

A large tree with pink blossoms in a grassy field. The tree is the central focus, with its trunk on the left and branches spreading out to the right. The blossoms are a vibrant pink color, and the background is a lush green field with some other trees in the distance. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

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OASIS OF PEACE

Six steps of meditative prayer

THE WISH LIST

A conversation with Jesus

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PERSONALLY SPEAKING

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. Who are we to believe?

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 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 on a daily and even moment-by-moment basis 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. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus."¹

Keith Phillips
Keith Phillips
For Activated

¹ Philippians 4:7.....

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BY JOHN MARGAILLAN

FAITH FINDING

THE THREE WOMEN WERE FRANTIC. Stopped at a petrol station, they were now running back and forth between their car and the cashier, who was inside. When one of the women passed the stand where I was selling books, I asked her if there was anything I could do to help.

“We lost our car keys!” she exclaimed. “We’ve looked everywhere, and they’re gone. We’ll need to find a locksmith and have him make another key.”

The cashier phoned around, but couldn’t find anyone who could do the job. It was an expensive car with a sophisticated security system, and only the manufacturer could make duplicate keys. That would take 48 hours. The women were traveling and more than 1,000 km (600 mi) from home. The only thing they could do now, it seemed, was find a place to stay until the new key arrived.

“Pray with them to find the key,” a familiar voice spoke to my mind. It was Jesus, and He was putting me on the spot. Praying in public with strangers is not one of my strong points, but He always knows best, so I humbled myself and asked one of the women if she believed in Jesus.

“I’m not sure,” she replied.

I tried another approach. “Well, do you believe in prayer?”

She mumbled yes, so I told her that I wanted to pray for her and her friends to

find the missing key. She was willing to try anything at that point, so the two of us prayed.

Twenty minutes later the manager came over to me, astonished. “They found the key!” he exclaimed. “I was watching you from the station as you prayed with one of the women, and now they’ve found it!”

At that same moment, the woman rushed over, literally jumping for joy. She gave me a hug and thanked me for praying. “It was a miracle!” she said. “We were still looking all around, and there were no other cars at the station. Then a man pulled into a parking space near ours, and as he got out of his car, he asked us what we were looking for. When we told him, he reached down, picked up a key from the ground, and asked, ‘Is this it?’ The key is on a bright yellow key ring, so of course we would have seen it if it had been there all the time. I know this was a miracle!” she said again.

“When you asked me if I believed in Jesus and prayer, I really didn’t know what to say. I used to believe, but my life got so busy that I never put much thought or effort into prayer. This has renewed my faith!”

JOHN MARGAILLAN IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SOUTH AFRICA. ●

Come

“COME TO ME,” JESUS SAID, “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.”¹ I recently read a message from Jesus that someone had received while praying, which said much the same thing but in terms that most of us today can relate to more easily. “The only way you’re going to hold up under the strain you’re under is by learning to pace yourself and to spend quality time with Me.”


That may seem simple and straightforward enough, but if you’ve ever tried to do it, you probably found that it’s easier

said than done. One reason for that is because it goes against human nature.

When you have so much to do, the last thing you feel like doing is slowing things down and taking time to meditate, to get your mind off of the work at hand and onto Jesus. You would have to invest more time and effort in the spiritual, in things like praying and waiting for Him to change things, which would leave less time for the physical or

mental work you’re caught up in. That’s not what you feel like doing, nor does it seem like good sense when you have a pressing deadline or things are speeding along all around you.

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



Resting in
JESUS

BY MARIA FONTAINE

.....
¹ Matthew 11:28-29

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.*

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.

It's easy to get on the treadmill of work and feel that you have to keep running to keep up with the pace, yet you feel like you're not really getting anywhere. You need to learn to recognize when you're getting to that point and stop, step off the treadmill, and ask Jesus to help you get back in step with Him.

If we want to get the best results, our time with Jesus in prayer and communication with Him can't just be quick and superficial, squeezed in here or there while our mind is still full of the business of the day. We have to take time to connect with Him, share our heart with Him, and let Him clear our mind and soothe our spirit.

Your time with Him is really the most important part of the day. If you get in the habit of taking that time first thing in the morning, His presence will be with you all day to guide and help you. It's a whole new mentality, really. Instead of trying to handle everything yourself and get through it all as quickly as you can, you will be letting Jesus do most of the work for you. You'll still have to play the part He shows you to play, but you'll have peace of mind that as you do your part, He will do the rest.

"Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter into that rest."¹ That sounds a little contrary—making an effort to rest—but it is really the crux of the matter. It takes effort to pull back. The concept of resting in Jesus isn't complicated or hard to understand, but actually doing it—leaving your old mindset and way of operating behind and entering the realm of the spirit—that takes work, and it can be difficult at first. But, once you get the hang of it, it will save you so much time and effort and stress and strain that you'll wonder how you ever did without it. ●

If you haven't yet met the Prince of Peace, Jesus, or received His forgiveness and gift of eternal life, you can right now by praying the following:

Thank You, Jesus, for paying the price for my mistakes and wrongs, so I can be forgiven. I ask You now, dear Jesus, to please come into my heart, forgive me, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen.

¹ Hebrews 4:11 NIV



THE DAY

THE BOUNCER BROKE

BY BONITA HELE

I WAS THRILLED TO BE A NEW MOTHER AGAIN. Allen was one of those happy, mellow little guys. I would put him in his bouncer, and he would be happy to sit there, awake or asleep, while I rocked the bouncer with one foot and sat in my chair and worked. I had a desk job and worked part-time at home, so I was happy for the opportunity to continue my work, even with such a young baby in tow. I took pride in being able to multitask so well, and others commended me. Even when Allen grew older and chubbier and was awake for longer spells, he still loved to be in his bouncer.

Then one day it seemed to rest closer to the ground. I thought Allen's older sister, Jessica, who was a toddler at the time, might have sat in it and bent it. I tried to return the heavy wire frame to its original shape, but it would not comply. Poor Allen's bottom would hit the floor if I tried to rock him.

I asked my husband to look at it, and his conclusion was that it would need to be re-welded. "Don't bother," I replied. It would be easier to get a new one.

Then came Allen's nap time. I was used to bouncing him to sleep as I continued

my work, but now I had to rock him in my arms until he fell asleep. I first tried rocking him while I walked back and forth across the room, and then while I sat in a rocking chair. When he finally went to sleep, I didn't want to put him in his crib for fear that he would wake up. So there I sat, feeling useless. I thought about everything I needed to get done, and got even more frustrated.

Then a different thought came to mind. *Pray*. I remembered reading a book once titled *Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something*.¹ So I did. I prayed for my baby, for my husband's work, for my daughter, for my various responsibilities, for friends and family members. By the time the baby woke up, I felt surprisingly refreshed

and upbeat. I actually felt as though I had accomplished more than if I had been sitting at my computer typing away. And I probably had.

Jesus said that we "always ought to pray."² Okay, so I'm not even close to that level of prayerfulness, but maybe if I spend my son's naptimes upholding others in prayer, I might come closer to that ideal. And so I discovered once again that "all things work together for good to those who love God."³ Through this interruption in my accomplishment-driven routine, He was able to get through to me about something of much more lasting value: the power of prayer.

BONITA HELE IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN INDIA. ●

¹ Ronald Dunn, *Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001)

² Luke 18:1

³ Romans 8:28

Why Meditate?

We inhabit physical bodies, but we are spiritual beings living spiritual lives. Meditation helps us to get in touch with the spiritual elements.

What Is Meditation?

By simple definition, meditation is continued or extended contemplation, especially of a spiritual or devotional nature. In practical terms, meditation involves concentrating on a single thought or mental image to the exclusion of all others.

Meditation is practiced in various forms the world over. It's a cornerstone of New Age religions, but meditation of one style or another can also be found in most of the major religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The following articles focus on meditating on Jesus while praying, which can perhaps be more aptly termed "meditative prayer." ●

Whatever happens to occupy our thoughts or drive our actions at any given moment is not the all in all. Meditation reminds us that there's more to life than what meets the eye.

Meditation helps us get our priorities right. Distancing ourselves from our day-to-day activities, even if only for a few minutes, gives us a fresh perspective on them.

Meditation has physical benefits, especially for the nervous system. Stress and tension negatively impact our health in various ways—raising blood pressure or accelerating the aging process, for example. It stands to reason, then, that relieving stress would pay off in better health, and it does. Resting the mind has a profound effect on brain activity, which results in a slower heart rate, lower blood pressure, and a reduction in stress hormones—and the nervous system gets temporary relief. If meditation is practiced regularly, these beneficial changes become relatively permanent.

Giving Jesus our focused, undivided attention strengthens our relationship with Him. Just as we each need some time alone with those dearest to us, He wants time alone with us.

When we draw closer to Jesus through meditation, He takes our minds off our problems and concerns for a time and empties us of our own thoughts about them. Later, when we must face those problems again, He is more easily able to give us His mind on the matter—solutions we hadn't been able to find on our own. ●

SILENCE

BY JESSIE RICHARDS

Sometimes I just like to sit here silently with You.
You already know.
You already understand.
I don't have to say the right thing, or anything at all;
You accept me.
You see my thoughts as they form and dance.
Words could never aptly express them.
You could verbalize Your every thought perfectly,
Yet You sometimes choose silence too.
There's just something about being together,
Not having to say a thing,
Because we feel it, we sense it, we know it.





OASIS OF PEACE

6

Six Steps of Meditative Prayer

Step 1: Choose an appropriate location. Most people find that meditation is best in quiet, uncluttered surroundings, ideally away from where they work or spend most of their waking hours. A secluded spot outside can be especially conducive. Fresh air not only renews us physically, but it also illustrates God’s Spirit that is able to clear our minds and spirits.

Step 2: Take time to wind down. It’s impossible to immediately go from the affairs of a busy day into a state of deep meditative prayer. There needs to be a time of transition, a time of phasing out the material world. Sometimes it helps to spend a few minutes on a transitional activity, such as listening to soothing music, taking a short walk, or breathing deeply. As you try different things, you’ll find what works best for you.

Step 3: Leave your cares at the door. If problems are weighing you down, they’ll keep you from the peace you could receive from meditation. Take a minute or two (or as long as it takes) to give your present cares to Jesus in prayer. Be specific. Describe to Him what is troubling you, and ask Him to lift and bear it. Focus on God’s ability to bring solutions, rather than the problems themselves. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”¹

Step 4: Get relaxed. Several minutes of gentle stretches and deep breathing, followed by a relaxation exercise (concentrate on relaxing your face and neck, then your entire body, part by part) can help. If you’re feeling especially tense, a shower or a bath or a short walk in nature might help you relax. Or if you’re very tired, a nap may be just the thing, because as long as you’re exhausted, you probably won’t get much out of your time of meditation.

Step 5: Select a comfortable position. In meditation, the position of your spirit matters much more than the position of your body. You don’t have to sit a certain way—or even sit, for that matter—except of course you should be comfortable, so that doesn’t become a distraction. Whatever position you choose, it should allow you to maintain good posture, because this facilitates deep breathing and good circulation of the blood.

¹ Philippians 4:6-7



*Resting in Jesus brings comfort
and peace that nothing can replace.
It's Jesus touching you.*

Step 6: Meditate. You've found an appropriate spot and wound down physically. You've put your problems and cares into Jesus' very capable hands. You've disconnected from the affairs of the day, and are relaxed and comfortable. Now you're ready to begin a time of focused meditation.

You might choose to focus on Jesus Himself, thinking about one of His attributes, or on some special blessing He has brought into your life. A specific thought from God's Word can also be a subject for meditation. Reading a passage from the Bible, one of the "From Jesus with Love" messages that are on the back page of each issue of *Activated*, or some other short devotional material may help get you started. For more meditation ideas, see the "Spiritual Exercise" columns in previous and coming issues.

Let your mind rest. Don't analyze. Just relax and concentrate on quieting your body, mind, and spirit. Think of this type of meditation as being like learning to float in water. It takes that amount of relaxation of both body and spirit for God's Spirit to take over and give you the "buoyancy" you need. If you struggle or try to poke your head up to see what's happening around you, the balance will be upset and you'll break your connection with Him. Whereas if you will just lie back, stop struggling, focus on relaxing every muscle in your body, and shut out the noise of the world and every thought except the one you're meditating on, God's Spirit will hold you up perfectly. It's a wonderful feeling!

"Peace I leave with you," Jesus promised. "My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you."¹ Let Him carry you away to the peaceful haven He has prepared for you. ●

FEEDING READING **Meditation**

Meditation has spiritual and practical benefits.

Psalm 49:3
Psalm 63:5-6
Psalm 119:99
Isaiah 30:15
1 Timothy 4:15

Meditate on God and Jesus.

Psalm 16:11
Psalm 94:19
Psalm 104:34

Meditate on God's Word.

Joshua 1:8
Psalm 1:2
Psalm 119:97
Psalm 119:148

Meditate on God's works.

Psalm 119:15
Psalm 143:5

Meditate on heavenly things.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10
Colossians 3:2

¹ John 14:27



AVALANCHE

BY SIMON BERNARD

FOR THE PAST 15 YEARS, I have been operating backcountry tours for snowboarders and skiers in the rugged Hakkoda mountain range in Japan's northeastern Aomori Prefecture. The work is exhilarating, but also a sober responsibility. Adventure-seeking tourists put their lives in my hands, trusting me to get them up and down the mountains safely. I always spend the long commute up the mountain praying for wisdom and spiritual guidance, as well as for protection for each person in that day's tour group.

In February 2007, seven Australian skiers hired me to be their private guide during their ski trip here. The first morning I was eager to get a quick start. A storm was rolling in, and if we didn't head out soon, we'd be stuck in the ski lodge for two days waiting for it to pass.

Usually I have eight mountains to choose from, but due to the approaching storm, only one mountain was close enough to hike to and ski down before the ski resort closed for the day. We were the first group out of the cable car station near the peak.

As we prepared to climb to a higher, more remote area, another guide stopped to warn me that it would be very windy at the top. Having beaten many storms before, I told him I thought we would be fine.

With the wind at our backs, it took us little time

to get to the top for the main run of the day. As usual, I called the lodge on my cell phone just before we started our descent, and told them where and when to pick us up with the bus on the other side of the mountain.

The moment I put my phone back in my pocket, a gale-force wind hit us and we were in total white-out conditions. Knowing what imminent danger we could be in, I told my team that the open bowl route I had planned was now too dangerous to go down. We

would have to backtrack to a ridge, where the wind would keep new snow from accumulating, and descend from there. We turned and headed into the biting wind.

As we inched our way down the ridge in blinding conditions, my job was to count seven heads over and over again. I desperately prayed that each man could see the one ahead of him, that they could all hear my instructions, and that they would heed my warning about not going down into the bowl. I also prayed for God to have mercy and get us down safely. I'm sure it was due to those prayers that very little snow broke away beneath us as we descended, but it was slow going. I stopped to take a GPS reading to double-check our position, and saw that a trek that usually takes five minutes had taken us half an hour.

Halfway down the mountain, I saw another group in the distance and realized that something was wrong. "Do you need help?" I called out in Japanese.

A cry of "Please help us!" sent shivers down our spines. We knew that they had been caught in an avalanche. God had helped us make it safely that far down the mountain, but now I realized that He had something more in mind. The seven skiers I was guiding were all experienced ski patrolmen, and each carried full avalanche gear in their backpacks. Combined, these men had 75 years of experience in dangerous situations.

We skied down to the other group, pulled out our shovels, and started digging out half-buried people. After an initial assessment, I called an emergency

CQ on my radio and relayed a message to the police—our position and the conditions of the Japanese skiers who had been caught in the avalanche. Of the group, two were dead, six were too seriously injured to be moved, and one was still missing.

We formed two groups and did a patterned search for the missing person with our avalanche probes. Miraculously, not only did we find him buried under the snow, but even after being buried for an hour, he was still alive. Apparently his helmet had created an air pocket around his head so he could breathe, and the cold had slowed his metabolism so he needed less oxygen. And it wasn't his time to die.

While the blizzard raged around us, we performed first aid and CPR on the injured and built snow shelters around them to keep them from freezing to death.

From the time of my CQ, it was three hours before police and army rescue teams could reach us. When they finally did, we helped lift the injured onto snow boats that the police had brought up. As

the blizzard raged on, they were taken to ambulances parked at the base of the mountain, amid a media circus.

After seven hours on the mountain we boarded the bus that would take us to the ski lodge.

The next two days were non-stop newspaper and TV interviews, and one point that came up over and over was how any other group of skiers I've guided would have been totally helpless in such a situation, as most people bring no avalanche gear and have no experience. Only God could have arranged for our team of experienced skiers to get together on that day, on that mountain, in order to help those stuck in the avalanche. And only through a miracle of God did we find the last person alive after he'd been buried under the snow for so long. As one commentator put it, we were "the hand of God on the mountain that day."

SIMON BERNARD IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN JAPAN. ●

THREE SPHERES OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

BASED ON THE
WRITINGS OF DAVID
BRANDT BERG

Our spiritual life can be divided into three principal spheres: praise, prayer, and performance.

Praise

Praise is a form of love. It's us telling God how much we love Him and how thankful we are for all He does for us. So when we turn our attention from the business of the day to focus on the spiritual and the needs of our spirit, what is the first thing we should do? Praise God for His goodness. "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name."¹ Praise opens a channel to the heavenly realm.

Praise benefits both parties. Not only does God love praise, but praising Him puts things in proper perspective for us as well. When we pause to consider God's love and all that He's already done for us, it changes our outlook; it clears our mind, relieves stress, and refreshes our spirit—and the benefits don't stop there. We don't just praise our way to peace of mind, body, and spirit; we also praise down more tangible blessings of God in the form of answers to our prayers. The blessings come down as the praises go up!

Prayer

Some people only pray when they need something from God. They tell Him all their problems and what they want from Him, and they try to push their program on God without ever giving Him a chance to say a word—except they hope that when they get done, He will say yes to whatever it is they're asking Him for. But prayer is meant to be much more than that.

Prayer is two-way communication with God, the means by which we connect and converse and commune heart to heart with Him. Like the loving Father He is, God takes a personal interest in us and wants to be involved in our daily life. He knows that we have questions and problems, and He wants to give us answers and solutions. He wants to speak to us through His written Word as we prayerfully read it, and He wants to speak personal words of love and encouragement directly to our mind. Most of all, He wants us to know how much He loves us.

What matters most in prayer is not how we position our body, but how we position our heart. We don't have to get down on our knees or close our eyes or bow our head or fold our hands to pray, although all of those are ways of showing God due

¹ Psalm 100:4



respect. They also can help close out other thoughts and distractions. The point is to focus on the Lord.

There are more ways to pray than you probably ever imagined. Prayers can be long or short, silent or spoken or sung. Some prayers don't even need words. Prayers can be fun, off-the-cuff exchanges, or hallowed, formal veneration. They can be spontaneous, carefully planned, or written. Write them yourself, or take them from the Bible (many prayers can be found in the book of Psalms) or a devotional book. They can be for yourself or others. They can be prayed in private or with others. They can be simple acknowledgments of your need for the Lord's blessing as you go about your routine, or they can be earnest petitions for His guidance as you tackle the seemingly impossible. They can be happy, thankful praises, or impassioned prayers of repentance from a broken and contrite heart. They can be prayed on your knees or on the go. The ways to pray are as many and varied as your needs. Whichever way you choose, the point is that it's a personal expression of your heart to God—it's making a connection.

The more we make prayer a part of our everyday thought pattern, the more in tune and in touch with God we'll be, the better He will be able to guide our lives, and the happier we'll be.

Let prayer flow through you as naturally and automatically as your heart beats and your lungs breathe. Then you will have discovered the full, dynamic power of prayer.

Performance

Praise and prayer bring us closer to God and put us in position to get His guidance and help in matters both big and small, but there's another key to a healthy spiritual life: *doing* what He tells us to do. "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."¹

A big part of putting spirituality into practice is sharing God's love with others. Jesus told His closest followers, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."² He says this still to His followers of today, calling them to give their lives daily in loving concern and care for others, to share His heart and love with those who are seeking for "the way, the truth, and the life."³ ●

¹James 1:23-25

²John 20:21

³John 14:6



the WISH LIST

BY TOMOKO MATSUOKA

THE AIR THAT FILLED MY LUNGS was salty and alive. Sand pressed between my toes. Jesus' hand slid into mine.

"Thanks for inviting Me," He said.

"I wish..."

"Yes?"

"I wish we could always be like this."

"Your need is what draws Me to you,"

He said.

I saw in His eyes that the times I have thought I was self-sufficient, I neglected Him, the one friend who has never let me down. He squeezed my hand, letting me know that all that was behind us.

There were others on the beach, but right then He was my world and we were alone.

Time passed, and my mind wandered here and there, but never too far from the anchor of knowing He was next to me. "I have some worries," I blurted out.

"Fire away."

I smiled, paused, took a deep breath, and then plunged right in. "I worry about the future. And more recently I'm worried that I won't be able to handle whatever I

may be faced with. I wish I were better with people. I wish I didn't feel as though every day was an effort. I wish..."

His hand squeezed mine, and we were both silent for a time. We watched the swelling of the waves and listened to them crash on the shore. I was thinking about what would happen to me if He ever put a limit on wishes. If He did, I'd be sunk.

He read my thoughts and said, "One wish right now."

"What?"

"It's yours. Anything. I'm giving you one wish."

I thought He must be kidding. "Really?"

"I'm not," He said.

"Not what?" I asked, a little confused.

"Not kidding."

I laughed. "Anything?"

"Anything."

"But what if I wish for something that isn't good for me?"

"Do you love Me?"

"Of course!" I said, surprised that He would ask such a question.

He chuckled. "Then I know that your desires will be in line with what I want and know is best for you."

I paused, trying to figure out where my love for ice cream fit into His highest will.

"You know, I *could* use this wish for something like..." I was unable to finish the sentence.

"Ice cream on demand?" Sometimes I forget how readable I am to Him.

"Would you like that?" He asked.

"I don't know. That *is* a good option." We smiled at

each other in perfect harmony of thought and emotions.

I began sorting through my wish list. Sitting next to Him brought most of my wishes down a few places on the list. Others I crossed off altogether. In the presence of the One I love most, all other loves paled in comparison and I realized that there was nothing I wanted more than to make Him happy.

“I wish to love You and make You happy.”

He hugged me tight. I felt as though *all* of my wishes had come true.

“That’s what I want too,” He said softly, “because then I am able to give you the desires of your heart.”

“But what if my desires aren’t the right ones?” I was thinking of a certain instance some time back.

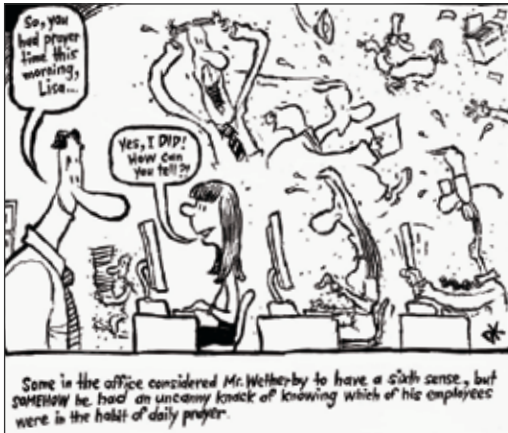
“When I have first place in your life, when you want nothing else more than Me, then I reward you by showering you with blessings. I send you things that I know will make you happy. I even fulfill desires that you didn’t know you had.”

I looked at Him and I told Him that all my desires were fulfilled in Him.

He looked at me and said, “Ice cream is on the menu today.”

We laughed as we continued our walk. And we ate ice cream that night.

TOMOKO MATSUOKA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ●



SUPREME GURU

Jesus is the ultimate spiritual guide and teacher. When you meditate on Him, His light and love envelop you. Meditating on Jesus and His Word is the ultimate high, the greatest transfer of spiritual energy that there is. Better still, it can help transform you into the type of spiritual being you were meant to be, because each time you make that connection, you partake of His divine nature and become more like Him. ●

WORDS TO MEDITATE ON

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the Word became flesh [Jesus] and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.—*John 1:1-4,14*

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”—*Jesus, John 8:12*

“If you abide in My Word ... you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”—*Jesus, John 8:31-32*

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.—*2 Peter 1:4 KJV*

We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.—*2 Corinthians 3:18* ●



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Constant Companion

I want to be a very present companion, counselor, and help to you—not merely someone you know *of*, or someone you met once but rarely think about or talk to, or even an advisor that you consult from time to time when you have a problem or need to make an important decision. I want to be a constant, loving presence.

I want to communicate with you personally and directly, and not in a distant, formal, or mental sort of way, but heart to heart. I want us to commune as intimates would, to talk things over, to reach decisions together, and to sometimes communicate without saying a word. I want to develop a bond of love between us that you've never experienced with anyone else and can't even imagine.

Learning to converse freely with Me, like learning to be natural, open, honest, and trusting in your communications with any friend, is something that comes with time and practice. It may feel awkward or even seem like work at first, learning to come into My presence and recognize My voice, but if you will do your part by making that effort, *I will* speak to you. At first you may think that little voice you hear deep inside is your mind, but in time you will know that it is Mine. I may give you ideas or solutions or answers to your questions, or I may give you a feeling of peace and well-being, or I may simply tell you how special you are to Me and how much I enjoy being with you. I'm full of surprises, so you'll never know what to expect, but this one thing I promise: I will never disappoint you!