

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# activated

Vol 10 • Issue 4

## **GOD'S FREE OFFER**

Today could be your day!

## **Why I Believe the Easter Story**

All the proof I needed

## **Keeping the Faith**

6 tips to help yours thrive





## PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Remember those connect-the-dots pictures that you drew as a child? The Bible is like that: Connect certain passages in the right sequence, and you reveal a hidden picture, a spiritual truth, a mystery of God. There are thousands of pictures between its covers. Here's a favorite of mine.

1. Romans 5:8: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

That's pretty extreme—dying for us. Why would Jesus do that?

2. Isaiah 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way."

In other words...

3. Romans 3:23: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Okay, so we're not perfect. Why is that such a problem?

4. Isaiah 59:2: "Your [sins] have separated you from your God."

But the good news is...

5. 1 Peter 3:18: "Christ suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us [back] to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit"—meaning He rose from the dead.

Good for Him, but what good does His rising from the dead do for us?

6. John 11:25: "I [Jesus] am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

In other words...

7. John 14:19: "Because I live, you will live also."

Which brings us back to our starting point—God loves us so much that He wants us to live in that love forever.

8. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world"—you and me—"that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Get the picture? That also happens to be the two-in-one theme of this issue—Jesus' resurrection and our eternal salvation. And for a more detailed picture of what Jesus went through to make it all possible, connect the dots in "Feeding Reading—The Easter Story" (page 14). Happy Easter!

Keith Phillips  
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# MY AVOCADO TREE



BY ABI F. MAY

AVOCADOS ARE ONE of my favorite fruits—delicious and nutritious. I have various herbs growing on my kitchen windowsill, and decided to use the little remaining space to try to grow an avocado plant.

Following the tips I found online at [wikihow.com](http://wikihow.com), I held the seed pointed side up and stuck four toothpicks into the middle section of the seed at even intervals so it could rest half-submerged on the mouth of a small jar filled to the brim with water—and waited. Weeks went by, and there was no sign of life. By all appearances, it could have been a stone rather than a seed! When a month had gone by I considered giving up. Perhaps there was no life in this dull brown seed.

Then a tiny crack appeared at its base. I thought at this point that the seed might simply be drying out, but I was willing to wait a little longer. I changed the water, and a few more weeks passed. Finally a tiny root emerged from the crack. Then another crack appeared, this time at the top of the seed. Slowly but surely a small shoot peeked out hopefully.

Transplanted to a pot of soil, the seed that had appeared lifeless is now growing into a small but healthy plant. Tender green leaves sprout day by day, each growing to several times the size of the seed. This baby tree is proof that there *was* life inside the seed, despite outward appearances.

As Easter approaches, I am reminded of my avocado-growing experience. How hopeless Jesus' followers must have felt when they saw Him die on the cross! They watched His lifeless body be carried off and sealed in a stone-cold tomb. They must have felt as though their hopes and dreams were being buried too. I can picture them now, forlorn and seemingly forsaken. Yet hope was not dead! Three days later Jesus would rise triumphant, the victor over death and the grave.

The miracle of Jesus' resurrection is of course a far greater miracle than my little avocado plant, but what an example that plant is. Even when the outlook seems hopeless, wait on the Lord, and He will work miracles—new life, new hope, new beginnings! ☘



## LIFE AFTER LIFE

What reason have atheists for saying that we cannot rise again? Which is the more difficult, to be born or to rise again? That what has never been, should be, or that what has been, should be again?

—Blaise Pascal

# GOD'S FREE OFFER

COMPILED FROM  
THE WRITINGS OF  
DAVID BRANDT BERG



JESUS CAME TO make salvation as easy as He could. That's one reason why the religious leaders of His day wanted to see Him crucified, because their religious system as good as said that nobody could be saved without following their complicated laws, traditions, and religious rigmarole.<sup>1</sup> Jesus taught that all we need to do to be saved is believe that He is the Christ, the Savior, and that we are sinners in need of salvation, and then ask Him for salvation.<sup>2</sup>

We can't completely understand salvation, any more than we can understand the depth of God's love, which is why Jesus said that receiving salvation requires childlike faith. "Unless you become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven."<sup>3</sup> It's impossible to fully comprehend either one. All we can do is receive them.

Does a baby understand the love of its mother or father? No, he just feels it, accepts it, and receives it. Even before he understands language, before he learns to talk, he understands love, he feels love, and he trusts his parents because he knows they love him. Likewise, you don't have to understand everything about God to experience His love and salvation; all you have to do is receive Jesus, God's Son, as your Savior by asking Him into your heart.

You can do that right now if you want God's answer to all of your problems and His love and happiness to fill your heart and life with joy and with a new plan and purpose in living. He'll meet all your needs and solve all your problems. He's just that wonderful, and it's all just that simple!

Jesus said, "I am the door" into the Father's house, the kingdom of God. "If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved."<sup>4</sup> If you want to get into Heaven, all you have to do is believe that the door is there and walk through it.

## SAVED AND FORGIVEN

Why is forgiveness an integral part of salvation? Because sin separates us from God,<sup>5</sup> and no one is perfect; we are all sinners. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"<sup>6</sup> and, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."<sup>7</sup>

So-called good people pride themselves on being better than others. "I don't do this, and I don't do that!" But it's impossible to get into Heaven by being good, because no one can be good enough.<sup>8</sup> We all need to recognize and honestly admit, "I'm a sinner like everyone else. I make mistakes. I need a Savior."

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 15:9

<sup>2</sup>John 11:25–26

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 18:3

<sup>4</sup>John 10:9

<sup>5</sup>Isaiah 59:2

<sup>6</sup>Romans 3:23

<sup>7</sup>Romans 6:23

<sup>8</sup>Galatians 2:16

## Unless you become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven

That's why Jesus died for us, because we're all sinners and it's impossible for us to earn or be worthy of salvation. But Jesus was perfect, and that's why He could pay the price of our sins so God could forgive us. We all need God's love and mercy to be saved, and we find that love and mercy in Jesus Christ.

Salvation is like receiving a pardon. God has offered pardon to the guilty, and it doesn't

matter how bad you are or what you've done. If you believe that Jesus died for your salvation, you will be saved and forgiven. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,"<sup>9</sup> no matter what you've done! "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."<sup>10</sup>

You can't be too bad, but you also can't be good enough. You

cannot save yourself, no matter how good you try to be, because you can never be good enough; you can never earn or deserve salvation. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."<sup>11</sup>

Many people are too proud to accept a gift. They want to work for everything they receive. But no amount of good works



<sup>9</sup>1 John 1:7

<sup>10</sup>Isaiah 1:18

<sup>11</sup>Ephesians 2:8-9

# Jesus paid for your salvation once and forever, and it's His gift to you.

or anything else can save them. Only Jesus saves! “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”<sup>12</sup> “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”<sup>13</sup>

## ONCE SAVED, FOREVER SAVED

Once you have received Jesus, He will never let go of you. “The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”<sup>14</sup> If you have Jesus, then you have eternal life. You may lose your physical life, but never your eternal life!

Salvation is forever. God doesn't change His mind or go back on His word. Once you've received Jesus Christ, you're going to live forever. “He who believes on the Son has everlasting life.”<sup>15</sup> Right now! No ifs, ands, or buts about it!

Jesus said, “I am with you always[s], even unto the end of the world.”<sup>16</sup> “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”<sup>17</sup> “I give them eternal life, and they shall

never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”<sup>18</sup>


You can have peace of mind knowing that you don't have to worry about whether you're going to make it to Heaven. Jesus paid for your salvation once and forever, and it's His gift to you. Grace plus faith plus nothing—that's salvation! You don't have to be good to get saved, and you don't have to be good to stay saved.

But this doesn't mean that you can then live as you please. Once you're saved, you'll always be saved, but if you wilfully commit sins and don't repent, you will suffer for them in some way. “The Lord disciplines those He loves.”<sup>19</sup> And once in Heaven, you'll be rewarded (or not) according to how you lived on earth.<sup>20</sup> Salvation is a gift, but you can keep yourself in line for God's other blessings, both in this life and the next, by doing your best to live as He would have you live. And if you appreciate that gift as you should, you'll love and want to please Him in return.

## A NEW YOU

Jesus likened salvation to being born again.<sup>21</sup> It's that big of a change spiritually. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”<sup>22</sup> Don't be surprised if you actually feel different and think differently and are happier than you have ever been before!

Jesus' coming into your life not only renews and purifies and regenerates your spirit, but it also renews your mind, breaking old connections and gradually rewiring you with a new outlook on life and new reactions to nearly everything around you. It's impossible for you to make such a total change yourself, but it's possible for God—and it's possible for you to ask Him for it.

When Jesus comes into your heart, expect things to be different. It may not happen all at once, but as you continue to hunger for truth and take in more of God's Word, it will happen.<sup>23</sup> You'll find a change in your spirit, your thoughts, and in your direction. You'll be happy and overflowing with love, because “God is love!”<sup>24</sup> 

<sup>12</sup>1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>13</sup>Acts 4:12

<sup>14</sup>John 6:37

<sup>15</sup>John 3:36

<sup>16</sup>Matthew 28:20 KJV

<sup>17</sup>Hebrews 13:5

<sup>18</sup>John 10:28

<sup>19</sup>Hebrews 12:6 NIV

<sup>20</sup>2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:11–15

<sup>21</sup>John 3:3–8

<sup>22</sup>2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>23</sup>Matthew 5:6; John 8:31–32

<sup>24</sup>1 John 4:8



## THE CHOICE



**J**ESUS SAID, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”<sup>1</sup> God’s love is all-powerful, but He won’t force it on you. Instead, He sends His Son, Jesus, to knock at the door of your heart and then wait for you to open the door and invite Him in.

Jesus wants to give you eternal life and become a very real part of your life here and now, but He can’t do either unless you want Him to. He stands meekly and patiently at your heart’s door—perhaps He has been standing there for years—waiting for you to hear Him knocking and open. He wants to be your Savior and will come in as soon as you ask Him to, but He has left that choice up to you.

Will you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? If you

Perhaps He has been  
standing there for  
years—waiting for you  
to hear Him knocking

haven’t already or if you’re not sure that you’re saved, you can make sure right now by sincerely praying this prayer:

*Jesus, please forgive me for all my sins. I believe that You died for me. I open the door to my heart and I invite You into my life. Please fill me with Your love, help me get to know You, and guide me in the way of truth. Amen.*

If you prayed that prayer and meant it, Jesus has already come in. You *have* eternal life and have just embarked on this life’s greatest adventure—experiencing God’s love in Jesus and growing in His ways and wisdom. ✝

### HE LIVES

He lives! He lives!  
Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me,  
And talks with me,  
Along life’s narrow way.

He lives! He lives!  
Salvation to impart.  
You ask me how I know He lives,  
He lives within my heart!  
—Alfred H. Ackley

### FACT, NOT FEELINGS

Sometimes people don’t get any evidence when they pray to receive Jesus as their Savior, and they’re disappointed because it wasn’t manifested by some supernatural or physical experience right then and there. But it doesn’t matter how you feel; from the instant you asked God for the gift of salvation, you have had it. You know you’re saved because God promised it, because of what He said about it in His Word. Your faith is built on fact, not feelings.

—David Brandt Berg

<sup>1</sup>Revelation 3:20



# Why I believe the Easter story

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

BY THE TIME Jesus' body was taken down from the cross, He had suffered one of the most torturous forms of execution ever conceived. His back and sides were a crosshatch of deep lacerations from flogging. There were holes through His hands and feet from the spikes that had pinned Him to the cross, and there was a gaping hole in His side from a spear thrust clear to the heart. Smaller wounds bore witness to other parts of the ordeal—gashes from a mock crown made of thorns and scrapes from when He had fallen under the weight of the cross as He had struggled to carry it up the hill to the Place of the Skull, where He had then been crucified between two common criminals.

The authorities handed Jesus' body over to a wealthy man named Joseph of Arimathea. Considering that Joseph was a member of the Jewish High Court, the Sanhedrin, which had brought the false charges against Jesus, one would have expected Joseph to be counted among Jesus' enemies, not His friends. More surprising still, Joseph wanted Jesus buried in the tomb he had bought for himself in preparation for his eventual death. The body was wrapped in a shroud and put in the tomb, and the entrance was sealed with a great stone. Fearing that His disciples might steal the body and spread rumors that Jesus was alive, those who had plotted His death persuaded the authorities to post guards day and night.

## CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

Because Jesus had been crucified on the eve of the Passover, there was no time to prepare His body for burial according to Jewish custom before it was put in the tomb. The Passover was followed that year by the weekly Sabbath, and any work on either holy day was against the Jewish law, so it was not until dawn of the third day that some of Jesus' women followers were able to return to the tomb to prepare His body for burial. When they got there, the body was *gone*.

It took encounters with the resurrected Jesus for His disciples to understand what had taken place. He had risen from the dead! Word spread quickly.



Jesus' enemies countered with what to most people must have seemed like a much more logical explanation—that His disciples had stolen His body to give credence to their claim that He was alive. The guards who had been at the tomb were even bribed to testify that they had fallen asleep, giving Jesus' followers an opportunity to snatch the body.

Considering that the people behind the “stolen body” version of events were the very same people who had brought the false charges against Jesus and pressured the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to condemn Him to death, and considering also that those announcing the risen Savior were willing to stake their lives on that claim, who would you believe?

### EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

The Gospel accounts of the Resurrection name at least 16 people who were eyewitnesses to the risen Savior. Over a 40-day period, Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs.”<sup>1</sup> Once He was seen by over 500 people.<sup>2</sup>

The apostle Peter testified: “We did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”<sup>3</sup>

The apostle John testified: “That which was from the

beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled . . . we declare to you.”<sup>4</sup>

It is hard to refute eyewitness testimony, especially when those testifying are willing to suffer persecution and even martyrdom for what they claim to have witnessed, as Jesus' first followers were. People don't give their lives for what they know to be a fabrication.

### EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Eyewitness testimony is powerful, but it involves an element of faith; we must take the witnesses at their word. Circumstantial evidence also involves an element of faith; we must believe that the conclusion it points to is more plausible than any other explanation. But empirical evidence—evidence that is verifiable by experience or experiment—is proof positive when it is put the test and it passes. Here is empirical evidence for the case of the Resurrection:

Hours before Jesus was crucified, Peter denied Him three times. Afterwards he and the other disciples went into hiding for fear that they would be recognized as His followers. Even after seeing the risen Jesus several times over a span of 40 days, they remained powerless and directionless. At one point, Peter



The Resurrection proclamation could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact.—*Paul Althaus, German theologian (1888–1966)*



[The narratives of the Resurrection found in the four Gospels] have all the artlessness of simple honesty. They furnish just such testimony as the facts would warrant, and such as plain people convinced beyond any question or doubt would give. They have all the signs of veracity.—*Doremus Hayes, U.S. theologian and author (b. 1863)*

<sup>1</sup>Acts 1:3; 13:31

<sup>2</sup>1 Corinthians 15:3–8

<sup>3</sup>2 Peter 1:16

<sup>4</sup>1 John 1:1,3

and some of the others returned to their old lives as fishermen.<sup>5</sup>

But 10 days after Jesus ascended to Heaven, the disciples were suddenly and dramatically transformed. While the other disciples stood with him, Peter preached to a crowd in Jerusalem that probably included many of the same people who had been in the mob that called for Jesus to be crucified. That sermon resulted in over 3,000 new believers.<sup>6</sup> A few days later Peter preached again and won over 5,000 more.<sup>7</sup> How do you explain the change that had come over the disciples?

The answer is found in something Jesus told His disciples the night before He was crucified: “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.”<sup>8</sup> Before Jesus died, He could only live *with* His followers, but ever since God raised Him from the dead, His Spirit lives in all who receive Him as their Savior—“I in you.” Jesus dwelling in His disciples effected a greater change in them than seeing Him in His resurrected body.

And unlike eyewitness testimony or circumstantial evidence,

we can put Jesus’ “I in you” claim to the test. If it’s true, we should get the same results as the disciples.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” the resurrected Jesus told the apostle John. “If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him.”<sup>9</sup>

When I first heard that as a 20-year-old agnostic, I decided to put Jesus to the test. I opened the door to my heart and asked Him to come into my life, and He did. No, He didn’t suddenly appear in bodily form, as He did to His disciples and others shortly after His resurrection, and I didn’t see a blinding flash of light or hear Him speak in an audible voice, as the apostle Paul did when he first encountered the risen Jesus, but that simple, awkward prayer, *If You’re real, show me*, was the start of a relationship that has deepened over time to the point that I can no longer imagine my life without His loving presence.

That, to me, is greater proof that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day”<sup>10</sup> than if I had seen Him exit the tomb or touched His nail-pierced hands. I believe the Easter story because I have experienced it. ❀



This band of disciples was beaten and weary, yet almost overnight it transformed itself into a victorious faith movement. If this had occurred simply on the basis of auto-suggestion and self-deceit, it would have been a much greater miracle than the Resurrection itself.—*Pinchas Lapide, Jewish theologian (1922–1997)*



I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.—*Thomas Arnold, English historian (1795–1842)*

<sup>5</sup>John 21:1–3

<sup>6</sup>Acts chapter 2

<sup>7</sup>Acts chapter 3; 4:1–4

<sup>8</sup>John 14:19–20

<sup>9</sup>Revelation 3:20

<sup>10</sup>1 Corinthians 15:3–4

# ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

## Keeping the Faith

Q: My family and most of the other people I'm around every day aren't interested in spiritual matters. How can I "keep the faith" in what seems to be an increasingly skeptical world?

**A:** 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."<sup>1</sup> 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."<sup>2</sup>

### 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."<sup>3</sup> 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.

### Live your faith.

"Faith without works is dead,"<sup>4</sup> 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."<sup>5</sup> 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."<sup>6</sup> 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. ✝

<sup>1</sup>Romans 10:17

<sup>2</sup>John 8:31–32

<sup>3</sup>1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>4</sup>James 2:26

<sup>5</sup>Romans 8:28

<sup>6</sup>Psalms 100:4





# God's Eternal Love

BY LILIA POTTERS

AS SOON AS I got connected to the Internet, dozens of messages that had piled up in cyberspace while I'd been traveling from the Middle East to Europe flooded my inbox. I wearily started separating junk mail from the real thing, and in the process was surprised to find a note from someone I hadn't heard from in a long while. It read, in part:

Twenty days ago medical tests revealed that I have cancer. Thank God, it hasn't spread yet. I will be admitted for surgery very soon. I wish you could come over to the hospital. I'll be there for a week. I'm not afraid of the surgery, but a little worried.

When I first found out, I felt betrayed. I used to

trust my healthy body—then suddenly I found out that I have cancer. I was so disappointed and sad. Then I prayed. God's kindness and mercy have always been with me, and He gave me signs that helped the illness be discovered early. I think I'll be okay.

I was deeply touched that this dear woman would reach out to me in her time of need, but I wouldn't return home for several weeks, so I sent a note to a coworker, asking her to visit this woman and pray for her. I also emailed the woman, explaining that I was away but had asked a friend, whom she'd also met, to get in touch. I also assured her that I would be praying for her.

When I returned home nearly a month later, I learned that my

coworker had visited the woman in the hospital shortly after the operation. The woman had been through a near-death experience due to post-op complications. While hovering between life and death, she had had a distinct feeling that she wasn't supposed to die yet, that God still had plans for her life. She had been revived and was thankful to be alive, but the whole experience had left her strangely troubled and depressed. This was the state my friend had found her in, but after they had talked for a while the woman's spirits had lifted, and she had clung tightly to my friend's hand when they prayed together for a speedy recovery and encouragement.

When I phoned the woman, she explained what a difference

## What a difference it would make if we could focus on what is really important

the visit had made—just the fact that my coworker had come meant so much. “It was as though an angel had visited me,” she said. Even though the battle for her health was not yet over, she thanked us both from the bottom of her heart for our prayers, and then asked us to visit her at her home.

Before this visit, I made her a card with some Scripture passages about Jesus, the Great Physician, who during His time on earth “went about doing good and healing all who were sick,” and who the Bible teaches is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.”<sup>1</sup> As I contemplated what else to write, love-filled words flowed effortlessly from my pen. Jesus Himself wanted to express His love and concern for this dear woman, and the message He gave me for her ended with a short prayer she could pray.

As we talked at her house, I explained that while praying for her I had received a message of encouragement for her from Jesus, and that I hoped she wouldn’t be offended if I passed it on to her.

“Even though I am not a Christian, I really love Jesus,” she said. “When I feel worried or uneasy, I listen to a tape by a

famous local singer who recorded two prayers, one for Easter and one for Christmas. When I listen to the Easter prayer, all about how Jesus was nailed to the cross, died, was buried, and rose to life again, peace fills my heart.”

When she opened the envelope containing my card and started reading the message from Jesus, tears welled up in her eyes. A little embarrassed, she asked if she could read the rest later that evening.

The next time I talked to her, she said she had reread the whole message and prayed the prayer. “It filled me with peace inside,” she said. “Now I have accepted what God has brought into my life, and now I know I will be okay.”

As we talked on, we both concluded that what really matters

in life is that we believe in and love God, and that we receive His words. What a difference it would make in our troubled world, where barriers are going up faster than ever between peoples and religions, if we could reach out and build bridges instead, if we could focus on what is really important—love for God and the sharing of His love with others. God sent Jesus to this world as an example of His love for *all* mankind.<sup>2</sup> God’s eternal, universal love hasn’t changed, and Jesus Christ, who healed hearts as well as bodies, is the same yesterday, today, and forever! ✝

LILIA POTTERS IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL AND WAS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE TIME OF THIS WRITING.



<sup>1</sup>Acts 10:38; Hebrews 13:8

<sup>2</sup>John 3:16

## Easter meditations

The meaning of Easter is not found in cute bunnies and colored eggs. For us who know Jesus, it's so much more. It's when He conquered death and the grave. Easter is the fulfillment of Jesus' love.—*Amanda White*

Jesus departed from our sight that we might return to our heart and there find Him. For He departed and, behold, He is here.—*St. Augustine*

The Resurrection gives my life meaning and direction and the opportunity to start over, no matter what my circumstances.—*Robert Flatt*

Easter is the demonstration of God that life is essentially spiritual and timeless.—*Charles M. Crowe*

The simple message that changed the world forever was this one: "He is not here. He is risen."—*Linda Bowles*

A man who was completely innocent offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act.—*Mahatma Gandhi*

The nail-pierced hands of Jesus reveal the love-filled heart of God.—*Author unknown*

Life doesn't begin at forty or at twenty, but at Calvary.—*Elaine Kilgore*

If Jesus was alive again in 33 AD, He is alive today because He is God. That is the message of Easter.—*Michael Whitehead*

Jesus Christ burst from the grave and exploded into my heart.—*Donna Hosford*

Let the Resurrection joy lift us from loneliness and weakness and despair to strength and beauty and happiness.—*Floyd W. Tomkins*

## FEEDING READING

### The Easter Story

*The triumphant entry into Jerusalem*  
Luke 19:29–40

*Eating the Last Supper with His disciples*  
Luke 22:7–30

*The agony in the Garden of Gethsemane*  
Luke 22:39–46

*The betrayal*  
Luke 22:47–53

*The kangaroo trials, mocking, and scourging*  
Luke 22:54–71; 23:1–24

*The Crucifixion*  
Luke 23:26–46

*The burial*  
Luke 23:50–53

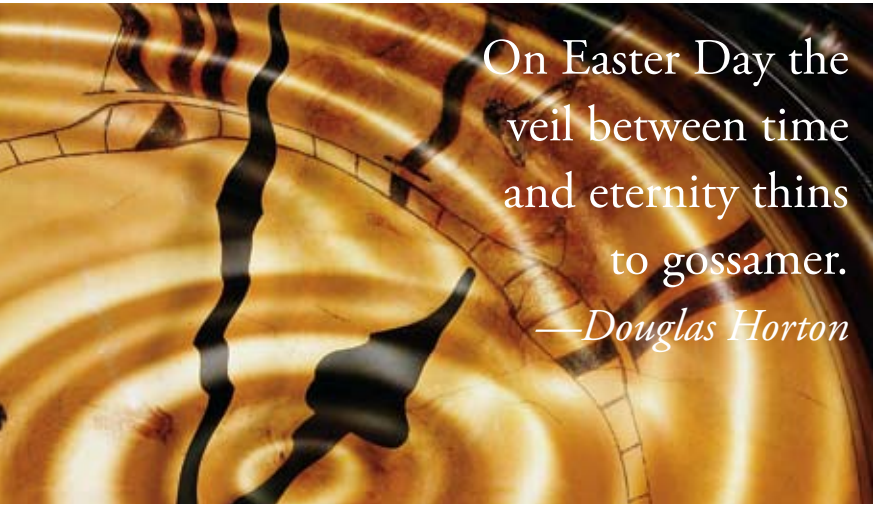
*The Resurrection*  
Matthew chapter 28  
Mark chapter 16  
Luke chapter 24  
John chapter 20

### ON EASTER DAY

On Easter Day the lilies bloom,  
Triumphant, risen from their tomb.  
Their bulbs have undergone  
rebirth,

Born from the silence of the earth  
Symbolically, to tell all men  
That Christ, the Savior, lives again.  
The angels, pure and white as they,  
Have come and rolled the stone  
away;

And with the lifting of the stone,  
The shadow of the cross is gone!  
—*June Masters Bacher*



On Easter Day the  
veil between time  
and eternity thins  
to gossamer.  
—*Douglas Horton*





# Renewal of spirit

“IF ANYONE is in Christ,” the Bible tells us, “he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”<sup>1</sup> That transformation begins the moment we invite Jesus into our hearts and lives, but it takes considerably longer for *us* to get into *Jesus*—to get completely immersed in Him and grounded in faith.<sup>2</sup> The more we do that, the more of our old thoughts and habits pass away, and the more “all things become new.”

What better time than Easter, the celebration of the ultimate rebirth, to get renewed in spirit?

Ask God to show you one or two ways in which you need to change or grow as a person. For example, do you generally have a thankful, positive attitude, or do you tend to grumble about life’s difficulties? Do you set aside time to read God’s Word

and think about how it applies to you, or do you fill your spare moments with TV or other entertainment? Do you pray for others who are experiencing hardships, or merely think about them sympathetically? Do you cheerfully give of yourself, or resent the sacrifices you sometimes need to make for the sake of others? Or is there some other area in which you need to change?

Now take a few minutes to commit these issues to Jesus in prayer. “Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.”<sup>3</sup>

It takes time and consistent effort to break old habits, but once you acknowledge the need to change and ask Jesus to help, this promise is yours: “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it.”<sup>4</sup> As you do your part, He will do His. ✚

## PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Jesus, I was nothing, yet You came and died for me so that You might always have me with You. You reached down to the depths for me, and I took hold of Your hand. Sometimes, though, I get so caught up in the cares of this life and the things around me that I forget You. But even when I do, You understand and keep loving me and encouraging me to come to You. You keep reminding me that You’re always there, waiting for me to come to You and be refreshed and renewed. When I turn my attention to You, Your love reaches down and touches my heart, and I am renewed!


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<sup>1</sup>2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>2</sup>Colossians 2:6–7

<sup>3</sup>Psalms 51:10

<sup>4</sup>Philippians 1:6



When I walked the earth many, many years ago, I went about doing good to all who crossed My path. I healed the sick, comforted the brokenhearted, lifted the spirits of those who were discouraged, and strengthened those who felt weak. And My love and power are the same today! I still long to touch and heal the bodies of those who suffer, and I still long to encourage the hearts of those who stoop under heavy burdens or go through difficult times. Since returning to Heaven I have touched many who lifted their hearts to Me and told Me their needs, and I want to do the same for you.

All it takes on your part is faith. You simply have to believe that I, the Great Physician, can still touch and make you whole. I am just a prayer away. Tell Me about your troubles, your fears, your worries, and ask Me to help and heal you. Sometimes healing the body takes a while—I know the best time—but the healing of your heart, the gifts of peace in place of turmoil and faith in place of fear, I can give in an instant. It is something that you can't understand with your mind, but when you ask in faith and it happens, you will know that I have touched you.

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE



*Let Me  
touch you*