the finishing line. Congratulatory messages on his website include a message of admiration from Prince Charles.

The road of life is not always easy, and sometimes we face what appear to be impossible obstacles. But we don’t walk it alone. We also have well-wishers—our family and friends—encouraging us along the way. And we too have a prince supporting us—not one from this realm, but Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who promises to help us rise above circumstances, persist against the odds, and triumph over difficulty: “My grace is sufficient for you,” He tells us, “for My strength is made perfect in [your] weakness.”¹ So “let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”²

Abi May

¹ 2 Corinthians 12:9
² Hebrews 12:1–2
Troubles are often the tools by which God fashions us for better things.
*Henry Ward Beecher*

The essence

...by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.

2 Peter 1:4

What is the “divine nature”?—It is the essence of God, how He thinks and how He acts. And through the promises He gives in His Word, we can be like He is. We can partake of those same attitudes, those same feelings, those same ways of looking at things by believing and putting into practice the principles and promises that are right there in the Bible.

We can transcend the confines of earthly attitudes that keep us weighed down, sorrowful, fretful, worried, and fearful. We can not only have a head knowledge of the fact that “all things work together for good to those who love God,” but we can believe, practice, and experience it.
We can be cleansed of all those attitudes and mental habits that are earthly and not heavenly. Jesus told His followers, “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”2 We can be rewired into new creations in Christ Jesus, and through His power overcome our wrong attitudes and bad habits.3

The more we live in the Word and believe it and practice it, the more we’ll be in sync with that heavenly realm. The more we “set [our] mind on things above, not on things on the earth,”4 the easier it becomes to live in this world without being controlled or shaped by it.

Maria Fontaine ■

Keeping the faith

Faith is at the core of our spiritual lives, so it’s worth fighting for. Here are a few tips that can help yours not only survive, but thrive:

Feed on the Word of God.

Faith is built by faithful study of God’s Word. As you read and absorb it daily, as you think about its truths and how they apply to you, your faith will grow. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”1 Jesus promises, “If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”2

Pray and meditate.

God wants to have a personal relationship with you through His Son, Jesus. “There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”3 Communing in spirit with Jesus—sharing your heart with Him and receiving His love, encouragement, and answers in return—will strengthen your connection and deepen your relationship.

1 Romans 8:28
2 John 15:3
3 2 Corinthians 5:17
4 Colossians 3:2
Live your faith.
“Faith without works is dead,”6 but conversely, putting faith into action brings it to life. As you apply God’s Word to daily living, its principles and promises will ring true time after time, and your faith in it and its Author will grow.

Look for the good.
Nothing can put a damper on faith like adverse circumstances, but the Bible promises, “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”5 Learn to find and focus on that good, and your faith will be buoyant enough to survive anything.

Draw from the experience of others.
Reading accounts of what God has done for others will increase your faith. What God has done for them, He can do for you!

Thank God for the good.
Praising God for His goodness propels us into His presence. “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.”6 The more you thank God for His goodness, the more you’ll find to be thankful for and the more He will bless you. It’s an upward spiral that makes God and the spiritual realm more real to you; it strengthens your faith.

Alex Peterson

1 Romans 10:17
2 John 8:31–32
3 1 Timothy 2:5
4 James 2:26
5 Romans 8:28
6 Psalm 100:4
**Multiplied power**

*Cast your burden on the Lord,*  
*And He shall sustain you;*  
*He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.*  

*Psalm 55:22*

Many people, when faced with a negative situation, feel justified in complaining and dwelling on the negative. Others have discovered the power of positive thinking and use it, but they don’t understand that the good results of positive thinking are part of the spiritual principle of praise, that praising Me for My goodness brings down My blessings. The power of positive thinking is multiplied when turned into praise, but because many don’t know they should bring Me into their positive thinking, they’re only scratching the surface.

Your bodies are built to respond vibrantly to positive thinking, and praise is the ultimate form of positive thinking. When you praise Me even in the midst of seemingly dark circumstances, you’re initiating a reaction that will actually make you feel good physically and will give you extra strength to persevere. But that’s just the beginning, because at the same time, in the spirit, you’re pleasing Me by telling Me that you appreciate My blessings in spite of the negative; that you have faith that I’ll work it out and continue to take care of you. That results in My increased blessings in your life.

*A message from Jesus received in prayer*

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

*Colossians 2:6–7*
Relief from loneliness
A spiritual exercise

“There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother,” the Bible tells us.¹ That friend is Jesus, who also promises, “I am with you always”² and “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”³ His presence can fill the aching void within that we all sometimes feel, no matter how many close companions we may have on life’s journey. We need to learn to let Jesus fill that void.

Sit quietly and focus on this promise. “My presence will go with you.”⁴ Think back to before your day even started. Jesus was with you as you slept, watching over you. Morning came, and just as sure as the sun rose, He was there. When you thought about the day ahead, He was there, just waiting for you to ask His help in planning and carrying out that plan. On your way to work, He was right beside you. Every time you encountered a problem, He was waiting with the answer you needed, hoping you would ask Him for it. When you heard some good news, He was happy along with you. When the day took a difficult turn, He was there to comfort you. As you read this, He is beside you.

Tomorrow, as you go through your day, think of Jesus as your constant companion. As you become more aware of Him being right there with you, you will find comfort and companionship that relieves loneliness and fills those blank spots like no one or nothing else can.

Abi May

¹ Proverbs 18:24
² Matthew 28:20
³ Hebrews 13:5
⁴ Exodus 33:14
Farewell to an old friend

...who are kept by the power of God.

1 Peter 1:5

My elderly mother was on the phone. “The next time you visit, would you mind looking in the garage? Your brother is helping clean it out, and he came across some of your old things.”

What childhood leftovers could possibly remain? When I arrived, there it was: a ponderous manual office typewriter, as sturdy as ever but a little rusty from three decades of disuse. The sight brought back happy memories. My parents had bought it secondhand to reward me for passing an important exam at age 11. I taught myself to type and spent many hours during my teen years hammering out poems and stories.

Before I could reconcile with the idea that my old friend should finally be thrown away, I tried typing again. I had forgotten how much force was required to press a key on an old manual typewriter! Maybe it was the old ribbon, but I could barely see what I had typed. Oops, I made a mistake! I pushed down on the backspace key to delete the mistake, and then remembered that I was back in the day of crumbly typewriter erasers. Hammering painstakingly at the keys, I managed to type a few words. A bell sounded, signaling me to pull back the lever that advanced the paper and returned the heavy carriage to start a new line. I had expended a lot of effort and had very little to show for it.

How different it is typing on my computer! I press the power button and the computer turns on. A few feather-light keystrokes and the first words form on the screen. When I make a mistake, one press of the backspace key deletes it. When I finish, a few more keystrokes and spelling mistakes are autocorrected. One more click and I save my work. A few more clicks and I can email copies to a few friends around the world—no carbon paper, envelopes, or stamps needed—and they will get them almost instantly.

Our spiritual lives are a bit like that. God is pouring out His Spirit in abundance to those who will receive it. He is offering us “advanced spiritual technology” to use in our daily lives—enhanced prayer power, a close personal relationship with Him, and gifts of the Holy Spirit such as wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, and discernment—but it’s up to us what we do with it. We can choose to try to get by without God’s help or just a bare minimum of prayer when we feel we really need it, or we can avail ourselves of His full power by asking for it and learning to use it in all we do.

Me? I’ve made up my mind. I want to learn new things. I’m going to press the “power key” and make as much use of God’s spiritual technology as I can!

And the old typewriter has gone for recycling.

Abi May

1 Corinthians chapter 12

Farewell to an old friend

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Abi May

1 Corinthians chapter 12
Over the rainbow

The power of His might

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord
and in the power of His might.
Ephesians 6:10

He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. … For when I am weak, then I am strong.
2 Corinthians 12:9–10

Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power,
for all patience and longsuffering with joy;
Colossians 1:11

He has made the earth by His power;
He has established the world by His wisdom,
And stretched out the heaven by His understanding.
Jeremiah 51:15

What God has promised

God has not promised
Skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways,
All our lives through.

God has not promised
Sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow,
Peace without pain.

God has not promised
That we shall not know
Toil and temptation,
Trouble and woe;
He has not told us
We shall not bear
Many a burden,
Many a care.

Annie Johnson Flint

God has not promised
Smooth roads and wide,
Swift, easy travel,
Needing no guide;
Never a mountain,
Rocky and steep,
Never a river
Turbid and deep:

But God has promised
Strength for the day,
Rest for the labor,
Light for the way,
Grace for the trials,
Help from above,
Unfailing sympathy,
Undying love.
The Bible is full of promises that God has made. Some of His promises are universal, like: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”1 Others were originally made to certain individuals or groups, like “If you ask anything in My name, I will do it”2—a promise that Jesus first made to His 12 disciples.

But God’s promises were not given solely for the sake of the original hearers. They are for anyone who has faith enough to believe that God will be true to His word. God means exactly what He has promised, and He will fulfill His promises to the very letter if you will reach out with the hand of faith and claim them in a definite manner.

As you become more familiar with God’s Word, you will learn to recognize His promises and claim them as your own. When you do that, it shows you have faith. It’s a positive declaration of your faith and knowledge of the Word, which pleases God and sets His power in motion to answer your prayers.

Jason Rae and Shannon Shayler ■

1 Acts 2:21
2 John 14:14

The difference

Picture a forest—lush, deep, inviting. You enter and look around, expecting that rush of wonder that you’ve experienced before in nature, but this time the birds are not singing, there is no breeze to rustle the leaves, and the stream is not flowing. Everything is still, frozen in time, lifeless. You are in the forest, but it might as well be a picture hanging on the wall.

Now imagine the same scene, except this time everything you expect is there—the cheerful singing of birds, the babbling of the brook, the rustling of the leaves, the breeze in your hair, the scent of a forest after rain, the cool, lingering mist, the mossy path beneath your feet.

The contrast between these two forests is like the difference between knowing of Me and actually knowing Me; it’s the difference between merely having heard or read about Me and having a direct, personal relationship with Me. One is static; the other is vibrant and brimming with excitement and love. One is empty; the other fills your senses. One may help you be a better person, but the other makes you complete.
I know what our relationship can be like, but I won’t force Myself on you. The choice is yours. My love is just waiting for you. Won’t you step in and experience all that I have in store for you? I’m only a prayer away. Just open your heart, and I’ll be there.

_A message from Jesus received in prayer._

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, “Surely the darkness shall fall on me,” even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You.

Psalm 139:7–12

If you are finding more dirt in the garden of your life than flowers, maybe you’ve got your eyes too close to the ground. Look up!

_Chalsey Dooley_
Prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity. If we want to see mighty wonders of divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure and disappointment, let us answer God’s standing challenge, “Call to Me, and I will answer you” (Jeremiah 33:3).

Hudson Taylor

Chapter 7

Orange: Cheery Rays of Gratitude

A happy color. I have chosen the cheery rays of orange to represent gratitude and a positive outlook that can illumine our days, bringing brightness even during dark times.

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.
Marcus Tullius Cicero

Gratitude is the memory of the heart.
Jean Massieu

Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls— Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.
Habakkuk 3:17–18
Have you ever wondered why bad things happen for no apparent reason? Many times King David of Bible fame asked God the same question. “My God, why are You so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?”

In this Psalm, David was so discouraged he said he was no better than a worm (verse 6). Maybe he even felt so low, as the saying goes, that he would have to reach up to scratch a worm’s ankle.

Despite David’s lament, you will read later in the same Psalm that David ends his heartcry on a positive note: “He has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; He has not hidden His face from him but has listened to his cry for help. The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the Lord will praise Him—may your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord.”

Curtis Peter van Gorder

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1 Psalm 22:1 (niv)
2 Psalm 22:24, 26–27 (niv)
the ground, and stacked firewood around his feet. However, just as they were about to set fire to the wood, they noticed that the king was missing a thumb. The cannibals had a superstition that forbad them from eating anyone who was less than whole, so they untied the king and sent him on his way.

As the king traveled home, he was reminded of the event that had taken his thumb, and he regretted the way he had treated his friend. He went straight to the jail and released his friend.

“You were right,” the king said. “It was good that my thumb was blown off.” And he proceeded to tell his friend about his brush with death. “I am sorry for sending you to jail for so long,” he said. “That was very bad of me!”

“No,” his friend replied, “this is good!”

“What do you mean, ‘This is good?’ How could it be good that I sent my friend to jail for a year?”

“If I had not been in jail,” the king’s friend replied, “I would have been with you.”

_Author unknown_

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_A positive praise post_

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!

_1 Chronicles 16:34_

I was inspired the other day when I read some personal accounts on a friend’s blog on the subject of praising God for His goodness in spite of daily problems and annoyances. It made me stop to think. (That’s always good!)

Generally, I am a thankful person. I post inspirational stories on my blog or send them to friends and family by email to share with them the good things that happen in my life. Still, after all these years, I wasn’t in the habit of praising God for even the “bad” things—“giving thanks always for all things to God.” I also wasn’t in the habit of looking for the good in everything.

But after I read my friend’s post I was reminded that the little daily things—a sandwich, a shower, a sunset, an encouraging word from a friend, a walk—are all events that are worthy of praise and thanksgiving. And what’s more, these things have the ability to catapult me into sheer, overjoyous (I made up that word) bliss. That’s quite a thought!
Previously I’d always waited for a “biggie” before I would become ecstatic—like the first time I flew on an airplane as a child, or when I attend a gathering with tons of friends, or the day I will meet my future wife or become a father or find buried treasure on a South Sea island. But that’s a lot of waiting and a lot of missed chances to be ecstatic when I could and should be truly happy and thankful to God, even if I’m just eating breakfast in the morning or receiving an email from my mom.

That’s easier said than done, you might say—and you’d be totally right. But the cool thing about reading my friend’s post was that it clicked with me that I could indeed be grateful for the same things that she was and instantly adopt the same “gratitude attitude.” See, once you start, it becomes automatic.

So let me remember my own words when I’m stuck in downtown traffic tomorrow, or when the rain is coming down in torrents and the roads, the sidewalks, and my driveway are all flooded. Those annoyances won’t matter. I can still rejoice and be glad in those times, too, when I determine to see beauty in everything that comes my way and, as an old song says, “Praise the Lord for another day of life.”

Brian Whyte

I can’t get enough!

God—you’re my God! I can’t get enough of you! I’ve worked up such hunger and thirst for God, traveling across dry and weary deserts. So here I am in the place of worship, eyes open, drinking in your strength and glory.

In your generous love I am really living at last! My lips brim praises like fountains. I bless you every time I take a breath; My arms wave like banners of praise to you. I eat my fill of prime rib and gravy; I smack my lips. It’s time to shout praises!

If I’m sleepless at midnight, I spend the hours in grateful reflection. Because you’ve always stood up for me, I’m free to run and play. I hold on to you for dear life, and you hold me steady as a post.

Psalm 63:1–8 (THE MESSAGE)

1 Ephesians 5:20
Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good.

*Psalm 135:3*

Positiveness lifts your spirit. It’s a law of both the natural and spiritual realms that when you dwell on the good, then good surrounds you. When you think positive thoughts, speak positive things, and take positive action, you feel better and things generally work out better. Praising Me accelerates that positive cycle because it not only helps you to think on the good, but it moves you out of the physical realm with all of its limitations into the spiritual realm, where all things are possible.

Praise brings you closer to Me. When you praise Me, it opens and strengthens our connection. That enables Me to speak to you more clearly so I can help put things in perspective. Praise puts you on My wavelength, receiving My vibes. It opens a channel in the spirit through which I can pour out My blessings upon you.

Praising Me reminds you that only I am capable of solving your problems. It also tells Me that you’re trusting Me and My power to bring victory. Your praises prove to Me that you’re depending on Me, that you’re letting go of your own works and depending on My power to work the needed miracle.

Praise activates your faith. It pleases Me and moves Me to answer your prayers, but it also encourages you and causes you to see beyond your request and present circumstances, to focus instead on the fulfillment.

Praise brings so much of My Spirit and so many of the fruits of My Spirit into your life, particularly the gifts of faith and positiveness, and those put you in line for healing, good health, and miracles of all sorts.

Focus on the good, no matter how bad the situation seems to be. Praise Me for all the wonderful things I have done for you in the past. Praise Me for the good that you can imagine Me accomplishing through this. Once you start praising Me more, you’ll realize how much there is to praise Me for. Praise will turn your times of trouble into times of triumph.

*A message from Jesus received in prayer*
The extra allowance

Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace;
Thereby good will come to you.

Job 22:21

Life is full of problems—sickness, accidents, financial problems, family problems, loss of loved ones, and on and on the list goes. “Hasn’t there been some sort of mistake here?” we ask. “If God truly is love, as the Bible says in 1 John 4:8, and if He truly cares for us like a father, as the Bible says many times, then why all these problems?”

The first thing to understand is that God doesn’t cause these problems, but He does allow them to befall us, and for reasons that are nearly as varied as the problems themselves. Sometimes He uses them to remind us how incapable we are of solving our own problems, so we will turn to Him for help. Sometimes He lets them happen so He can show us how much He loves us by working things out. Sometimes they happen to test and strengthen our faith. Sometimes they happen to make us pray more earnestly. Sometimes they happen to teach us lessons of patience or positiveness in the face of adversity. Sometimes they happen to keep us humble. Sometimes they happen to make us wiser. Sometimes they happen to help us appreciate our other blessings and all the problems we don’t have. Sometimes they happen to draw us closer to others who are going through similar things. There are all kinds of reasons for troubles, but whatever the reason, God always wants to turn them for our ultimate good.

Keith Phillips
Break point

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Psalm 150:6

The due date for my writing assignment was fast approaching, and I was barely half done. I’d been working fast and furiously, but my mind was now too stressed to think clearly, my eyes were too strained to focus, and my shoulders were stiff from sitting hunched over my computer keyboard for so long.

I finally pulled myself away from my desk piled high with books and papers, and retreated to a nearby window for a break. As I raised my eyes to a beautiful blue, sunny sky above neighboring apartment buildings, I caught sight of a bird in graceful flight. My spirit soared with it. I forgot my work for a moment and enjoyed this glimpse of God’s beautiful creation. My tired mind was renewed as I marveled at the shapes and shades of the clouds—thousands of tons of water floating effortlessly high overhead. Breathing deeply of the breeze that blew through the open window, I thanked and praised God for His goodness and care. I began with the scene before me, and ended with a few of the many wonderful things He has done for me personally over the years. With each breath and thought, my mind and body relaxed a little more, and my aching shoulders became a little less tense.

When I returned to my desk, I felt completely refreshed. The three-minute break had worked wonders. I tackled my assignment with renewed energy and focus. To my amazement, I made more headway during the next hour than I had in the previous two. Not only that, but when I reread my work later, I found fewer mistakes than I expected. I met my deadline with time to spare.

I was so excited by my discovery that I decided to apply this “praise break” principle to other areas of my life, and I’ve found its effects to be amazing. In addition to relieving stress, it has helped improve my moods, my relations with others, my problem-solving ability, my organizational skills, and more.

My life hasn’t become problem free since I started practicing praise, but stopping to thank God for His goodness and refocus on my blessings gives me strength to face whatever comes my way. It’s made the joys more enjoyable and the trials less trying. It doesn’t take long—sometimes less than a minute—but I’ve found that it makes all the difference in the world.

Elsa Sichrovsky
Over the rainbow

My meditation

May my meditation be sweet to Him;
I will be glad in the Lord.
Psalm 104:34

You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
Psalm 16:11

I have set the Lord always before me;
Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
Psalm 16:8–9

In the multitude of my anxieties within me,
Your comforts delight my soul.
Psalm 94:19

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.
John 14:27

A cupful of joy

A spiritual exercise

The joy of the Lord is your strength.
Nehemiah 8:10

Joy and praise—thankfulness to God for His goodness—are connected. When you take time to thank God for your blessings, your problems and concerns fade into the background. Concentrating on the good things God has brought into your life puts you in a positive frame of mind. Do that for a while, and you’ll find that you’re happier than before. Keep it up, and your happiness will grow. With this joy in your heart, you won’t be so easily pulled down by problems or worries; you will be encouraged and strengthened in spirit.

This short exercise may help.

You’ll need a cup, a stack of paper (any scraps will do) cut into pieces just large enough to write a phrase, and a pen or pencil.

Take one of those small pieces of paper and write one of the things you’re thankful for. Wad the paper into a ball and put it in the cup. Take another piece of paper, write another blessing, wad it up, and put it in the cup. Keep repeating the process. Be specific.
Cover topics such as recent successes, members of your family and circle of friends, experiences you’ve enjoyed, sicknesses that are now behind you, problems that have been resolved, material comforts, your favorite things, and so on.

Continue until the cup is filled to overflowing and you can say with David, the great psalmist of the Bible, “My cup runs over.” You’ll probably be surprised at how many things you have to be thankful for, as well as how strengthening it is to thank God for them.

*Abi May*

I’ve learned to sing the song of joy,
   My cup is running o’er
With blessings full of peace and love,
   And still there’s more and more.

*Jonathan Bush Atchinson*

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1 Psalm 23:5

The blue of heaven is larger than the cloud.

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*
How can you expect God to speak in that gentle and inward voice which melts the soul, when you are making so much noise with your rapid reflections? Be silent, and God will speak again.

François de la Mothe Fénelon

Blessings from battles

Because “many are the afflictions of the righteous,” it’s certainly comforting to know that “all things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). In fact, in order to come through our many trials, difficulties, battles, and temptations victoriously, it is imperative that we make this promise in Romans 8:28 a vital part of our life.

We need to get this principle so deeply ingrained within us that it becomes impossible for us to forget, neglect, or overlook it. Romans 8:28 is something that should be as much a part of our conscious and even subconscious thoughts and way of looking at things as the necessity of prayer, the importance of the Word, the inevitability of tests and trials, and the certainty of God’s love.
If we fail to send the events of our daily lives through the filter of Romans 8:28, if we fail to constantly view our disappointments, hurts, problems, illnesses, etc., through the perspective that Romans 8:28 gives us, we will tragically miss many of the valuable lessons the Lord is trying to teach us and we will rob ourselves of the peace that comes from absolute trust in this precious promise and principle.

If you learn the simple equation “trials equal good,” your life will be richer, life’s lessons profounder, and your mind more tranquil. You will also more easily recognize the Lord’s hand in the events of your life. It makes all the difference in the world whether you look at a flood of problems, trials, and tribulations just waiting to see the worst happen, or if you look at them with the excitement and challenge that comes from waiting to discover all the good you know the Lord will bring out of them.

Maria Fontaine

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1 Psalm 34:19

I see your struggles and hear your calls for help. When you feel all alone, I am there. I feel your heartaches, and wait for you to come to Me in prayer. Come into My sanctuary, into that secret place that you and I can share. There I am able to lift the worries, the cares, and the confusion. There I can restore your feeling of purpose and infuse you with strength to go on.

Life can be a struggle, but you do not have to struggle alone. Many times I have placed burdens in your life that seemed like mountains. They weigh your spirit down and you wonder why I have placed them there. I have not done these things to reprove you or as some sort of punishment.—I have done them to bring you closer to Me. I know your heart better than anyone else ever could, and love you more dearly.

The problems and obstacles that I allow in your life can be taken two ways: They can make you either bitter or better. When you have found the peace that only I can give, I can then use you as an instrument of My love to comfort others.

A message from Jesus received in prayer
Chapter 8

Afterword: The Seasons of Life

A meditation on Ecclesiastes 3:1–7
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, 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
Finally…

“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.

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.
—Psalm 4:1

Abi May

“Let not your heart be troubled,” Jesus tells us. “You believe in God, believe also in Me.”1 “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”2

He wants to be with you always, through every disappointment and every hardship. He wants to protect you from harm. Even when there is trouble on every side, you won’t need to worry or fear.

Jesus will be your closest and dearest friend. You will be able to talk to Him anywhere, anytime, and He will answer. He will speak to your heart and guide you through the storms of life.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace,3 will not only give you peace in your heart here and now, but when this life is over, He will bring you to His heavenly kingdom where there will be no more oppression or war or poverty or pain or sickness or suffering or sorrow or death, but only peace and plenty for all. There evil and darkness dare not go!
Jesus is reaching out to you now. Won’t you take His love? If you have not yet personally received Jesus’ gift of eternal love and life, you can do so now by praying the following prayer:

Dear Jesus, I want to receive Your gift of love and feel Your peace in my heart. Please forgive me for my sins and come into my life as my Savior. Amen.

Abi May

1 John 14:1  
2 John 16:33  
3 Isaiah 9:6
OTHER TITLES IN THIS SERIES

Quiet Moments for Parents
Quiet Moments for Success
Quiet Moments for Busy Days

ABOUT THE COMPILER

Abi May is a British educator and member of the Institute for Learning. She is also a writer and compiler who specializes in inspirational anthologies. Previous books include:

The Wonder of Christmas (2007, Aurora Production)
The Wonder of Love (2011, Aurora Production)
The Wonder of Mothers (2011, Aurora Production)
The Wonder of Fathers (2011, Aurora Production)
Moments in Morning (2012, Aurora Production)
Quiet Moments When You Need Them Most

Our lives, like the seasons, are a collection of bright moments and bleaker times; an eclectic intermingling of joys and sorrows. This selection of anecdotes, reflections, and scriptures is designed to lift your spirit when you need it most.