

Volume 1, Issue 4

MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

STEPPING STONES

Obstacles are for overcoming

THE CLOCK THAT STRUCK 13

Only one man could prove his innocence

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

Can suffering have a purpose?

THE OYSTER

Turning trials into treasures

CONTENTS

FROM THE EDITOR

3

The Clock that Struck Thirteen

Only one man could prove his innocence

4

Stepping Stones

Obstacles are for overcoming

6

Beauty for Ashes

Can suffering have a purpose?

7

Just for Fun

The painter

8

Say Yes to Yourself!

Think better to feel better

10

The Oyster

Turning trials into treasures

11

Answers to Your Questions

Why suffering?

12

Notable Quotes

Take action

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Volume 1, Issue 4
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Life has its ups and downs, but sometimes it can seem like life is just full of problems—accidents, loss of loved ones, financial problems, and on and on the list goes. “Hasn’t there been some sort of mistake here?” we may ask. “Why all these problems?”

The answers to these questions are nearly as varied as the problems we face, but God always allows them for a good reason. Sometimes these problems befall us to strengthen our character. Sometimes they happen to teach us patience or positiveness in the face of adversity. Sometimes they happen to make us stronger in mind and spirit. 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. There are all kinds of good reasons for having troubles, believe it or not.

Of course, much depends on how we take problems and difficulties in life. This issue of *Motivated* will help you look at each problem more positively and at each difficulty through the eyes of faith, seeing each one not as a stumbling block, but as a stepping stone.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

THE CLOCK THAT STRUCK THIRTEEN

-- By Les Brown, adapted

It was midnight in the town of Plymouth, England, many years ago. Two men stood by the town's great clock. As it finished striking the hour, both men, strangers, remarked that it had struck thirteen times instead of twelve. One of these men was a gentleman by the name of Captain Jarvis.

It was not long after this that Captain Jarvis awoke early one morning, got up, dressed, and went down to the front door of his home. As he opened it, he saw, to his surprise, that his hired servant was standing there, with his horse saddled and bridled, ready for him to mount.

The servant explained, "I had a feeling that you would want your horse, sir." He said the feeling had been so strong that he couldn't stay in bed, but had to get up and get the horse ready.

This was strange. It had never happened before. But since the horse was ready, Captain Jarvis mounted and rode off. Not having to go anywhere in particular, he let the horse choose their direction. Soon they were down by the river, close to the spot where a ferry took passengers across.

Imagine his surprise, at this early hour, to see the ferryman there with his boat,

waiting to take him across. What was going on?

"How are you here so early, my man?" Captain Jarvis inquired.

"I couldn't rest in my bed, sir, for I had a feeling I needed to ferry someone across."

The captain and the horse got on the boat, and soon they were on the other side. Now what? Again he let the horse choose the course they would take. After some time they came to a large country town. And seeing a passerby, the captain inquired if anything of interest was going on in the town.

"No, sir. Nothing but the trial of a man for murder."

So, with no other destination in mind for this strange trip, he thought he would see what was going on. He rode to the place of the trial, dismounted, and entered the building.

As he walked in, he heard the judge saying to the prisoner, "Have you anything to say for yourself—anything at all?"

And the prisoner said, "I have nothing to say, sir, except that I am an innocent man. There is only one man in all the world who could prove my innocence, but I do not know his name nor where he lives.

Continued on page 7

Turning

Stumbling Blocks

Poets, philosophers, and romantics have often likened life to a river that flows from the mountains to the sea. The river widens in some places and narrows in others. It ambles through pleasant valleys and plains. Tranquil spans give way to turbulent, frothy rapids that splash into sparkling, crystal pools. On and on its waters flow until they are swallowed up by the wide, open sea.

But what attracts the most tourists, photographers, artists, and the like? What inspires the most awe? The gentle and silent winding through the plain? No. It's the majestic waterfall, where the river hurls itself in utter abandon into a deep, rock-strewn chasm. There, if you will look closely, somewhere in its mist is a rainbow.

We all appreciate the pleasant valleys and plains, and sometimes we wish we could stay there forever. But life flows on. God

knows what lies around the next bend, and He will guide us through the narrow gorges, the white water rapids, and yes, over the heart-stopping waterfalls. With your life placed in His care, you can not only make it through the problems and perils of life, but thrill in the face of such challenges.

So if you have financial headaches, or health worries, or find yourself in an emotionally trying situation, don't despair. If you have problems in your marriage, or in your relationships with your parents or children or friends or boss or co-workers, don't despair! If you feel doomed to struggle for the rest of your life because of your social status, or lack of education or job skills, or whatever, don't despair! If you are physically impaired, don't despair! If you're not happy with yourself because you feel you'll never be as smart or as beautiful or as handsome or as charming as you wish



you were, don't despair! If loved ones or friends just don't understand or don't agree with you, don't despair!

While your circumstances may not change—at least not immediately—God can help you rise above circumstances. If the obstacles won't move out of your way, He can help you go over or under or around them. He may not take away all your troubles, but He can bring you through them.

God is in control

Not only can you trust that all things that come your way will work out for your good, but you can be assured that things don't "just happen" to the believer. Each event that comes your way is a part of God's personal and unique plan for your life. And He knows exactly what you need to experience and learn in order to fulfill that plan.

Some of the crises and calamities that come our way are of our own making. They are the result of our own carelessness, mistakes, and wrong choices. Some are the results of others' mistakes. But whatever the case, we can have faith that God is in control of our lives and destinies. Nothing can happen to us without His permission.

God cares and He is intricately involved with and concerned about every detail of your life. When you are going through times of difficulty, that can be one of the most comforting things to think on.

Think on the good things...

When our hearts are weighed down with worry, fear, sorrow, or pain, it would be better to count our blessings instead of dwelling on our losses and troubles. We can think about the love of our family and friends. If we can't think of anything else to be thankful for, we can at least be grateful for all the problems, troubles, and ailments we could have but don't because God has spared us from them.

Let's look on the bright side. Let's think on the good things. It helps to put our troubles in perspective by considering what some others have gone through.

Take advantage of your handicap

Whether from birth or the result of an accident or debilitating illness, a physical handicap can be one of the most trying of human experiences. The irreversible loss, the limitations, the stigma of being different from others, the humiliation of having to depend on others for even the simplest things, the big questions—"Why me? Why this?!" No one who hasn't been there could possibly understand.

If this is you, take heart! There is One who sees and understands exactly what you're going through. He cares for you more deeply than you will ever know in this life, and He wants to help you lead a full, happy, productive life that touches and enriches the

Into

Stepping Stones

lives of others around you.

It has been said that suffering makes people either better or bitter. Those who dwell on their losses are likely to become bitter and end up losing far more than they have lost in the physical.

But there are others who face the same tragedies and handicaps bravely. They refuse to give up, but rather strive all the harder. They beat the odds. They become a source of inspiration to the rest of us.

Someone once said, “When God closes the door, He usually leaves a window open somewhere.” Your problem, whatever it may be, could be your way out. It could be your greatest asset. It could strengthen your character and stretch your soul. It could spur you on. It could inspire new creativity. It could lead to deeper and happier relationships with others. Whether or not it will depends on you. Do you look

at your problems as a stumbling block, or as an opportunity in disguise?

In conclusion

Yes, life is a struggle. But God watches over you and has planned every detail of your life. So when things seem dark, confusing, or cloudy; when tears fill your eyes and despair tries to take hold of your heart, look away from yourself and this world’s woes. Look up to the One who loves you and tenderly cares for you. Find comfort in Him and His promises to you. Look on all He has blessed you with, and thank Him for it. And then look forward to all that He has in store for you—the rewards and blessings that He has promised for those who persevere and hold on. Be an overcomer and turn each stumbling block into a stepping stone. ■

—From “*Obstacles Are for Overcoming!*”

By Shannon Shyler

Beauty FOR Ashes

By David Fontaine

In order to bring forth the sweetness, there has to be some suffering. To bring about the beauty of the flame, there must be ashes. Something must go to ashes! Blessings come from suffering, beauty for ashes.

Like a giant hand taking the honeycomb and squeezing it, and out comes the honey. Like a beautiful flower pressed and crushed, and out comes the perfume. Or like the beautiful music that comes from the throat of the bird, almost as though in pain, yet it comes forth with song.

Even though the bird’s song is sad, it’s so sweet. The groans are not complaints, but songs of thanksgiving to God, a sad, sweet song. As the great English poet, Percy Shelley, once said, “Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts.” ■

You can never appreciate the light unless you’ve been in darkness. You can’t appreciate health unless you’ve been sick. You’ll never appreciate joy until you’ve known sorrow. You can’t appreciate God’s mercy until you’ve experienced injustice. We comfort others with the comfort that we are comforted with of God.

Some weeks ago we stood together in the town of Plymouth, when it was midnight. We both heard the great town clock strike thirteen instead of twelve, and we remarked about it to each other—how strange it was that the clock should strike thirteen at the midnight hour.”

“I am here! I am here!” The captain shouted from the rear of the room. “I was the man who stood at midnight beside the Plymouth town clock and heard it strike thirteen instead of twelve. What the prisoner says is absolutely true. I identify him as the man. On the night of the murder, at the very time it was committed, that man was with me at Plymouth, and we remarked to each other how strange it was that the clock should strike thirteen at the midnight hour!”

The condemned man, proved innocent by the captain’s testimony, was immediately set free!

Think of it! Only one man in the world could prove that prisoner’s innocence. Angels, no doubt, had awakened a servant and a ferryman and impressed upon them both a need to vary from their daily routines, contrary to reason. Angels, no doubt, had guided the man and his horse and brought him into the courtroom at the precise moment he was needed! ■



Just for Fun

**A sense
of
humor
is a
great
asset in
life.**

The struggling young artist and his wife were at a party, and one of the guests asked the man what he did for a living. “I’m a painter,” he replied.

“That’s great!” answered the guest. “The walls in my house could use a new coat of paint. I’ll give you nine hundred dollars to do the job.”

“But you don’t understand,” said the artist. “I’m a painter. You know, like Michelangelo.”

“What does that mean?” asked the guest.

The artist’s wife chimed in, “You said nine hundred dollars?”

“That’s right,” was the reply.

“It means,” she responded, “that he’d be happy to paint your ceiling as well.” ■

say



YES

to yourself

By Joseph T. Martorano and John P. Kildahl, adapted.

TO FEEL BETTER, YOU NEED TO THINK BETTER

It's the classic story—with a twist: A traveling salesman gets a flat tire on a dark, lonely road, then finds he has no jack. He sees a light in a farmhouse. As he walks towards it, his mind churns: *Suppose no one comes to the door. Suppose they don't have a jack. Suppose the guy won't lend me his jack even if he has one.* The harder his mind works, the more agitated he becomes, and when the door opens, he punches the farmer and yells, "Keep your lousy jack!"

That story brings a smile because it pokes fun at a common type of self-defeatist thinking. How often have you heard yourself say, "Nothing ever goes the way I planned. I'll never make that deadline. I always mess up."

Such inner speech shapes your life more than any other single force. Like it or not, you travel through life with your thoughts as navigator. If those thoughts spell gloom and doom, that's where you're headed, because put-down words sabotage confidence instead of offering support and encouragement.

Simply put, to feel better, you need to think better. Here's how:

TUNE IN TO YOUR THOUGHTS

Susanna told her new friend, "I know you can't help me. I'm a total mess. I keep lousing up at work, and I'm sure I'm going to lose my job. Just yesterday my boss told me I was being transferred. He called it a promotion. But if I was doing a good job, why transfer me?"

Then, gradually, Susanna's story moved past the put-downs. She had received her MBA two years before and was making an excellent salary. That didn't sound like failure.

Susanna's friend told her to jot down her thoughts, particularly at night if she was

having trouble falling asleep. Next time they met Susanna's list included, "I'm not really smart." "I'll never get that report done on time." "Tomorrow will be a disaster. I've never chaired a meeting before." "My boss looked furious this morning. What did I do?"

She admitted, "In one day alone, I wrote down twenty-six negative thoughts. No wonder I'm always tired and depressed."

Hearing herself read her fears and forebodings out loud made Susanna realize how much energy she was squandering on imagined catastrophes.

If you've been feeling down, it could be you're sending yourself negative messages

too. Listen to the words churning inside your head. Repeat them out loud or write them down if that will help capture them.

With practice, tuning in will become automatic. As you're walking or driving down the street, you can hear your silent broadcast. Soon, your thoughts will do your bidding, rather than the other way around. And when that happens, your feelings and actions will change too.

ISOLATE DESTRUCTIVE WORDS

Fran's inner voice kept telling her she was "only a secretary." Mark's reminded him he was "just a salesman." With the word "only" or "just" they were downgrading their jobs and, by extension, themselves.

By isolating negative words and phrases, you can pinpoint the damage you're doing to yourself. For Fran and Mark, the culprits were "only" and "just". Once those words are eliminated, there's nothing destructive about saying "I'm a salesman" or "I'm a secretary." Both statements open doors to positive follow-ups, such as, "I'm on my way up the ladder."

STOP THE THOUGHT

Short circuit negative messages as soon as they start with the command, "Stop!"

"What will I do if ... ?" Stop! In theory, stopping is a simple technique. In practice, it's not as easy as it sounds. To be effective at stopping, you have to be forceful and tenacious. Raise your voice when you give the command. Picture yourself drowning out the inner voice of fear or worry.

Vincent, a hard-working bachelor in his 20s, was an executive in a large company. His mother died when he was young, and his father raised him. They had gotten along well, but his father was overprotective, filling Vincent's head with worrisome thoughts. Without realizing it, Vincent carried these thoughts into his adult life. His inner voice had taken over his father's role. Vincent was a worrier.

He worried about an incident with a co-worker in his department, whom he thought he'd offended with some of his comments. His worries immobilized him: "He's very upset with me over what I said" and "It's past the point of apologizing."

When Vincent stopped his inner voice and went to talk to his co-worker, he found out that what he'd feared was not necessarily true.

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

When a person is in a depressed mood, everything can seem depressing. So once you've put a halt to negative thoughts by calling a stop, replace them with good thoughts.

One person described the process this way: "Every night I used to lie awake with a whirlpool of thoughts spinning in my head. Was I too harsh with the children? Did I forget to return that client's call?"

"Finally, when I was at my wits' end, I thought about the wonderful day with my daughter at the zoo. I remembered how she laughed at the chimps. Soon my head was filled with pleasant memories, and I fell asleep."

Be ready with a thought you've prepared in advance. Think about the promotion you got or a pleasant hike in the woods. "Whatever is good ... whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious ... think about these things."

REORIENT YOURSELF

Have you ever been feeling down late in the day, when someone said, "Let's go out?" Remember how it picked you up? You changed the direction of your thinking, and your mood brightened.

Reorient yourself right now. You are tense because you must finish a huge project by week's end. On the weekend you plan to go shopping with friends. Reorient from "week end's work load" to "weekend fun."

Practice this technique of going from

painful anxiety to an active, problem-solving framework. For example, if flying frightens you, get absorbed in the pattern of lights and roads near the airport as your plane is taking off or landing. During the flight think about some activity on the ground that distracts you.

By reorienting, you can learn to see yourself and the world around you differently. If you think you can do something, you increase your chances of doing it. Optimism gets you moving. Depressing thoughts bog you down, because you are thinking, “What’s the use?”

Make it a habit to remember your best

self, the “you” that you want to be. In particular, remember things for which you have been complimented. That’s the real you. Make this the frame of reference for your life—a picture of you at your best.

You’ll find that reorienting works like a magnet. Imagine yourself reaching your goals, and you will feel the tug of the magnet pulling you towards them.

Over the years we’ve discovered that when people think differently, they feel differently—and they act differently. It’s all in controlling your thoughts. The choice is yours. ■



THE OYSTER

An oyster on the ocean floor opened wide its shell. As its valves flushed seawater through, the oyster picked out minute particles of food. Suddenly a large fish nearby stirred up a cloud of sand and silt with a flip of its tail. Sand.

Oh, how the oyster disliked sand! It was so rough that it made life very unpleasant for the oyster whenever any got inside its shell.

Quickly the oyster slammed its shell shut, but it was too late. One hard gritty grain of sand had gotten in and became lodged between the oyster’s flesh and shell.

How that piece of sand bothered the oyster! But almost immediately, special glands the oyster has to coat the inside of its shell went to work, coating the inside of its shell. Coating the irritating grain of sand with a shiny, smooth covering. Year after year the oyster added more layers, until at last it had

produced a beautiful, lustrous pearl of great value.

Our problems are like that grain of sand. They bother us and sometimes we wonder why we have to suffer the irritation and inconvenience they can be. But God will work wonders with our problems and weaknesses, if we will allow Him. We become humbler, wiser, and better able to cope with other problems that come our way. Like blessings in disguise, the rough pieces of sand in our life can turn into precious pearls of inner strength, and they become an inspiration to others. ■

Answers to your Questions



Why is there so much suffering in the world?
Why do things seem to get worse by the day?
Why are thousands of innocent people dying or suffering the loss of loved ones in horrible and dehumanizing conflicts around the globe?



We probably won't know all the answers to this eternal question, for only God knows and His ways are not our ways.

A very fitting illustration of this was given by Dr.

Handley Moule as he visited a coal mine immediately after a terrible underground explosion. At the pit's mouth was a large crowd, including family members and loved ones of the trapped miners.

"It is very difficult," he said, "for us to understand why God should let such an awful tragedy happen. I have at home an old bookmark given me by my mother. It is embroidered in silk, and when I look at the

wrong side of it, I see nothing but a tangled mass of threads. It looks like a big mistake!

"One would think that whoever made it didn't know what she was doing. But when I turn it over and look at the other side, I see the beautifully embroidered words, 'GOD IS LOVE!' We are looking at this tragedy today from the wrong side. Someday we shall view it from another standpoint, and we shall understand."

God always has a purpose and a plan in our lives, even though we can't always see it right away. We just have to trust that if we don't understand now, we will later. And despite our limited knowledge and understanding, there is one thing we can rest assured of, and that is His unfailing love and care for us. ■

TAKE ACTION

NOTABLE
QUOTES



The best plans remain only daydreams until you bring them to life through action.

A mistake at least proves somebody stopped talking long enough to do something.

All that is necessary for evil to triumph is that good men do nothing.

If you do what you can, God will do what you can't.

If you believe in something, you will do it.

The kindness planned for tomorrow doesn't count for today.

If you see something needs to be done, do it!

Act on what you believe in and what you pray for.

Call it what you like: inspiration, charisma, enthusiasm, emotion or personality.—You have to have something that brings you to life, spurs you to action, moves you into motion.

We cannot do everything at once, but we can do something at once.

The smallest good deed is better than the grandest intention.

Do more than exist—live. Do more than look—observe. Do more than read—absorb. Do more than hear—listen. Do more than listen—understand. Do more than think—reflect. Do more than talk—say something. Do more than plan—act!

