

My “Activated” articles

For Activated Christmas mag, submission.

19 Nov. 2012

1,001 Gifts for Jesus

By Chalsey Dooley

There’s something magical about Christmas, however last year the spark didn’t come. I was disheartened and bothered by all the commercialism that plagues this city months in advance. It’s the biggest possible fund raiser for most businesses after all. Somewhere between the flashy ads in magazines, and feeling there wasn’t much I could give to Jesus due to our circumstances, I lost my heart and joy in Christmas to do much. The last thing I wanted to do was to decorate a tree or anything else. I also didn’t like that feeling of guilt and stress, knowing that it’s a time for giving, but I’d have to cram and rush to do things to make it “meaningful.” This year is different, however. We started preparing in July—for the One Who’s birthday it is.

The children and I came up with a plan. We wanted to give Jesus 1,001 presents by His Birthday! Every day we send a few more His way—from the children and us parents as well. The back of our kitchen door is covered with lists and charts, and now there are several hundred checkmarks and stickers indicating the gifts we have given to Him! There’s a chart for helping around the house. There’s a chart for memorizing Bible verses. There’s a chart for making simple audios to send to other children, telling Bible stories. There’s a chart for writing letters to friends. There is a chart for the times we have stopped to talk with and listen to Jesus. These and other things are some of the gifts we chose to give Jesus for Christmas.

We started our Christmas season months ago and it feels great! There’s no rush, no pressure, no guilt, and no lack of focus. My joy returned. We’re reaching our goals and using our time to make Him and others happy. When the charts are filled up, we’ll place each list in a box—one of the many we have saved up for it—and wrap it as a gift, placing it under the tree. They are precious gifts of the heart. Not ones that were grabbed and purchased in a hurry. Each one represents time spent, love and effort, and gifts we know He will be so happy to receive.

A month before Christmas we add the last gift—the “one” of the 1,001 gifts. It’s a simple birthday candle. We light it for a moment each day while we pray together for many others around the world to come to know Jesus’ love. We blow it out when we are done. We will continue daily to light it and spend a moment in special prayer, until the candle is finished. We know that these prayers are one of the best gifts we can offer the one who offers us His all.

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Published version

1,001 GIFTS FOR JESUS

By Chalsey Dooley

Last Christmas, the magical spark never came. I was bothered by all the commercialism that plagues our city months in advance. Somewhere between the flashy ads in magazines and feeling there wasn’t much I could give Jesus due to our current circumstances, I lost my enthusiasm at doing

much at all. I wasn't looking forward to decorating the tree, neither did I want the guilt and stress that would come from cramming and rushing to "make things meaningful."

This year has been the opposite, though. In fact, we started preparing in July! So what was different?

Back then, the children and I came up with a plan to give Jesus 1,001 presents by His birthday, and we've been sending a few more His way every day since. The back of our kitchen door is covered with lists and charts, and now there are several hundred checkmarks and stickers indicating the gifts we've already given Him! There's a chart for helping around the house. There's a chart for memorizing Bible verses. There's a chart for making simple Bible story audios to post for other children. There's a chart for writing letters to friends. There's a chart for the times we have stopped to listen to Jesus. These are just a few of the gifts we're giving Jesus for Christmas.

This year, our Christmas season started months ago and it feels great! There's no rush, no pressure, no guilt, and no lack of focus. We're reaching our goals and using our time to make Him and others happy. The charts are nearly filled up, and when they are, we'll place each list in a gift-wrapped box and place it under the tree. They are gifts from the heart—each one represents time, love, and effort we know He will be so happy to receive.

We already know what the 1,001st gift will be—a simple birthday candle. We'll light it for a moment each day while we pray for many others around the world to come to know Jesus' love. These prayers are also gifts we can offer the One who offered us His all.

Chalsey Dooley is a writer of inspirational material for children and caretakers and is a full-time edu-mom living in Australia.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;

Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

Submitted for the 2014 Feb activated mag on love and friendship

(I know it will need editing and to be cut down. GBY!) --Koriane

A Unique Valentine's Day Gift

It was nearing the end of January, 2011, and I had been thinking earlier in the day that Valentine's Day was coming up. I was thinking how I wanted something special to happen, but then brushed it off as a silly thought, not for busy mommies of young children.

We have a wonderful marriage with “romance on the go”, with a hug here, a word of appreciation there, a quick kiss good-bye or welcome home, is what we mostly manage to fit into our busy life.

I reminded myself that there would be no fancy dinner out or chocolates! (Due to my dietary constraints, and our children’s needs in the evenings.) Then I turned my thoughts outward, like I like to do—I wondered what I could do to cheer others up, and moved on from the “what can happen to make me feel special” thoughts.

We came back that day from our one-day camping trip and got the mail out of our box. Our mail that day held a fun surprise.

My tooth had been hurting off and on for a few months. The thing that had stopped me from being able to get dental help was that for some reason my health card had expired. With it the dentist trip would be affordable; without it, totally impossible. We didn’t know why mine was the only one that had expired. We were trying to find the time to one day go in to the office and ask about it and hopefully be eligible for a new one.

So the mail that day held a new health card for me. We hadn’t asked for it. But the timing was right. Great! Within seconds my dear husband was phoning to make a dentist appointment.

“The soonest appointment is on February the 14th” the lady on the phone said. “Will that be alright?”

Jesus had given me a gift of love for that special day. A practical and appreciated gift!

Then to top it off, my plans for doing something special for others on that day worked out in a miraculous way. I had planned and hoped to make gift bags for mothers in the maternity ward at the hospital who had just given birth and were there recovering during Valentine’s Day. However, being short on funds to buy the items to put into the mother/newborn gift bags seemed beyond what we could do. I prayed for the supernatural supply of funds to do it, if it was something Jesus wanted me to do.

A day or two before Valentine’s Day we were doing our weekly shopping, and were pleasantly surprised at what happened. Just that day—the one and only time it happened for us—there was a wonderful offer.

For only two dollars a bag, customers could fill up all the fruits and vegetables that they could fit, into as many bags as they wished to. It had such a dramatic difference on the total cost of our shopping that were able to then use the funds we’d saved, to purchase the gift bag items for the new mothers.

So on Valentine's Day we made our first stop at the dentist, and my tooth was promptly pulled. Surprisingly, there was no pain then nor afterwards. And on we went to the maternity ward to deliver our gift bags to some very happy mothers. A wonderful day it was! A perfect blend of giving and being given to, by the one who loves us eternally.

ACCESSORIES NOT INCLUDED

By Chalsey Dooley

Advertisements generally portray more than the item on sale. An advert for a plastic inflatable pool might show a happy family having a great time splashing in the water. But if you get the pool, will you get a happy family too?

When considering getting such a pool for our boys, I had to explain to them how there's a lot more going on than meets the eye. For instance, after a fun day splashing around, the water in the pool gets cold and dirty, and cleaning it out is a big job. If the pool isn't deflated after each use, the grass underneath gets brown, withers, and may eventually smell bad. I warned them that how much enjoyment they'd get from the pool would be largely up to them and how willing they were to keep the pool clean, to wait for the right weather, and to be patient while it gets inflated and filled with water.

Lego is the same thing. When my boys see adverts for the small, brightly coloured blocks, they're always instantly keen to build the **space shuttle**, or a plane. But no matter how the pictures look, and how much fun it seems the models are having, happiness won't really come from the Lego set—that's something that the Lego players themselves need to supply.

When their creations break—as all Lego creations eventually do—they will need the buoyancy and cheerfulness to not get too bothered and the perseverance to start anew. These attributes don't come included in the Lego set, but without them, there will be tears instead of smiles.

Things, positions, and material items by themselves can't bring happiness. There is no shop selling "joy." That comes from within, from a life of sharing, courtesy, and kindness, and from Jesus, the source of love. He can help us to think more of others than ourselves. "You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."[[Psalm 16:11]]

Enjoy the pool if you have one, but don't be fooled by a glittering advertisement. Life is what you make of it. With joy in your heart, the rest is just a bonus.

Article Submission for Activitated Mag March 2014

From Chalsey Dooley (Koriane)

For topics:

- building character in children (2 articles)
- healthy living tips / overcoming unhealthy habits (1 article)
- rewards—what we have to look forward to in heaven. (1 article)

Here are some articles I have written that may or may not be a blessing for these topics. I have not shortened them, for the most part. But you can see if they hit target at all. GBY! --Koriane

- building character in children

Family Flag

One morning I woke with a novel idea—and made it the priority to act on in. I'm glad we did! It's a fun new way to add to the "character building" side of raising a family, and bonding as a team.

We recently got a pack of "flags of the world" cards, to look at and learn about. It was interesting to notice how some flags were created and thought up at a "contest" to see who could come up with the best flag idea. Each part of the flags had meaning and were significant in some way to what was deemed important or special about that country. We've been enjoying learning about different ones, and making certain ones with paper, colours or paint.

The other day the idea came to me just as night was fading and the day was on us... to come up with our own flag—for just our family. What was important to us? What was unique or special to us as a family? What do we want to be remembered for—and remember to make part of our lives?

I made a starter list of qualities, the basics, and jotted down some ideas of colours and shapes that could help to describe and represent those character and family traits and specialities.

Over the breakfast table we talked about it. I didn't tell the children what I had planned, but said they'd know after answering the questions. I probed with the above mentioned questions: What are some of the most important things to us in life? What do we believe in? What is special about our specific family? What things do we want to have part of our life always? After getting their input and completing the list, I'd formulated in my mind most of the flag's design—what to include—and began to create it.

I kept it a secret what I was doing, while they watched on, seeing if they could guess. It was simple, so it was done soon. When the basics were there, I announced we were making our family's flag! I showed them what the various colours on it presented—of the points we'd discussed that were important to us, as a family. Then together we discussed and came up with the details and shapes to be added, and further representations, adding them as we did so.

Before too long it was complete. I typed up our explanations and pasted it to the back of the flag. Each colour, each shape, had one or more meanings. It had come together so well. It was

great to look at a simple, concise, pictorial representation of what we strive for, as a reminder, as well as giving feeling of the strength as a team, and confidence in the unique facets of our family's essence.

Here are just a few of the things included in our flag: My favourite was what the boys helped to come up with for the centre of it: A brown scroll with a red heart on it. –Brown for earth + scroll for God Word = Jesus, God's Word "made flesh" as a man, made of dust. (John 1:14) And our "law" is love, as He taught. We also have a large green section representing nature and the natural, health-building ways. And of course, a musical note too—being the musical family we are, thanks to our man of the team, and how the boys all take after him, and learn from his great way of teaching it.

We are a mini nation—a team! The flag was posted up! (One day I plan to sew it out of cloth!) A name was thought up for our "country" or family—Quinceyland. Just a funny name, but meaningful for us—"Quin" for the 5 people in our family, "C" for the letter C that each of us happen to, by chance, have a name starting with, and "land" to make it country-sounding.

Maybe you wanna try it? I'm sure you'll enjoy. It's bonding. It's faith and character building. It's fun. It's less about what the parent is saying to do and be—and more what the team says they want to strive for, as a result of all you have helped to teach and instil for years. And it's a concise and colourful reminder of it!

Positive Practice

Something new to try for those certain areas of your children's behaviour that need some maintenance and training. A positive approach to progress.

Together with my young ones we talked about the "weak areas" that they, and I, wanted to see change in, with their behaviour. We prayed, and a new thought came to me. A fresh approach. A new mindset. If it's a weak area, it needs training, practice, strengthening in. If a grown up needs to learn to drive, he takes lessons and practices, right? He isn't hit with tickets and fines the first day he attempts with a teacher. He's not called a bad driver—he simply hasn't yet learned how to do it properly. Practice, study, training, experience is what's needed.

So we chose 6 areas of frequent need-work-on's during the day, things that are the current behaviour issues. I wrote each one on an envelope, along with a Bible verse expressing the guidance, the proper way to behave. And in each envelope were placed 3 or so cards, with "practice ideas" to pull out and do when the incident occurs and it needs to be worked on.

(Truthfulness is one of the envelopes. If they are forthright with their misbehavings, not trying to cover up their faults, then they just get to practice that area. If trying to tell an untruth about it: "The toddler just started crying.. I don't know why..he was grabbing my toy.." (when he was pushed or hit rather), then two cards must be drawn, one for the behaviour, and one from the "truthfulness" cards.

Now there's no stress of "They did it again! Now what?" It's just a recognized area, and it's kept more in check, as they know I'm prepared! We're not trying to change every area possible, just focusing on a handful. I don't have to dream up consequences and "punishments" on the spot. Just calmly, matter of fact ready-to-help them make progress, offer "pick a card". A scenario might be:

"Oh, you are having a hard time playing together, things are making you act unkind.... guess we need to work on 'love 'n' kindness'. Pick a card.Hmm, that one says, 'Say 5 things you like about your brother, give a hug and apologize for acting unkindly'. (After it's done:) Okay, you can play now—nicely. But if you're not ready or need more practice on how to act, we can always pick another one, and keep working on it till you feel ready to handle situations patiently." And with a hug and prayer with the child, he can carry on his activity.

- healthy living tips / overcoming unhealthy habits

Radical Health-Building Tips that Save Money!

Far-out ways to save on money AND health-build, upping your life's quality!

Warning: This is not for everyone. But should any of it suit you, and be what the God shows you is best for you and your children, the freedom and health benefits are exhilaratingly well worth it!

I realize we all have our individual journeys. Ours has taken us (and continues to take us) on some pretty new territory for us. Though things looked rather out-of-the-box, and in some ways made us feel "different", the joy of obeying the Lord came when seeing the coolest, positive results. And wonderfully, they save on funds too! Many have had to try these things for their health needs, and have been so happy with the results. We've just "cut to the chase" so to speak, and skip all that in-between "health products". We just do/eat/live the healthy way.

Here are the things that we've needed to do, to find solutions in our situation. And have rejoiced at the outcome. I think it's really in the obedience to do whatever God's asked, no matter how odd it seems. But should they help you in some way, enjoy!

* * *

*No commercial cleaning liquids and fluids. Just water, vinegar and baking soda. The chemical reaction of mixing those two are powerful, and the baking soda is somewhat like Ajax. It leaves things sparkling and disinfected. (Don't mix them ahead of time, just sprinkle the baking soda on the place you want to scrub, spray on the vinegar, and then scrub. Or just use water and vinegar if just to disinfect.) No more wondering what's the best thing to use, and what type to use for what. Too many choices! And no dangerous poisonous fluids for kids' safety, lying around the house. Cool, easy, simple and it works! (For some people, just eliminating the commercial cleaning fluids from their lives has completely changed their life for the better, and health turned around!)

*No dish soap, just hot running water, and salt for the extra cleaning needs.

*Eat nothing at all processed in a factory, mass produced, restaurant, etc. Only home prepared fresh fruit and veggies, brown rice, nuts, fish (and sometimes other meats). Cooked only with water, oil & salt. There are oodles of things, as we are discovering, that can be made with these ingredients alone.

*Our only drink is water—lots of it, all throughout the day. Water has proven to cure so many “chronic” and “incurable” illnesses.

*We don't buy any advertised, expensive “health foods” or additives or “gluten free” and all that stuff. Such gimmicks to attract you to part with hard earned funds. We just get the real thing, and keep out of our belly anything that fights against the good it's doing. We don't take “vitamins”—too many odd things added to them when manufactured—we just eat right.

*Nothing at all with any type of sugar. The more we eat right, the less hungry we are! Our bodies stopped yelling out in hunger simple because it was being denied the real things needed. Sugar has a way of numbing your body's sense of telling you when you've had enough. Skipping it helps keep your weight normal, and saves on dentist bills!

*No shampoo! Water works great, once your hair and scalp are able to recover from all that has been done to it from all the chemicals of shampoo and conditioner and all that hair junk. The gooey coating that was always on my hair is gone. My extra oily hair is now normal. No more bath blues or shampoo in eyes for children. Just a good rinse and it's done!

*We never have to spend a cent on toiletries, except some cheap bar soap for hand washing. Perfume is a cause for many health issues and irritability, so we skip on it. A bit of olive oil from the kitchen for dry hands after lots of dish washing, or dry skin, takes care of the issue. Water or at times salt or baking soda for teeth brushing only has worked wonders. The day I stopped using toothpaste (as it was causing my toddler's teeth to get black spots, is the day my own teeth were finally really clean, and the yellow build up was gone.

*No laundry soap! This is known by many to be the trigger of all sorts of problems, with all the unnatural scenting and chemicals included. Just plenty of water in the washing machine (cold water usually, but hot when something really needs it—like dirty rags, or stinky things), and a long cycle of sloshing. A day out hung in the sun and wind—not wasting electricity on dryer use. They last longer. Smell fresh. Radical!

*To sleep early at night. I don't waste my strength or strain my eyes, staying up late, or watching TV or movies. When the day light fades, so do we. Saves on electricity. Saves on aspirin for headaches from tiredness. Saves on getting glasses from eye strain. Saves on nerves from over extending one's self. Saves on doctor bills and pills from getting sick due to body misuse from lack of sleep. The boost of natural energy the next day is great, using it to give to my family the best I can.

* * *

The health God's blessed us with in this last year since bravely following His gentle leading, (and finding helpful suggestions from others on line), is unheard of. Phenomenal really. I seemed to have been sick most of the time growing up, and often as a young person. I can't

remember the last time I even caught a cold nowadays. And wonderfully the kids are so rarely sick... it feels worth it to me. I'm sure our journey will continue, and we'll learn new things over the years. But this is where we are at right now.

So, whatever He's asking you to try, for health, or for budget, or for your children's behaviour, or sleep, digestion and processing related issues, or whatever (which all the things above effect...all the chemicals, preservatives, sugars, dairy, etc, etc.) just do it! Don't look around at what "everyone else" seems to be doing.

God bless you!

- rewards—what we have to look forward to in heaven.

A Fancy Meal

I read a very neat verse in the Bible that tells us that if we serve Jesus now, that when we get to Heaven, we'll be like the guest of honour at a fancy meal. Jesus, our Lord and King, will say it's our turn to rest, sit down and be refreshed. And guess who will be like the servant to us then, serving us and bringing us all kinds of delicious foods, and letting us just relax? – Jesus! He'll wait on us, and serve us all kinds of wonderful things.

I'd sure like to be at that special meal. If Jesus is making sure it's a nice meal, and the best food is being served, and the guests are being treated well, it is going to be a very nice place to be, for sure! I want to do my job now of serving Jesus, and doing the things that He wishes He could do on Earth, but needs me to help do it for Him.

I'm happy to serve and live for the best King of all, and to please Him in all the ways I can. I will be looking forward to the special meal and feast He's preparing for all of us who love and do our best for Him.

At breakfast time today when my family met for prayer, we each said the ways we wanted to help "serve Jesus" today. Daddy said he would work hard to care for and support his family, as well as teach the children how to play music. I said I would serve Jesus by cooking good nutritional meals for the children, and taking good care of them.

The boys thought about some of the things they were learning, and the ways they could show more kindness to each other. "I'll serve Jesus by not laughing when it would make someone feel bad, and instead listen to those talking to me and respond nicely."

Another boy said, "I'll serve Jesus by helping my younger brother build things out of Lego, instead of getting bothered when he tries to take my Lego pieces." The youngest boy said, "I'll serve Jesus by driving a big dump truck!" Well, maybe one day he will!

No matter where we are or what we are doing, we can all serve and help Jesus in some way. We talked about how John, the disciple of Jesus, was sent to be on an Island, to try to stop him from telling others about Jesus. However, it only gave him more time for quiet prayer and hearing from the Jesus, and he was able to write a whole book of amazing things that Jesus told him. Millions of people have read that book and learned more about Jesus because of John writing those words down. He could even serve Jesus on a lonely island!

And what about Jonah, after he disobeyed God's instructions to him to go and warn the people of Nineveh that God was very displeased with their unkind and ungodly ways of living? Well, when he was on the ship and it was getting too stormy, he wanted to change and make things right. But what could he do on a ship, out in the middle of a stormy sea? As soon as he started to go God's way in his heart he started to serve the Lord, and he told everyone on the ship about God. As a result of his talking to them, the men on the ship chose to believe in God.

It doesn't matter where you are or what situation you are in, you can always do what Jesus needs you to do. Each day you'll have new chances and new opportunities too. And if you didn't make the right choices yesterday, and instead of serving Jesus you did your own selfish or proud ideas, well, it's not too late to start now. Just tell Jesus you are sorry and He'll forgive you, and be ready to start again today to allow you the privilege of carrying out His important instructions.

When a king or ruler want something done, they don't just give their instructions and important jobs to just anyone. They want to make sure the job will get done good and right and well. They only ask those they trust to help them.

So if Jesus wants you to do something for Him today, it's because He thinks you are important and special, and He wants to give you a chance to be trust worthy. Of course He knows that you will never do everything perfectly. And that's fine! He's powerful and amazing enough to help work things out for good in the end, if you are trying your best and love Him and want to be a faithful servant for Him.

Luke 12:37

Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

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Submission for Activated Mag June 2014 –Success (on stress/ life values/ priorities)

(If you want to cut it down and omit the story, and change the title, that's fine)

At Least the Platypus Got Taken Care Of...

--By Chalsey Dooley

Some days just seem to hold the magic—things go well, new ideas are tried, I have something to show for the hours put into the day. Then there are the other kind of days, where I get to the end of the day, searching my brain for anything noteworthy I can give myself a good pat on the back for, that I accomplished that day, but I can't seem to think of anything.

Sure the kids were cared for, fed, dressed—repeatedly; we read together, they taught themselves new songs on the piano, committed to memory a Bible scripture or two, had fun at the playground, maintained good health and living habits, and so forth... but still I feel I want more.

I want to be able to take out my pen and check off several things from my long list of “to do's”. I want to be able to say I made giant leaps of progress. But rather than that, I feel further behind in so many areas of life. But then I look at the children, happy, cozy in bed, waiting for their bedtime story, and I decide to change my criteria of “accomplishment” and a “good day”.

I mentally go down a new list, and see how many “checks” I could put.

--Did I help the children smile today?

--Was I patient when things weren't the easiest?

--Did I give hugs and show that I loved each one in my family?

--Was I there to help, listen, talk, and encourage whoever needed me then, even at the cost of not “getting something done”?

--Did I send a prayer for someone today, easing their load in some way?

--Did I laugh and choose to take things in stride when I felt like I was being pushed over the edge?

A couple of days ago, as I was trying to push off the weight of despondency and stress from having much to take care of and problems piling faster than I could keep up. I walked into the bathroom and found my toddler, in an impulse of fun, had taken the soft, fuzzy, stuffed-animal platypus, put in the sink plug, given it a good wash, and now had poured baking soda all over it (what I use for cleaning the bathroom). He wanted to make it as clean as could be, taking very good care of it in his tender way.

I didn't need more messes to clean up. I didn't need half the box of baking soda poured out and wasted. But it did look cute in its own way. I decided to see the funny side, and think: "Well, even though I can't seem to get around to any of my other goals, at least the platypus got taken care of. At least that's clean!"

I'm realising that if today I've helped someone have something to smile about, I can mark myself up a big checkmark on my one-of-the-most-important-things-to-do-in-a-day list. Tomorrow's another day. Eventually the rest will all work out. Plod. Breathe. Smile. Plod. Breathe. Smile. We'll get there, eventually, wherever "there" is actually meant to be.

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Published:

THE CLEAN PLATYPUS

By Chalsey Dooley

Some days seem magical—things go well, I try some new ideas, I have something to show for the hours I've spent at various tasks. Then there are other times when I get to the end of the day struggling to find something of note that I accomplished. **Sure, the kids were fed and dressed, they did their home-learning activities, they played in the park** ... but I still feel I want more. I want to be able to check off several things from my long to-do list. I want to be able to say I made leaps of progress. But rather than that, I feel like I'm falling further behind in so many areas of life.

At the end of a long day a few months back, I was trying to push off the weight of despondency from having so much to take care of, with problems piling faster than I could keep up with. Then I walked into the bathroom and found **Patrick (2 years old) had taken his soft, fuzzy, stuffed platypus, filled up the sink, given it a good wash, and now had poured baking soda (which I use for cleaning the sink)** all over it.

I didn't need more messes to clean up. I didn't need half the baking soda poured out and wasted. **But it did look kinda cute, so I chuckled to myself thinking, *Even though I can't seem to get around to any of my other goals, at least the platypus is clean!***

Later, as I looked at the children, happy, cozy in bed, waiting for their bedtime story, I decided to change my criteria for "accomplishment" and a "good day."

Now I go down a new list, and see how many "checks" I can put.

- Did I help my children smile today?
- Was I patient when things didn't go smoothly?

- Did I show each son that I loved him personally?
- Was I available to help, listen, and encourage, even at the cost of not “getting something done”?
- Did I pray for someone today?
- Did I laugh and choose to take things in stride when I felt like I was being pushed over the edge?

Tomorrow’s another day. Eventually the to-do list will work out. Plod. Breathe. Smile. Plod. Breathe. Smile. We’ll get there, eventually, wherever “there” is actually meant to be.

Chalsey Dooley is a writer of inspirational material for children and caregivers and is a full-time edu-mom living in Australia. Check out her website at www.nurture-inspire-teach.com.

It Catches Up

A wonderful miracle occurred—or at least was documented—on March 7th. I’ve had a long, detailed, proactive prayer list for the children. From the time my first child was a baby I kept a list of things to pray for—things I wouldn’t see the effect of or even need the answer to for a few years. But when the time came, the prayers had paved the way. I was so glad. Whatever aspect that I was particularly concerned about facing or happening, was worked out by the time we got to that stage or age.

I’d prayed for good and healthy teeth for my children. I did all I could in the natural as well. But an odd happening seemed to say it hadn’t had much of an effect. Two of my eldest son’s teeth in the front merged together, with just a cavity being a bit of a gap between them. “Well,” I encouraged myself, “perhaps the adult teeth that are yet coming will be good and strong, and that’s where my prayers will pay off.”

When we took him to the dentist to have these merged/ cavity teeth checked out, he took an x-ray. “I’ve never seen this before.” He said. “Besides the adult teeth coming in, there is something else, some other growth there. That’s what’s causing the teeth to be pressed together. Come back in a year and we’ll see what’s happening. It could cause the adult teeth to be hindered in proper growth.”

As the year of waiting was passing, I prayed for whatever “it” was to completely vanish—or for the grace for him to handle whatever we’d face on the next visit, as well as for God’s supply of funds to cover the needs. “We should try to save up over this year for his dental needs,” I was often thinking and suggesting. But during this time we really had no resources to “save”. We got by, and that’s all we could do then.

Thoughts of future surgery and teeth pulling and the like were uncomfortably in my mind. A young child having to go through that wasn't something a mother wished for. Time passed, and we moved to a new country. It'd been a bit over a year since his last dental visit. We wanted to get it checked. Our friends' son's tooth had needed surgery and it cost them in the 4 digits. Where would we come up with the funds to cover it should an operation be needed in our situation? So the appointment came, the x-ray was taken.

Everything was as it should be! The new adult teeth in the gum lined up to emerge later were growing good and right. There was absolutely nothing abnormal to be seen. Whatever the "growth" had been, was gone, vanished—just as I'd prayed for. And all the prayers I prayed for his teeth that I thought hadn't made a difference, had caught up, when we most needed it. I'm a firm believer in proactive prayers. I've seen the effect time and again.

Perceptions of Him

"He must have read a book written by children for children, called, 'Ideas to do after you get out of the bath!' " I thought, humouring the situation, walking myself patiently through it.

Ever tried to bath 3 young kids: the hair washing, the mess of a bathroom, the water usage, the dressing, and all? Okay, well, I could check that off the list. Done. At least that got done today—something to feel that I "accomplished".

Hmm? Then I notice, my dear son, outside the window in the back yard, making a mud puddle, playing with the mud! I tell my husband, "Top ten tips for what to do after a bath..." He looks outside, chuckles too and finishes the sentence, "Go play in the mud." (Okay, so it's 2 steps forward, one step back?.. Oh well.)

As I look at him, with a questioning look, he holds up a handful of newly mown grass in one hand, and stirs his nice muddy water with the other: "Mommy, I'm pretending I'm God! I'm making the land and the water!"

* * *

That morning when my young son woke and I hugged him in my lap, he said to me, "Mommy, you feel like God to me! You don't even feel like a girl right now, but like you are God holding me."

Taken in the right way, it was pretty sweet, and a good reminder—what we show to them of His love, is what they'll know, in real ways, that He is like.

* * *

Our toddler son talks in his own way. The children ask him “how do you say ___?” And he responds with his own word or sound for it. “Go, go” is dog, “Going” is water, “ton” is to get up on something, sha-sha is good bye/ fly away, Daddy is “Da-da” mommy is “Da-ma”, and so forth. “How do you say, ‘daddy is getting in the car?’” the boys ask him: “Key-door, sha-sha da-da”. Then they asked him, “How do you say ‘Jesus?’” Our toddler responds, “Da-da!”

Activated article submission, for the 2014 April mag--Easter

By Koriane (Chalsey Dooley)

31, March, 2013

Easter Memories

Today it's Easter—March 31, 2013. I'm taking a trip down memory lane to the most memorable ones of years past. These experiences remind me of the true meaning of Easter.

Easter 1985:

My family and I were missionaries in Brazil and one Easter we went to a beautiful beach town a four hours' drive away. We went there to camp and reach out to the throngs of tourists and visitors. It was a time when many celebrated this wonderful day. We were welcomed everywhere we went as we sang songs about Jesus and His love. Countless people chose to give their hearts to Him.

The first night at the small campground we invited and gathered all the children and teens who wanted to come, to meet and watch us as we sang to them. We met under a large tarp with a bright camping light. All the children were eager to pray with us and received Jesus as their saviour. It was a highlight of their trip—and was to be mine as well.

Easter is about Jesus' gift of love and life to the world—and our feeling compelled to share it.

That was the Easter I fell in love for the first time—and it was mutual. One of the teen boys that we talked to about Jesus at the campground that night became a part of my heart forever. I'd never known such love, so strong, could exist. I felt there was nothing on Earth that could take this love away. Though years have faded some of the intensity of the emotions, he is forever, indelibly, etched on my heart. During those days of camping was one of the only times we met, but love goes on regardless of physical presence.

Easter is about intense love—Jesus' love for us that would stop at nothing, even death and resurrection, to win us. Our returning the love to Him is deeply fulfilling for Him.

Easter 1986

This new friend and I wrote each other for a year, and met the following Easter—same place, same time. We talked and walked under the stars. When other girls, far more shapely and likeable were around, his eyes were blind. He cared deeply about me. It was as if I was the only one there. When he returned home after that Easter weekend, my heart shattered. Somehow I knew I wouldn't see him again on Earth, but the love went on. I never had another mutual love, until nearly 20 years later, when I met the man who is now my husband.

During those years of loneliness I learned to love more deeply the one that is the creator of love. I formed a close bond with the one who lived in love, and gave His life for love, and rose again to love forever. Knowing the feelings of love that mere humans can feel, who receive but a touch of the feelings that Jesus has for each of us, helped me to grasp how greatly He must love me—and each one of us.

Easter is the celebration of His total devotion to us, and His eternal, unending love for us. Nothing on Earth, will ever stop Him from loving us.

Easter 2005

On Easter 2005, my husband and I were married. In many ways I feel like he represents Jesus to me, and holds so many qualities that are heaven-sent. I often think of the verse where Jesus says that in His absence, He would send to His disciples, "Another comforter." He was to send them the Holy Spirit, to comfort, guide and empower them to do their job. So during this time on Earth, doing His will and telling as many as possible about His gift of love and eternal life, they would never be alone. I'm so thankful for this gift of love that Jesus has granted to me. I'm reminded of His love every time I look at my husband.

Easter is about His eternal existence and loving involvement in our lives. We are His forever, and He will never leave our side. He wants to live with us every moment of every day, because He loves us immeasurably.

Easter 2010

One of the prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus, as He gave His life on the cross, was that not a bone would be broken. In His life, in His death, and in His resurrection, He fulfilled countless predictions given by God to prophets thousands of years before. It was all planned.

An odd coincidence occurred at Easter, 2010. My family was at a park and my four-year-old had a bad fall. I was sure he'd broken his arm. It would have been nearly impossible for him not to have, noting the distance he fell, on to a hard surface on his arm. And by the sound of his cry, and the unbearable pain in his arm, it seemed so. The nearest hospital was called, "Calvary". So we went to Calvary on Easter. Then miracle of all miracles, the X-ray showed there wasn't a single thing wrong with his arm. —Not even the tiniest fracture. The pain subsided after a few days, and he was completely fine. We were so very thankful for that Easter miracle.

Easter isn't just to celebrate the gift of eternal life and the salvation of our spirit. Jesus gave His life and conquered all—that includes the power He has to heal and save our physical bodies. The One who was victor over death itself can restore and bring us healing too—of heart, of mind, and of body.

To Activated, submitting for March 2016 Easter mag

By Koriane

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*Note: I know this is lengthy, but I thought to leave all the letter portions in, so it could be selected from, should it need to be cut down. But I highlighted my favourite parts of John Howe's letter excerpt, as those are the parts I think hold the biggest value—of course all of it is good, but these are the main thoughts and reason why I put the letter here in the first place.

Eternal Embrace

(Or if you think of a better title)

By Chalsey Dooley

In 1683, after being unjustly accused and condemned to die, William Russel invites his family to visit his prison cell where they partake of Holy Communion for the last time. There they remember another Who has walked a similar path, condemned and His life unjustly taken; the One into whose arms Lord Russell is soon to be welcomed—Jesus Christ.

Rachel Russel's love and devotion to her husband was dear, yet her heart to heart union with her Lord and Saviour was far greater; this is was the source of her inner peace and stability through what seemed unbearable heartache. Her wonderful Lord had lived and died and rose again to live forever. He would never leave her side, even though her earthly companion must part with her for a time. The eternal love of Jesus, and this family's hope of an eternity of joy together with each other in the place where no tears need fall, was the light of hope that brought them through this dark corridor.

After the passing of her husband, the Rev. John Howe wrote a most wonderful and lengthily letter of condolence to Rachel Russell. I believe there is not a life in this world that has been untouched by the parting of loved ones, and we can all find deep comfort from these words he penned.

(Excerpts from John Howe's letter to Rachel Russell:)

"The cause of your sorrow, madam, is exceeding great. The causes of your joy are inexpressibly greater. You have infinitely more left than you have lost. Doth it need to be disputed whether God is better and greater than man? Or more to be valued, loved, and delighted in? And whether an eternal relation be more considerable than a temporary one? Was it not your constant sense, in your best outward state, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee, O God, and whom can I desire on earth, in comparison of Thee?' (Psalm lxxiii. 25).

"Herein the state of your ladyship's case is still the same, if you cannot with greater clearness and with less hesitation pronounce these latter words. The principal causes of your

joy are immutable, such as no supervening thing can alter. You have lost a most pleasant, delectable earthly relation. Doth the blessed God hereby cease to be the best and most excellent good? Is His nature changed? His everlasting covenant reversed or annulled, which is ordered in all things, and sure, and is to be all your salvation and all your desire, whether He make your house on earth to grow or not to grow? (2 Samuel xxiii. 5).

"Let, I beseech you, your mind be more exercised in contemplating the glories of that state into which your blessed consort is translated, which will mingle pleasure and sweetness with the bitterness of your afflicting loss, by giving you a daily intellectual participation through the exercise of faith and hope in his enjoyments. He cannot descend to share with you in your sorrows; but you may thus every day ascend and partake with him in his joys."

"Nor should such thoughts excite over-hasty, impatient desire of following presently to heaven, but to the endeavour of serving God more cheerfully on earth for your appointed time, which I earnestly desire your ladyship to apply yourself to, as you would not displease God, who is our only hope; nor be cruel to yourself, nor dishonour the religion of Christians, as if they had no other consolations than the earth can give, and earthly power can take from them. Your ladyship, if any one, would be loth to do anything unworthy of your family and parentage. Your highest alliance is to that Father and family above, whose dignity and honour are, I doubt not, of highest account with you."

Lady Russell gained strength of heart through these and other of his words. She took his advice and turned her heart's affections and devotion to her eternal relationship with Him who never leaves nor forsakes. Though her heart yet remained tender and her fond memories of her late husband were frequent, the stability she found in Jesus' love gave her the fortitude to carry on bravely and raise her children well.

She wrote to a friend,

"Fresh occasions recalling to my memory the dear object of my affections must happen every day, I may say every hour of the longest life I can live. But I must seek such a victory over myself that immoderate passions may not break forth, and I must return into the world so far as to act that part incumbent upon me, in faithfulness to him to whom I owe as much as can be due to man. It may be that I may obtain grace to live a stricter life of holiness to my God, who will not always let me cry to Him in vain. On Him I will wait till He hath pity upon me, humbly imploring that by the mighty aid of His Holy Spirit He will touch my heart with greater love to Himself. Then I shall be what He would have me. But I am unworthy of such a spiritual blessing, who remain so unthankful a creature for those earthly ones I have enjoyed, because I have them no longer. Yet God, who knows our frames, will not expect that when we are weak we should be strong. This is much comfort under my deep dejections."

In another letter she said: "Submission and prayer are all we know that we can do towards our own relief in our distresses. The scene will soon alter to that peaceful and eternal home in prospect."

Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord. (Psalm 31:24)

Faith articles 1-3

(Submitting to Activated for September 2016, on matters of faith—or any other one it suits)

(Though 3 separate articles, you may choose to pick and patch from this and that. As you wish. But if all three are good and used separately in this mag, or in other mags, great. The more funds I get the sooner I can pay for the little Bible story book to be translated into Thai. Waiting on the Lord's supply. Hopefully something here can be used.)

By Chalsey Dooley

23-August, 2015

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Australia

Little Journey of Faith #1 :

My eight-year-old has had his own little journey of faith. All avenues possible in this modern world are employed to convey a very confusing and ultimately self-destructive message—the fable of the evolution of the world. Though he's grown up in a believing household, there still is ample vying done from the other side to try to captivate the young in faith. Even though we, as his parents know from our own life's experience that God is real and loves us; and have learned through solid proofs that the world and each human being and all creatures could only exist due to a creator, still my son—like everyone—had to find out the truth of it for himself.

Over time we've introduced many wonderful bits of information via videos and books from top scientists to our children; from these it's clear to see fact from fiction. My son was fully "converted" and a full believer for himself in our God of love who created us all. Yet, the adversary of our faith is never at rest it seems. My son said to me not too long ago, "Mommy, sometimes I get this thought that Jesus doesn't exist." I knew what he was talking about, as the same bizarre things seem to bombard through the air at just about everyone. I didn't put him down for thinking such things; I too have had the same crazy thoughts. But I told him that I remind myself that I am real and am here, and the world is real and all around us, and it didn't just get here from nothing. So there must be Someone—an eternal Someone—that made it all. Even he knows the science of that.

When he learned from his uncle who is a scientist, that explosions don't occur unless there is oxygen, that gave him something to give others to think about: There is no oxygen in the universe—so how could a "big bang" happen? He's smart and puts two-and-two together and finds out the facts and discards the fanciful fairytales. But I think in my life, and in the lives of my children, the biggest proof of the reality of Jesus is the way He intervenes in

answer to our prayers. Last week this boy was sick with a cough. He is so rarely ever ill that it can be a bit of a shock and hard for him to handle it patiently. The frequent coughing was annoying, and it had moved to his chest. *How long will this go on*, I wondered. It wouldn't be uncommon for a cough to linger for weeks, and it wasn't showing any signs of letting up. Not wishing for any delay however, the children and I took some time to pray with all our hearts for healing. Then, as if to make the point of the listening ear of Jesus and how He is there and ready on-call to help, He saw fit to do something wonderful. After praying and asking for immediate healing and relief, within that hour the cough had vanished! This boy went to bed a few hours later and slept, at last, in total still silence throughout the night—and that was the end of it. These things help to strengthen all our faith.

God says Hello #2 :

God's always on the lookout for ways to say hello and let us know He is right on hand. Just last night a large group of primarily unbelievers were attempting to stargaze. The one leading the event has tried hard to look the other way when God tries to get his attention. But last night even he couldn't help but acknowledge the wonder. The clouds were covering the sky, and it was looking like after all that was put into it, it would be a big embarrassment and failed attempt. Yet for some reason after phoning his Christian brother and telling him of the problem, then like a curtain pulled back on a stage at just the right moment, the clouds parted and moved away and all was well. "Did you pray?" he asked his brother. Yes, God likes to let us know He's there. Faith in Jesus is never wrongly placed.

For those who think it might be, I'd like to say it's the "safest" option, in my opinion. If none of the Christian faith is true—and after this life we find out that there never was a heaven or Jesus, well, if we have lived like it was a fact, all our life, we will have lost nothing, and only gained peace and love and goodness filling our life on Earth. And if it is true, and we have lived like it was, then we will also gain a marvellous eternity with unending rewards for our faith in Jesus and for doing our best to love and please him.

However, if we think, "just in case it isn't true, I'll look the other way and pretend God doesn't exist," then the stakes are much higher. What if it all is true? If we lived ignoring God and endured all the sorrow, hurt, troubles and loneliness that a godless life causes, and then find out that we have to meet God face-to-face and answer for ourselves, we'll be pretty embarrassed and saddened that we not only made our life on Earth a whole lot harder than it needed to be, but will have missed out on a heap of joyful rewards that we could have be enjoying for eternity. It's just common sense to take the safest route, if you still have yet to discover the truth of God's love and reality for yourself. But I bet the moment someone chooses to look God's way and allows Him into their life and gives Jesus a chance to prove Himself, it won't be long until He does just that.

The passage in the Bible that says, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" was referring to how we can't see Jesus just yet, as "while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the

Lord". Paul goes on to say that he's sure most of us would rather be present with the Lord, but reminds us all that we have a job to do. We are ambassadors of Christ, and will one day return to our homeland. Though it takes being away from the seeable-hearable-touchable presence of Jesus while here on Earth, we are to do our best to make Jesus pleased. We will all one day appear before Him; that is certain. But how glad we will feel when facing him for the review of our lives, that is up to us and our choices here and now. (2 Corinthians 5)

Faith in God's Care Rewarded #3 :

I love hearing the heart-warming and faith-strengthening accounts in the lives of others as they describe the ways God had worked and proved Himself faithful. It multiplies my own faith and shields it. I think our faith can fall or grow according to what we take in with our eyes and ears. Reading God's Word is the best way to keep up our spiritual immune system against attacks on our faith, and a close second is reading stories from the lives of those who believe God's Word and have put it to the test and can proclaim from personal experience how God has proven true to His Word. Recently I read a wonderful narration from James Hudson Taylors book, "A Retrospect":

*November 18th, 1857, he penned: "Many seem to think that I am very poor. This certainly is true enough in one sense, but I thank GOD it is "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things." (1 Corinthians 6:10) And my GOD shall supply **all** my need; to Him be all the glory. I would not, if I could, be otherwise than I am--entirely dependent myself upon the LORD, and used as a channel of help to others."*

On Saturday, our regular home mail arrived. That morning we supplied, as usual, a breakfast to the destitute poor, who came to the number of seventy. Sometimes they do not reach forty, at others again exceeding eighty. They come to us every day, LORD'S Day excepted, for then we cannot manage to attend to them and get through all our other duties too. Well, on that Saturday morning we paid all expenses, and provided ourselves for the morrow, after which we had not a single dollar left between us.

*How the LORD was going to provide for Monday we knew not; but over our mantelpiece hung two scrolls in the Chinese character--**Ebenezer**, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12); and **Jehovah-Jireh**, "The LORD will provide" (Genesis 22:8,14)--and He kept us from doubting for a moment.*

That very day the mail came in, a week sooner than was expected, and Mr. Jones received a bill for two hundred and fourteen dollars. We thanked GOD and took courage. The bill was taken to a merchant, and although there is usually a delay of several days in getting the change, this time he said, "Send down on Monday." We sent, and though he had not been able to buy all the dollars, he let us have seventy on account; so all was well. Oh, it is sweet to live thus directly dependent upon the LORD, who never fails us!

On Monday the poor had their breakfast as usual, for we had not told them not to come, being assured that it was the LORD'S work, and that the LORD would provide. We could not help our eyes filling with tears of gratitude when we saw not only our own needs

supplied, but the widow and the orphan, the blind and the lame, the friendless and the destitute, together provided for by the bounty of Him who feeds the ravens. "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His Name together. . . . Taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. O fear the LORD, ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing"--and if not good, why want it?

Contributions to July 2014 mag on "Joy"

From Koriane (Chalsey Dooley), Australia

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Just laugh

I was exhausted, and had used up my last ounce of umph, and was giving myself timeout, to sit, put up my feet, and hope to deal with things nicely, when I'd recharged a few droplets of strength to do so.

Today was the day of the week we take all bedding and air it in the sun. Great fun for the kids, as they play on the bouncy mattresses, and make wombat homes in the pile of blankets and pillow play on the sunny trampoline.

However, getting it back on takes a long time—and the kids delay it as long as possible. The clock was ticking; soon the youngest would need to be put to bed. If I didn't get this done before night fell, and sleep time began, none of us would have proper beds to sleep on, or so I told them.

Funny how it is, the thing that has been untouched and forgotten about for hours, the second you as a parent begin to clean it up or work on it, it is all of a sudden the desired item.

Like bees to honey, I had just reached for the bedding, when the boys from all ends of the house descend on me, instinctively knowing it was about to be "back to normal" again. I tried to push onward, tolerating the crawling, bouncing, and such. But it really wasn't doable.

Finally, after trying my hardest, I just couldn't manage it. I had no strength or patience left. I went to sit down, leaving a sad boy. He felt my frustration, wondering why I wasn't having just as much fun as they were, romping around on mattresses and blankets.

Perhaps I could indulge in a few tears, relieve the pressure, and then get up and on with things... Nope. My toddler has this instinct telling him when I'm going to cry. He gets up from his play on the floor, climbs into my lap, looking closely at my

face, “mama, mama.. ha..ha..mama!” trying to get me to laugh instead. He’s gotta be a cherub in person. He’s totally cute.

Ah, okay, fine, I’ll hold it together, smile and muster up a laugh.

The sad son comes in. I tell him to enjoy the bedding now, because as soon as I find the strength to try again, well, that will be my last attempt. If they hinder me again, I won’t have strength left, and it might be wombat beds for night time, in a rubble of blankets—or they’d have to make them.

“Mummy, I lost the joy of playing there...Remember what I was telling you earlier about how I feel sometimes...I’m getting that feeling now.” (*He’d said that sometimes when he does bad things, and he’s afraid I’ll find out, he gets this bad feeling, wondering if I’ll stop loving him.*) Oh, dear. My attempted self-indulgent moment just ended, I needed to get on the offensive to get the smiles going again, in hearts and on faces.

“Okay, count to 20, and I’m going to be hiding in the bedding... come and find me!” I say.

The laughter and surprise when I popped out from under a blanket, making silly sounds and all—repeatedly—was worth it. It changed everyone. And after that they willingly let me fix it all up “properly” again. Really, they just want things to be fun, that’s all.

Re5! 016: Rainbows in the dark

--By Chalsey Dooley

(When pondering on this write-up, the other morning, something interesting occurred. The children had troubles in the night, and the baby wasn’t feeling well as the day dawned. The room was very dim, but not all dark, as the sun was slowly starting to rise, and a faint tint of light turned the walls to grey, rather than dark. I was thinking of this article, as it had been a trying night, with the children’s various difficulties, and I was on the verge of tears already. Then we looked up to the wall, and saw the closest thing we could to a “rainbow in the dark”. There was a large arch on the wall, in a darker grey than the rest of the wall. It could have been formed by some shadow of some light somewhere, perhaps. But to us it was a touch of God’s love, reminding us of the rainbows we could have in our hearts, through our tears and hard times. We were in His loving hands. We were going to have a great day.)

I’m reminded of a song I learned when I was young. “If your heart keeps right, you can find a rainbow in the darkest night.” I never fully understood what it was saying, then. But it’s a wonderful concept. There will always be something good to notice, even when things seem as black as night. As

a child I never understood the “heart keeping right” part, or it didn’t seem attainable. I thought it meant to always feel happy, never making a wrong move, nor marred with regret of some childish wrong doing, or negative feeling. That I was to always feel joyful about doing everything I was supposed to do. Rather, my heart was filled with emotional ups and downs, and I seemed to be always feeling bad about something. But now when I ponder those words I think about a sunflower. It has to be in the right position to get the sun’s rays full on, and to grow in the fastest, strongest way. Perhaps having the heart right, and being able to see the good no matter what, is simply looking to the light. It’s looking at Jesus, to want to see and know His love, to want to get His take on a situation, to stand tall knowing the light of His love is what makes me grow, and is what will nurture me.

While looking out the window one rainy day, feeling the squeeze of personalized difficulties, the following words began to come to me. I typed them in the night while the children slept.

Rain fall, blend with mine, wash my eyes, restore my sight

Sunshine, make me whole, cleanse my soul, shed your light

Rainbow there, magic bend, showing good that troubles send.

Wipe my tears now washed with rain, restore my strength, bring joy again.

Delight my soul, once aching sore, give me grace down to my core

Flower drear, let me water, with the rain flow that I’ve felt

You too will see the rainbow that can come from darkened skies.

Light your eyes, to see the blessings that come to us in disguise.

And oddly enough, the following day, there were rainbows displayed brightly in the sky at two different times—morning and afternoon. Rare enough to see one, much less twice in a day!

Taking into account those who have lost their homes, loved ones, or face great hardship or loss in some way, does have a way of making even the biggest challenges we face seem rather minuscule comparatively. I have a house, even electricity and running water, food & clothes, and I’m with my family. Even the toughest moments in a day could seem like yearned-for bliss to those who have little or nothing, or have lost it all in a sudden calamity, or the ravages of war or greed have left them torn. But still, regardless of state or fortune, life works its magic on us all, and to-the-man, at times we all can feel we’re tackling or enduring things that make us “stretch” or take us to our limit, and perhaps a bit beyond.

None are exempt from growth or heartache, from sorrow or pain, from loss or loneliness, from health struggles or accidents, or from being handicapped in some way—physically, mentally, socially, financially, healthwise or whatnot. Not wanting to belittle the plight of any, nor to shrug off each of our responsibility to help each other out on this planet, but for those who struggle with seeing the seemingly great imbalance and terrific hardship of others, I’d like to say I believe that in some way things do or will yet balance out—eventually.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5: 3,4,9, KJV)

Babylove

Maybe I'm just a softy, but when I see someone with a tiny baby, I just think it's the most beautiful thing on earth—the bravest women holding the most lovable, tender little thing. As a Christmas deed my family and I made and took gift bags for the mothers and babies in hospital who gave birth just before or on Christmas day.

Though we didn't have the means to fill the shiny bags with expensive items, they were things that would be useful and appreciated. Like Jesus said in the Bible, “As you have done it unto one of least of these... you have done it to Me”. So since we weren't there at the first Christmas, to bring something to the baby Jesus, at least we could bring some supplies to these little ones born today.

It felt wonderful. I wish I could do it every day. I know the feeling of being in the recovering part as well as being on the threshold of starting a life with this new tiny person. Every bit of encouragement from others when you have a new little one is always welcome—especially when it's words put into action.

It reminded me of when I was “there” too. It is a special time of bonding as you prepare to be a team for the next (hopefully) long while. Each baby is so unique, special, and isn't without cost. They are like both the trophy for a victory won, as well as the next challenge all wrapped up in one. And each new baby holds special secret treasures, often known in full by the mother alone, in those first beautiful days of life.

Here's one of my little treasures:

The first time I ever called my second son by his name, he knew it. It was as if he always did. We thought he was going to be born a girl—as the doctor said it was 80% chance to be a girl. So we didn't even choose a boy name. Then “he” was born, and over the phone (as my husband had to travel suddenly, and I had to have an unexpected, early C-section), we had to come up with a name! I remembered the name I'd always wanted to give a future child, that I'd chosen years before getting

married. So while nursing my one-day-old new baby I looked down and was talking to him, then asked him, "Is your name _____?" And he did the most amazing thing. He stopped nursing at the second I said aloud the name and turned his face up and smiled at me. And from that moment on, whenever I said his name, his eyes got a certain knowing look, different than when I was just talking to him. It was one of the many special treasures this one brought with him.

Thank God for new babies, new beginnings, and new years!

Submission for sept 2014 activated mag

From Koriane (Chalsey Dooley)

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There are so many heroic, great things parents and caretakers, as well as community service people, do each day, that God alone knows. But if medals were given out and hung up, the walls wouldn't have space for pictures! Here are the lyrics of great song my husband wrote, expressing appreciation for the many "unsung heroes",

Unsung Hero

By Michael Dooley

I saw you when no one noticed,
I watched you from day to day,
Observed your humble spirit,
Admired your simple ways.
I wondered what it had cost you
To so willingly play your part?
Until I could not hold back
The words that filled my heart:
You are the unsung hero
Letting your hopes and dreams go
That other lives may find what they're dreaming of,
Giving yourself to the uttermost,
Holding on no matter what the cost.

In all the world there is no greater love.
I've wanted so much to tell you,
But words seem so hard to find
To show the admiration
I feel so deep inside.
All of those unseen labours
That nobody seems to see
Are making your crown in Heaven
That will shine eternally.
I couldn't do what I do.
Without you there to help me through.
Our lives would know an emptiness
Without your love and faithfulness.

It reminds me of the story I heard about the rescuing of John Wesley, the famous preacher, when he was boy. He was in burning building, and some caring man noticed him still up there, climbed up and got him out. We don't know that man's name or anything else about him. But we've sure heard of John Wesley.

If someone hadn't been there at the right time and making the right decisions, his name would not only have been forgotten, it probably wouldn't ever have been heard of. And worse yet, the countless people that John Wesley helped to bring close to the Lord wouldn't have heard from him either.

Even if we are never heard of, and become as invisible stage hands in a great play, let's do our part well, and give others our care. We'll get our name lit up one day, if not now. But mostly, we'll feel such satisfaction at seeing the ripple effect in many other's lives because of our efforts. Who knows what the future holds—for those we help, or for us?

To Activated for the Feb 2014 mag on love and friendship

(From Chalsey Dooley, Australia)

I submitted this last year in July. I never heard if it was to be used before, so I'm resending part of it. I selected a portion of it here to submit for this mag. GBY! --Koriane

How Jesus says: I love you!

I think one of the main things that has drawn my heart to want to be closely knit with Jesus' heart has been the personalized touches of His love that He's given me. I relate to that poem that says,

*I've found a Friend, O such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him.*

(By James G. Small)

He does special things in each of our lives—sometimes we notice, many times we don't, and other times we notice but don't peg the credit right. It must be sad for Him, but Jesus loves us too much to give up. On and on throughout our life He just keeps trying to say and to show us those three wonderful words: I love you!

As a teen struggling with endless emotions and loneliness, I needed such love in as tangible a form as was possible from the One I had given my heart and life to. On a walk I saw by the side of the road the tiniest, cutest little pansy. It was adorable. I'd never seen this miniature version of pansies before. I picked it, and held it carefully all the way home. The blossom was no bigger than my fingernail, and the stem only as long as my finger. I placed it in a paper cup on my bedside, trying to extend its expected short life as much as I could. A week passed and it still sat there in the water as good as new, cheery and bright. I was happy.

Then the most curious thing occurred—a “never before, never since” thing. From its tiny stem there were roots growing. Roots, that in a short time only got longer and stronger. I planted it in a flower pot, and with joy saw it grow into a plant with many other blossoms. My creator—the One Who makes plants to grow as well—was there with me, continuing to create of my life what He wanted, molding me through the ups and downs, and bringing blossoms of joy my way.

Many years later when at last I was married, and continuing on the roller coaster of life with the challenges and thrills of parenthood, a puzzling, scientific phenomenon occurred—at least I've never heard of it being possible. To set the scene: It happened at a time when my husband was compelled to be gone for 6 months (refused visa entry into the country we had been staying and working in as volunteers). I was caring for our one year old with all his health issues, while pregnant with our second child, and ending in a sudden, unexpected C-section. I was then caring for the baby too. My husband couldn't enter the country, and I couldn't leave the country till we had the passport and paperwork for the new baby.

Ever heard of an egg that after being boiled, painted by a child to resemble a bird's egg, placed in a decorative nest, displayed on the shelf for several months—and then when it was opened one day, was found to have turned into golden coloured glass? It was like an amber stone, or glass. It didn't smell in the least. It didn't go bad. It was hard and clear as glass, and amber in colour.—The “white” of the egg, that is. I still have it. Perhaps my heart was like that egg—cooked in the hot water of the difficult situation. Then God gave strength and faith, as good as gold or jewels. We came through, and the better for it.

As the days, months, years—and yes, decades—pass, I've learned to know and love Him personally through countless special touches and displays of His love, in ways that would seem

totally insignificant when compared to all the change and miracles that are needed in the world—but made a world of difference to me. He won me—forever, through His love. And faith alone tells me that I make a difference to Him, and that’s why He’d even bother to. “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

Published:

HOW JESUS SAID, “I LOVE YOU!”

By Chalsey Dooley, adapted

I think one of the main things that makes me want to be closely knit with Jesus’ heart has been the personalized touches of His love that He’s given me. I relate to that poem that says,

I've found a Friend, O such a Friend!

He loved me ere I knew Him;

He drew me with the cords of love,

And thus He bound me to Him.

—*James Grindlay Small (1817–1888)*

He does special things in each of our lives—sometimes we notice, many times we don’t, and other times we notice but don’t peg the credit right. It must be sad for Him, but Jesus loves us too much to give up. On and on throughout our life, He just keeps saying and showing us those three wonderful words: I love you!

As a teen struggling with a myriad of powerful emotions and intense loneliness, I needed to feel that love in a tangible form. One day, while on a walk, I saw by the side of the road the cutest, most adorable miniature pansy. I picked it and held it carefully all the way home. The blossom was no bigger than my fingernail, and the stem only as long as my finger. I placed it in a paper cup on my bedside, trying to extend its expected short life as much as I could. A week passed, and it still sat there in the water, as good as new, cheery and bright. I was happy.

Then the most curious thing occurred—a “never before, never since” event, in my experience. From the pansy’s tiny stem, roots began growing, which soon extended longer and stronger. I planted it in a flowerpot, and with joy saw it grow into a plant with many other blossoms. I was amazed, but also reassured that my creator—the One Who made my pansy grow from nothing—was there with me, molding me through the ups and downs, and bringing blossoms of joy my way.

As the days, months, years—and yes, decades—pass, I’ve learned to better know and love God through countless special touches and displays of His love. Many of these would seem totally insignificant when compared to all the change and miracles that are needed in the entire world—but they’ve made a world of difference to *me*. He’s proven to me that I matter to Him, and in return, He has won my love forever. As the Bible says, “We love Him because He first loved us.”[[1 John 4:19]]

KNOWN TO HIM

By Chalsey Dooley

I guess I'm in the season of life where I'm too occupied living life and keeping up with all my projects and everything I need to do as a mother, caretaker, teacher, and wife that I just don't have time to write blog posts and letters to friends about myself.

It's not like I never miss it, though. There are times when I just want there to be someone who knows what's going on, who can laugh with me at the funnies, smile at the kids' new accomplishments, give an e-hug and encourage me through the new challenges, someone I can tell the daily struggles and updates to, who is "on the same page" as I am. There's a difference between telling someone who's trying their best to listen—but not really getting it—and someone who really, really knows exactly what you are feeling and expressing, and what level of importance something you're saying holds in your heart.

Growing up, I never had many friends. My biggest lament as a teen was that I didn't know how to make friends. In a way, I'm glad I got used to being a loner, to the point that now I totally enjoy it. I don't seek out or crave big social events and partying, but in my own way, I enjoy the rich and full life I am blessed to have.

I have the best husband I could have dared to hope for and love being with my children more than doing anything else in the world. I can tell my husband lots—and try to, in the midst of the busy life we both lead. We try to listen, encourage, and be the friend the other needs. But our areas of expertise, and our focuses, wavelengths, dreams, and all are different—and need to be, in order to cover everything that needs to be covered in our home and family, making a well-rounded base for our children's growth and care.

Once upon a time, I opened a Facebook account ... but don't bother looking for me! Even if you find me, you'll just be disappointed at my blank, empty space! It was an attempt to hook up with old friends I'd lost contact with during a few years of travel, followed by marriage, beginning a family, and moving to a new country. But instead of feeling a sense of "home" and excitement at reigniting fun, cozy friendships, I had the unexpected reaction of tinges of depression. The glimpses I got of my friends' lives were like splashes of cold water. They had all moved on and were doing quite fine without me! No matter how close we had been, and all the secrets and dreams, fun times, laughs, and tears we had shared, it was all water under the bridge, as life flowed along.

Thankfully, within the next day or two, unexpected sources of friendship poked their heads up, all at the right time to lift my spirits. A few unexpected emails and phone calls, a couple of visits, and even a handwritten note. Someone "up there" knew, and timed these right. I pulled through and am back to my happy self again. I also rarely—if ever—visit Facebook.

The thing is, I realized that doesn't mean the friendship I had with these people is ended. If any of my seemingly long-gone friends were in need and asked me to help and be there for them, I absolutely would, and I'm pretty sure they feel the same way. I saw I needed to adjust my thinking and not have it so centered on, "A friend is only someone who contacts me daily and showers me with notes and updates, is always there to listen to me, and who makes me feel important to their happiness." Our friendship is just in a different phase from where it used to be, and there's nothing wrong with that.

Then the most encouraging thought of all came this morning: *God* keeps a blog of my life! Even though I don't have time to write a diary, a blog, or heaps of personal letters with a play-by-

play account of my life, He knows it all and is keeping track. My every move, thought, action, word, decision, tear, smile, emotion, illness, adventure, scrape, thrill, idea, and dream has been and is being recorded. It could be an uncomfortable thought in some cases, I suppose. But today I'm glad for it.

Even if I never get around to writing a book about my life, that's being taken care of. And I have a friend 24/7 to talk with and listen to, who knows how my heart feels every moment of the day. Jesus is the best!

PAUSING TO CARE

By Chalsey Dooley

I don't know how she did it, but the cashier woman's eyes peered right into mine. I'd been discovered. I had tried to avoid eye contact as I was finishing the grocery shopping. More embarrassing than being seen in public coping with a rare meltdown would be someone discovering the "nothing to cry about" interaction that had triggered it.

I was holding it together—as long as I didn't have to talk. My husband tried to phone me, but I couldn't respond. It would have been messy (and noisy) if I attempted to communicate anything at all.

Then it was my turn at the checkout. I knew from past experience that in this store the cashiers work like automatons, processing items in a jiffy. That was fine by me. I was ready for the speedy processing and looked forward to getting out of there as soon as possible—before I let it all out.

Then she *had* to ask me, "How's it going?" And it wasn't a casual don't-care-what-you-say greeting. She actually wanted an answer.

"It's nothing, nothing..." I tried to say, wanting to just get on with it. But for the first time ever—I mean ever, in that store—the kind woman cashier wouldn't touch a single item of my shopping waiting to be scanned until I told her what that problem was.

Yes, there were people in line waiting, and her skill at her job was no doubt being monitored. But I was made to feel more important than everything else. I was shocked. Somehow it cushioned the embarrassment I would have felt blubbing about it.

If I could have said something like, "I found out I have breast cancer" or "My best friend died," I would have felt justified in raking in as much sympathy as possible. But I knew that sharing what had actually happened just wouldn't have the same pathos. Yet I got the impression that this woman who cared enough to sincerely ask how I was doing was going to treat me with compassion, no matter what in the world I was sniveling about—just because *I* was important to her.

Seeing I wasn't going to get out of it, I responded briefly, "I kept someone waiting in line at another store, and she made a big deal of it!"

My day had started at 3 am, when my baby woke and couldn't fall back asleep, and the tiredness and stress had coalesced at the wrong time and place!

First, it turned out that I shouldn't have been in the "express line," because I had miscalculated the number of items in my basket and ended up with several more than the limit.

Then when it was time to pay, I went blank and couldn't remember my PIN number! The next lady in line wouldn't let up and began verbally harassing me. Meanwhile, the cashier continued her patient reminders that, "You just need to enter your PIN, Ma'am."

I found out that there is something more stressful than being late and having a customer in front of you hold up the line—that is *being* that costumer! I finally stepped aside for a moment to pray, and thankfully, the number came back to me. After apologizing to the lady behind me—whose response was cold and unforgiving—I quietly left, tearing up.

The contrast between what happened in that checkout lane and in the second shop was so stark. After I had experienced being misunderstood, unforgiven, pressured, put under stress, treated as though I was the root of the world's problems, this woman made me feel important and cared for, worth more than time or money. The kind lady even ran off to get me a handful of tissues. All embarrassment was covered in a warm blanket of care.

The world doesn't usually pause because I have a tear to shed, and it felt good! I was reminded how important love is, and how painful and hurtful it can be when we are too focused on what we have to do that we neglect to make those around us feel important.

Chalsey Dooley is a writer of inspirational material for children and caretakers and is a full-time edu-mom living in Australia.

[Sidebar:]

During my second year of nursing school our professor gave us a quiz. I breezed through the questions until I read the last one: "What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?" Surely this was a joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank.

Before the class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our grade. "Absolutely," the professor said. "In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello." I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy.

—Joann C. Jones

Pith of Christmas

By Chalsey Dooley

(Koriane, login: chakoriq, Australia, cha.koriq@gmail.com)

I was glad to find out the origins of "boxing day". I'd always wondered. No, it wasn't for "boxing up the gifts you got to get a refund or replacement from the shop", nor to put away the wrappings and boxes strewn all over the living room floor.

At Christmas time people would bring their gifts and offerings for those in need, to the Church or a central location. The day after Christmas these items would be boxed up and delivered to those who needed them. That puts a whole new spin on things; the right focus. Christmas was and is and should always be a time for giving to others—preferably those who have little or next to nothing. I believe Christmas is to be a time a gift giving; not mere gift exchanging.

When Jesus was dining with wealthy company who had invited Him, He suggested a revolutionary approach to their future dinner parties: Invite those who couldn't return the favour. Give something to someone from whom you expect nothing in return. Thanks and reward will always be passed back to the giver, God will see to that. If you give to those who really don't need that extra item, and they give back something that you likewise just stuff in your overfilled closet, then you are square and payed back, so to speak. But giving to those who can't offer a payback, as a deed of love in the name of Jesus, well then it's His debt to fill.

My husband and I decided on our yearly Christmas custom. We want our children to feel joy taken to a higher level, by setting the example of finding joy through giving to those far outside of our circle of friends; to those who might not make it through the next year without our humble gifts towards their wellbeing spiritually and physically. It might seem rather peculiar to our friends and relatives that have grown up with the habit of gift swapping, that we're choosing a fresh, new "back to the good ol' way" approach. Our gifts to them will have a very different feel and flavour... "a pair of chickens for an impoverished family..." or "a lamb given that will produce wool for a needy household..." or "sponsoring reading lessons for women, who can then read the story of the birth of Jesus for the first time, and teach the Bible to others."

This year my gift to my husband, and his to me, is to save up a portion of our tithe that we give for God's work and sponsor a bicycle for a missionary, who travels on foot in hot lands to reach those who have never heard the Christmas story. Now that's a gift that feels special—every time we think about it for the next 365 days and more. That echoes the pith of Christmas. If we all start the fever of giving beyond our own micro communities to enable the best gift of all to be given—the gift of Jesus' love and salvation—the true joy of Christmas will ring throughout the world. All the angels will rejoice and celebrate with the One Who's birthday we are commemorating.

Submission for activated mag: May 2014--God and me (on prayer, anecdote)

Love, Koriane (cha.korIQ@gmail.com)

Praying for Others

--By Chalsey Dooley

I've been reading the most remarkable book on prayer, printed in the 1920's. My heart rings out, along with the writer, that prayer brings action and results, most assuredly. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (Matthew 21:22) One

incident the writer related impressed on me, as it stirred my heart to realise how important are our prayers for others—for those we simply think about.

Mr. Goforth and his wife were dedicated missionaries in spite of tremendous difficulty and challenge. Yet they persevered for decades, through countless near-death scenarios. They attribute their success and protection to the prayers of many for them. One such anecdote expresses this succinctly.

Though tirelessly studying and practicing the Chinese language, Mr. Goforth was unable to make himself understood. Nearly in despair, fearing his inability to speak well would render him useless in his mission, he went out once again to attempt leading others to the Lord. When he returned his face was alight, radiating with joy. What had happened? A miracle had taken place. For as he went to speak, words and sentences began forming in his mind and were spoken through his lips as never before. Not only was he well understood, but sought after with earnest by those wishing to know about Jesus and hear the message this man had come to tell them. Astounded by this occurrence and breakthrough, it was noted in his diary.

The soul-moving part of the story unfolded two months later when a letter arrived from aboard. A prayer meeting had been held, and this missionary couple were the topic of prayer. One of the members who attended that meeting wrote asking if anything notable had occurred on a certain day—at the time of their fervent prayers for Mr. and Mrs. Goforth. A quick look in his journal showed the wonder, the mystery, the joy—for it was on just that day when Mr. Goforth was able to suddenly speak the challenging language with enough clarity as to bring many to know the Saviour.

Hearing this causes me to ponder: Did I think about someone today? Did I pray for those I was reminded of? Perhaps the Lord brought them to mind so I would give them the urgent help needed, through prayer. Jesus may be waiting for me to pray so a timely miracle can be released. Perhaps the ball is in my court. A lot may be awaiting my prayers. Through turning a thought into a prayer I'll pass it on, and we'll all be winners.

(I found the book, "How I know God Answers Prayer" on <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/26033>)