

Volume 2, Issue 1

MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!



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Answers to some of life's most
troubling questions

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The making of a better you

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Most people try not to think about it more than they have to, but there's no denying it: There's a lot of suffering in the world. Innocents are killed, maimed, and made homeless in cruel and unjust wars. More suffer the same in natural and manmade disasters. Cancer, AIDS, and other diseases claim millions of lives each year, often after months or years of pain. There's no end to it. Why does life have to be this way? It's the age-old question: Why does God allow suffering?

There is no simple, universal answer to that. Of course, there is a God and He does allow suffering, but the reasons and purposes are nearly as numerous and varied as the sufferers themselves. One thing is certain, however: How people come through suffering or react to the suffering of others depends largely on their faith. Those who have no faith often go down in despair, but those who have strong faith in a just and loving God can call out to Him in their time of need, and find the grace and strength to rise above their pain and loss.

Suffering is part of life, but a wonderful faith and assurance can be ours by connecting with God's love and comfort when we need Him most.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Whispers from Beyond

The mysterious rescue

— Lois Bunker Woods

The year is 1939. The place is an 80-acre dairy farm outside a small town, 16 miles from the nearest doctor or hospital. A little girl, an 18-month old toddler dressed in overalls, slams the screen door as she scrambles out onto the back porch to play in the sunshine. Her mother is inside the house, cleaning.

Outdoors on this warm spring morning, the world is full of delights to explore. The youngster runs through the dewy grass, picks dandelions and carries them back to the house. On the porch, an old enameled kettle sitting in the sun catches her eye. It is filled with peas soaking in arsenic solution, something that will prevent them from rotting when planted. Back then, seeds weren't pretreated as most are today.

The little girl is fascinated with the liquid in the kettle. Taking a battered tin

cup, she dips it in the pot, fills it with liquid, and then lifts it.

Just then, her mother hears a voice calling her, "Ella, Ella come quick!" She follows the voice through the house and out to the back door where she spots the little girl, the cup at her lips. Frantic, she grabs the toddler and empties the cup. She wipes the little girl's lips, but no, the youngster hasn't had a drop of the poison. The mother arrived just in time.

I know this story well because I was that little girl, and the woman who rescued me was my mother. And as for the voice, mother recognized it right away. It belonged to her mother, my grandmother.

The mystery? My grandmother had died the year before, six months after I was born. ✨

Bitter or *Better?*

By David van der Laan

“I was able to comfort them with the same comfort with which I had been comforted.”

Even as a teenager, I loved babies and couldn't wait to be a father. By the time I was 20, I was married and my wife Anisa and I were expecting our first child. We were overjoyed and waited with great anticipation for the arrival of our son. (An ultrasound had revealed that our baby was a boy.)

Finally it came—the big day that we had so looked forward to for nine months. Finally, we would see the face of our dear son. But then everything changed. Complications developed during the delivery, and our dear little baby went back to Heaven before he drew his first breath.

Unless you've lost a child yourself, you can't imagine the shock, the pain, and the anguish we felt. There were so many thoughts, so many regrets, so many unanswered questions. What had we done to deserve this? Where did we go wrong? Why did God allow this to happen? Was He punishing us for something? Where were we to go from here? Would we ever smile again?

All the while God said, “Trust. Trust in Me that I do all things in love.” But how could we trust when it seemed our whole world had shattered and fallen out from under us?

As the weeks and months passed, I had to decide to either hold on to the hurt or to let my son go, get a grip on life, and start over. Would I let this heartbreaking experience turn me bitter, or make me better?

Thanks largely to my family and friends whose prayers and words of encouragement strengthened me through





smile once again. We were later also blessed with a daughter, and two years after that, our son was born. We were beginning to see the rainbow after the storm.

During my times of great trial and heartache, these beautiful words kept coming to mind: “God comforts us in all our tribulation, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” I see now what I couldn’t see at the time: My heart was broken and then mended in order to give me a greater understanding of what others are faced with.

In the four and a half years since our son passed away, I have learned many priceless lessons. My heart became softer and through this experience, I received a gift of being able to encourage and comfort others.

I soon crossed paths with others who had also recently lost loved ones. I was able to comfort them with the same comfort with which I had been comforted.

I can truly say that although it was a painful experience, it has served to strengthen me and make me a better person—one that is able to be a blessing to many others who need faith to lean on in their times of great trial.

To anyone reading this who has lost a loved one or is going through other severe difficulties I want to say, please hold on, no matter how difficult the trial or dark the night. There will soon be light at the end of the tunnel. Look to God for comfort and strength. He loves you and wants to see you happy again. He’s simply making a better you. 🌸

the ordeal, I decided to trust God. Even though it was still hard for me to understand why such a tragic thing had happened, I chose to accept by faith that God had allowed it for a good and loving reason, and that one day I would understand.

As time went on, Anisa and I did find peace in our hearts and we were able to

News and Views

How to be prepared for anything

For James and Maureen Halderman, life started over at 4:30 one July morning in 1992. A huge earthquake sent their house in Lake Arrowhead, California, plummeting 20 feet. The couple's three children were trapped for four hours. Finally freed, they jumped in the car, still in their pajamas. As they drove off, the house blew up.

For Maureen Halderman, as for others who lose everything, one of the biggest challenges was replacing important papers. "That was terrible," she says.

"Birth certificates, Social Security cards, my nursing license—everything. I tried to get a driver's license, and I couldn't prove who I was." Today she keeps a metal lock box under the bed for important documents.

The couple also devised an emergency plan. They staged fire drills so the children would know what to do. They also store canned food, bottled water, and powdered milk in a basement room. Other emergency supplies include three sets of clothes per person, a camp stove, candles, and oil lanterns.

Halderman concludes, "You wouldn't wish this on anyone, and you can't ever say you're glad it happened, but if you're open to it, there is opportunity even in tragedy. It's an opportunity to

look at life in a different way and be grateful for what you may have taken for granted. The best first step you can take toward recovery is being grateful for what you have, instead of being bitter for what you lost."

Although the Haldermans, like others who have survived disasters, are well prepared for the next one, many experts recommend being well prepared in the first place.

How can you prepare for an emergency of your own, whether it's an earthquake, hurricane, flood, or other natural disaster? Here is a distillation of advice from emergency preparedness experts from across the spectrum:

[WATER] If you take nothing else away from this article, at least heed this advice: stock up on water. It is cheap, it has a long shelf life, and, most important, you cannot live without it. Though you drink half a gallon (approximately 2 liters) of water a day, you should store one gallon of water (approximately 4 liters) per person per day. Assume you will be cut off for at least three days and store as much extra as you have room for in a cool, dark space. Rotate the stock every couple of months. If you have the room, store

some of the water in the freezer. When the electricity goes, you'll have more ice to preserve the food in the refrigerator for a day or two longer.

[FOOD] You don't want to spend a fortune buying and storing food. If you have a pantry or basement with a decent supply of canned foods and bottled juices, you should do just fine for several weeks. It is smart to keep a 72-hour mobile kit with a three-day supply that you can easily carry out to the car at a moment's notice. The crucial concept here is high nutrition in a small amount of space. Don't forget baby formula if you have an infant.

[CASH] It is good to have some cash on hand to get you through those first days or week. If you get a warning and you have money in the bank, head to the nearest cash machine. The time to raid the ATM is before the disaster, because when the electricity fails, you won't find one that works. When the disaster has passed, you can put the money back in the bank.

[COMMUNICATIONS] In many disasters, cell phones have proven remarkably useless, but in other instances, people reported that cell phones saved people's lives and were the only way of communication they had left. Old-fashioned landline phones often hold up much better, but you might be able to use your cell phone if you have a non-electrical charger of some sort. It's best to have both.

[EXTRAS] You cannot do without a first-aid kit, a radio, and lots of batteries. The new flashlights that use light-emitting diodes will help you conserve juice. Camping gear—butane stoves, coolers

and lightweight tents—easily doubles as survival gear. An adapter that turns your car's cigarette lighter into an electrical outlet for any appliance could be a lifesaver. Stash all this stuff in a plastic box that can serve to float things out to safety.

[DOCUMENTS] Pulling together documents you need on the run may be the hardest thing to do. Prepare a book with copies of birth and marriage certificates, adoption papers, key identification numbers, copies of bank statements, deeds, titles, credit cards, and insurance policies as well as passwords to online accounts. Keep it in a secure place and grab it on the way out of the house.

[LOOKING OUT FOR YOUR NEIGHBOR] In emergency preparedness, one element shouldn't be overlooked, experts say: the critical role individuals and families play through their personal readiness and commitment to looking out for their neighbor. "The best defense against disaster is a close-knit community of people who care about each other and take care of each other," says Ann Patton, an emergency planning consultant.

Of course, no planning in the world will do much good if you don't practice ahead of time. Not only does this enable you to go through your plan while you're calm and thinking clearly, but it also enables you to fine-tune it before you have to put it into action. Practice the plan at least once a year. ✨

(Compiled from articles by Reuters; U.S. News and World Report; Peter N. Spotts and Marilyn Gardner, Damon Darlin, NY Times News Service.)



WHY SUFFERING?

Answers to some of life's most troubling questions!

— Based on the writings by David Fontaine

Why is there so much suffering in the world?

It has been said that God does not impose on any soul a responsibility beyond its ability. God is not to blame for all the suffering, pain, death, and heartache in the world today. The truth is that much of what we suffer is caused by selfishness and destructive attitudes and actions. Take wars, for example, which have caused untold suffering throughout history. People are to blame for the suffering caused by war, because

of their own selfishness, greed, pride, and competitive spirit—the destruction of others for selfish gain or power.

What about poverty? What about the millions who die of starvation and disease in some of the impoverished nations of the world? Surely they haven't brought that upon themselves!

Believe it or not, man is largely responsible for poverty as well. Global warming is increasing, rainforests are disappearing, deserts are expanding,

and sea life is dying. These combined ills are having a disastrous effect on food supplies, especially in already impoverished regions, and all are largely the result of the haves relentlessly striving to have more at the expense of the have-nots. For example, indiscriminate logging for fast money in some developing countries is bringing about ecological disasters and population displacement.

In addition, conflicts, driven by political greed contribute to famine and poverty in many nations. Again, it's a case of people bringing suffering on others through selfishness, lack of love, and lack of foresight and concern for future generations.

It's true that some factors are beyond man's control, but ironically, while millions are undernourished, in other parts of the world there are huge surpluses of food. No one needs to go hungry; the earth provides more than enough. But unfortunately, while many rich Western countries spend hundreds of millions of dollars on storing or destroying their surpluses in order to keep the global market price high, even paying farmers not to grow certain crops, the poor of the world starve.

Why can't evil and the people responsible be stopped from inflicting all this suffering? Why does it seem that God allows it to go on?

If God were to stop people from perpetrating suffering and evil, He would have to put an end to our free will and majesty of choice, whereby we can choose to do good or evil. If God had wanted robots, He could have made

everybody do only what is right and good, but He purposely created us with a free will so we could choose to both love Him and do what is right—just as parents want their children to love them of their own free will, not because they're forced to. We were created to make a choice between good and evil.

Why do bad things happen to good people? No one is perfect, of course, but why does it seem that those who genuinely try to do good are not rewarded by being spared from suffering?

God does, for the most part, reward us when we choose to do the right thing. We're all acutely aware when things go wrong, but we often don't see or appreciate what could have gone wrong, but didn't, because of God's loving intervention on our behalf.

Nevertheless, good people do sometimes go through difficult times. That's when it's important to remember—and this can be difficult to grasp—that there are benefits from suffering. Difficult times shape our character and teach us important lessons. Often more is learned from failure than from success.

Suffering often brings out the best in those who choose not to become embittered or hardened, and engenders love, tenderness, goodness, and concern for others. Often those who turn to God for comfort and strength in their suffering, later want to point others to the One who can also ease their sufferings and help them solve their problems—God and His love. ✨



Through the **Eyes** of a **Child**

—By Marie Claire

About a week before my son Tristan’s fourth birthday, I talked with him about how much he had grown up in the past year, how much he had learned, and how proud I was of him for the progress he had made. Then we talked about his birthday and what he wanted to do for his party. As usual, I let him choose what kind of birthday cake he wanted.

Last year he chose a “caterpillar” cake, as at the time bugs fascinated him. That cake wasn’t too difficult—just a string of crescent-shaped cake pieces with bright, multicolored icing. I expected him to choose something equally simple this year, so you can imagine my chagrin when, after looking through a book with imaginative cake ideas for children, he chose the “knights and castle” cake.

I looked at the detailed drawing, read over the explanation, and felt immediately that I had bitten off a bit more than I could chew. But Tristan was sure he wanted a castle cake, knights and all, and I wanted to make him happy, so I shot up a quick prayer for help and the talents I don’t normally have.

Before I knew it, his birthday was upon



me, and I set to work on the cake. Book in hand, I tried to follow the directions as best I could, but soon realized why there was only a drawing of this castle cake, not a photograph, as with most of the other designs. There was a gulf between concept and finished product—and I was adrift and sinking! My cake was lopsided, the icing didn't stick well, and the turrets weren't equal in height or diameter. I couldn't find any toy knights, so I settled for a Lego figure of a man on a horse.

I felt so under pressure and discouraged! *Poor Tristan*, I thought. *He's going to be so disappointed! He's been looking forward to and talking about his knights and castle cake all week, and now look what he's going to get! Things never turn out the way I want them to! Tristan is sure to be one unhappy little boy when he sees his mother's version of his dream cake!*

I finally finished the cake, adding the final touches as best I could—paper flags, cookies along the top of the walls that were supposed to look like stones but kept falling over at awkward angles, and “grass” made from shredded coconut dyed with food color that somehow turned out a muddy mossy color. I was done, but felt like crying.

I cleaned up my mess and decided I'd better let Tristan see the cake, to prepare him for the embarrassing moment when he and his friends would see it at the party. As Tristan entered the room, I studied his expression and wanted to say just the right thing to cheer him up and help him not to take it too hard.

Tristan's eyes widened and, to my surprise, a huge smile spread across

his face. “Wow, Mom! It's so cool!” he exclaimed. “It's just what I wanted!”

I nearly burst into tears as he went over to the cake, inspected each part, and said it was exactly the way he wanted it to be. Then he ran over and hugged me, thanked me for making it for him, and lifted his hand to his mouth as if to tell me a secret. I bent over to let him whisper in my ear.

“I love you!” he said, and then ran off to tell his friends about what he'd just seen.

After he left the room, I sat there a while, thinking about what I'd just experienced. In those few minutes, I was taught a lesson that can take a lifetime to learn.

How many times had things in my life turned out differently than I had hoped or imagined? How many times had my dreams seemed to turn out a little lopsided, distorted, with pieces missing? How many times had I questioned and not fully accepted or appreciated what God had done for me?

Oh, that I can learn to see life through the eyes of a child—full of faith, hope, love, and positivity, instead of seeing the imperfections. Oh, that I can learn to see the good and the wonder of it all.

I stayed in that magic moment as long as I could. Drinking in the scene of that misshapen cake before me, and the fresh memory of Tristan's sweet reaction, I decided to adopt a more positive outlook on life.

Then a funny thing happened. As I stared at the cake, it took on a cartoon quality and I actually began to like it! Best and most important, Tristan liked it. It was his birthday, after all. ✿

Overcoming

NOTABLE
QUOTES



Write the bad things that are done to you in sand, but engrave the good things that happen to you in marble.—Unknown

Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.

—Khalil Gibran

Suffering becomes beautiful when anyone bears great calamities with cheerfulness, not through insensibility, but through greatness of mind.

—Aristotle

Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.

—Helen Keller

The most authentic thing about us is our capacity to create, to overcome, to endure, to transform, to love, and to be greater than our suffering.—Ben Okri

It is by suffering that human beings become angels.

—Victor Hugo

Our human compassion binds us the one to the other—not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learned how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.

—Nelson Mandela

We should not despair because there is so much suffering, grief, and wrong in the world. Instead, we should do what we can to make things right and encourage others to do the same.

—Unknown

Anywhere I see suffering, that is where I want to be, doing what I can.

—Princess Diana

Those who have suffered understand suffering, and therefore extend their hand.—Patti Smith

