

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement For The Real World

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"—2 Peter 3:9

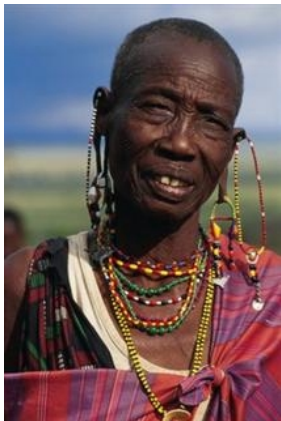
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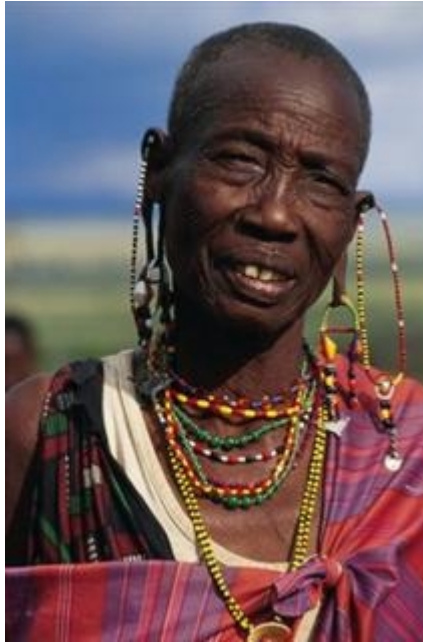
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Everyone Will Have a Fair Chance!

By Robert Berendt

Life in this world is certainly not fair. Some wonder about the next life. Does the Bible's teaching of a second resurrection mean a second chance? Or is it really a first chance—a fair chance to avoid the "second death" and live happily forever?



FOR THE FIRST 26 YEARS of my life, I did not give much thought to the distant future. I didn't give much thought to death and dying! It did seem a little strange that everyone went to heaven. I never heard a funeral in which the minister said, "This guy has gone to hell"—no matter how loathsome his reputation.

I gave no more than a passing thought to the billions of people who know nothing about Christ. They were pagans and Christianity had condemned them to hell. It seems every religion condemns everyone else to hell!

What happens to those who die never having learned about Christ?

What's all this about resurrections?

As I began to study the Bible, I was enthralled with the story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to which over 500 people bore witness (1 Corinthians 15:6). But that wasn't the only resurrection I discovered. I found scriptures about the "better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35)—the "first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5). In fact I was surprised to find the concept of "resurrection" tied to everything the Bible says about our afterlife.

I found scriptures telling of the resurrection of the whole nation of Israel—people who had not followed God's ways and were in fact cut off from God (Ezekiel 37). Romans 11:26 tells us that all Israel *will* be saved—that is a future event, since most of Israel caused God such grief that He divorced Himself from the nation (Isaiah 50:1).

Most Christians believe that God is fair and just, but they can't really answer the question, What happens to those who die never having learned about Christ? God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). It follows that since God is perfectly just, fair and reliable, He will not allow anyone to be condemned who has not had a full and complete chance to be saved. All humans must have a chance to receive eternal life.



No chance?

Most of mankind has not known God or Jesus Christ and has had no chance whatever to be saved. That is the only conclusion one can reach. Pagans have no chance, babies have no chance, mentally infirm people have no chance, the ignorant have no chance, those born into evil have no chance and so on. The list just grows.

Most of mankind has never had a chance to repent and accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which is the only way one receives eternal life (Acts 4:12). Wow! This was big stuff! With an Almighty God—One who is seated on the throne of mercy and One who loves the whole world—it cannot be permitted that people who never had a chance should be relegated to no future.



The Scriptures help us to understand that there will be a resurrection to physical life of all those who never had a chance. They must have a chance that is perfectly equivalent to all those who have their names written in the Book of Life. Skin color, geographic location, language, culture—all do not, and cannot, matter.

What a delight to understand that the dead who are not in the first resurrection will live and will know the truth! God will open their graves and then their minds, and they will understand (John 5:24-29). Not a great deal is written about this momentous event, but God's fairness would be contradicted if humans were relegated to "hell" without ever being able to make a choice. Satan is God's adversary and he would like humans to think God is unfair and unjust.

The Bible teaches that there is no work, device, knowledge or wisdom in the grave where we all go (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10). Our thoughts perish. Those who have died "in Christ" will be raised in the first resurrection that takes place at His second coming (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This is a resurrection with a new body composed of spirit that never dies (1 Corinthians 15:50-55).

All who have not died "in Christ" and who have never been called by God and never received a chance to be converted must be resurrected and then be given that chance. This can be called the second resurrection since it is not the first, but another. This resurrection is to physical life to allow humans to be reeducated in the way of God. This resurrection comes after Jesus Christ has ruled the earth for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:5).

God will open their graves and then their minds, and they will understand (John 5:24-29).

The books of the Bible will be opened to their understanding, and they will be given time to live what they have learned and to be judged “by the things which were written in the books” (Revelation 20:12). The Book of Life will also be opened to allow new names to be written in it.

The second death

The second death is mentioned in Revelation 20:6, 14-15. This death is reserved for people who have been offered the sacrifice of Christ to cover their sins, but who have then rejected that offering. Hebrews 6:4-6 tells us about the result of finally rejecting God’s loving offer. God will only grant eternal life to those whom He has tested and who have proven to be faithful to Him and His will. Until humans prove that to God, they cannot be given eternal life. God will not have another Satan on His hands.



This is a logical and loving solution and conclusion to God’s efforts. Only people who have been given a full chance and who have failed by their own choice will be in the second death. This is an act of supreme love and mercy on God’s part.

Surely there will be very few people who will turn away from this wonderful work God will do. The vast majority of mankind who have died in their sins will wake up, be reeducated, understand the purpose of life and the purpose of Jesus Christ and repent and be baptized. This will be the great harvest that is reflected in God’s Holy Days and that the Bible talks about (Matthew 13:36-43).

There is still time, while you draw breath, to be part of the first resurrection—the better resurrection. You can know and you can join the throng that is walking with Christ. Request our free booklets, [What Happens After Death?](#) and [God’s Holy Day Plan—The Promise of Hope for All Mankind](#). You will come to a greater love and appreciation of our Great Creator. He is just, fair, loving and perfect in every way.

What a delightful and exciting plan! Truly God is most wonderful. He is worthy of honor, praise and worship for all eternity.

The Worst Disease of Our Time

By Rex Sexton

“Of all the diseases I have known, loneliness is the worst.”—Mother Teresa



MOTHER TERESA SAW PEOPLE DIE from virtually every affliction known in the third world. In her hospitals she treated people suffering from malaria, leprosy, cancer, elephantiasis and a host of other terrible maladies. Before she died, Mother Teresa was asked, “What is the worst disease you have seen?”

Her response to the question was, “Of all the diseases I have known, loneliness is the worst.”

In her book *My Life for the Poor*, she states: “I have come to realize more and more that the greatest disease and the greatest suffering is to be unwanted, unloved, uncared for, to be shunned by everybody, to be just nobody to no one.”

“The greatest suffering is to be... nobody to no one”—Mother Teresa

One of the most common results of our fast-paced, morals-free society is lonely people. Throwaways. Those who live alone with no one to care for or about them. Their families are either gone, uninterested or too busy. Every day is a repeat of coming home to an empty home or apartment and spending the evening in silence, except perhaps for the television.

Like any disease, loneliness can strike quickly and at any stage in life. It afflicts the rich and the poor, the young and the old. When it begins it seems endless.

In our fast-paced society where people are striving to acquire more things, they often find themselves with fewer meaningful relationships. A recent survey from the University of Chicago reveals some startling statistics about just how lonely today’s urban adults can expect to be.

The survey, published in January, gave the results of several years of research and interviews of more than 2,100 Chicago area residents. According to the findings, the average urban dweller reaching adulthood can expect to spend 18.5 years of his or her life living with a spouse, 4.3 years living with someone they are not married to and the rest of his or her lifetime living alone.



Reasons given include higher divorce rates and growing reluctance of young adults to make a commitment to marriage. Researchers also found that cohabitation—living together—resulted in more jealousy and physical violence than found among married couples.

This is astounding when you think about it. Out of an average adult life of approximately 57 years (figuring that an average life span in the United States is close to 78 years currently), 39 of those will be spent lonely! This is an incredible change in the very fabric of our society—one that is already having terrible consequences.

So what can we do if we find ourselves alone—afflicted with what Mother Teresa said was “the worst disease”?

The Bible is full of stories of people who were closer than brothers because of their shared sense of purpose and belief in God.

First, we have to realize that our Creator understands and offers assistance. Jesus Christ spent much of His time with His disciples who rarely communicated on His level. When He became a man He shared the full range of our feelings and emotions. While loneliness is not sin, it is part of our frailness as humans and can lead to sin if we let it get the best of us.

Referring to Jesus, Hebrews 2:14 tells us, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity...” Verses 17-18 continue: “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way... Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (New International Version).

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” He said (Matthew 11:28). These are some of the most comforting words ever spoken. We are never truly lonely when we can pray.

Second, we need to build and develop family relationships. When God stated that “it is not good that man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18), He was also referring to the woman He was about to create. Our very nature is to need others and to need our Creator.

The message of the feminist movement and modern entertainment—that marriage is unnecessary and, in fact, a burden that will prevent self-fulfillment—is one of the most damaging lies ever told to a society. God says that children, even large families, are a blessing from Him (Psalm 127:3). The happiest senior citizens are often those who have raised many children and grandchildren.



Finally, develop close relationships with those who share the same spiritual values and sense of purpose in life. God says that He “sets the lonely in families” (Psalm 68:6, NIV). The Bible is full of stories of people who were closer than brothers because of their shared sense of purpose and belief in God. This is one of the primary benefits of assembling with a church family, which is something that we are commanded to do regularly (Hebrews 10:25).

God did not intend for us to be lonely. His intention for us was that each of us live a life filled with rewarding relationships—the source of true happiness. He wants us to have loving and appreciative relationships with our family members, encouraging and positive relationships with friends of like mind, and an ever-deepening experience of learning from and getting to know our Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ.

For more about how to build relationships, read our free booklet [Making Life Work](#).

Breaking Bad Habits

By Barbara Fenney

Are we in control of our thoughts and actions, or does something else rule in our lives? Are we in bondage to stubborn habits and runaway emotions? How can we take back control of our lives?



MANY OF US HAVE BAD HABITS we want to break. We may use bad or inappropriate language because that’s how we were brought up. Perhaps we smoke, gamble, drink too much alcohol or simply fail to listen to others due to impatience or disinterest.

Maybe we talk too much or overeat because we are bored or stressed. Untidiness—negligence in putting things away after we’ve used them—can be a problem. Perhaps we habitually exaggerate.

Cause and effect

Some of these bad habits could cause serious health problems. Uncontrolled anger could result in criminal acts, and even untidiness can cause problems within families. All of these bad habits have one thing in common—they all reveal a lack of self-control.

Some wake up in the morning craving a cigarette or come home from work and say, “I need a drink.” We may shout at the kids because it is simpler than getting to the root of whatever is really wrong. If so, we are not in complete control of our own lives.

The apostle Paul wrote, “You are that one’s slaves whom you obey” (Romans 6:16). If we do not take responsibility for our own thoughts and actions, no one else will.



So how can we go about taking control of our lives? Perhaps we can learn from cognitive behavioral therapists—they’re the sort of people who help with such things as phobias, eating disorders and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders such as nightmares and panic attacks.

Cognitive means “the action or faculty of knowing or perceiving as opposed to volition and emotion.” Basically it means being aware of what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Admitting the problem

First we have to admit we have a problem. This is often the hardest part. Maybe it isn’t entirely our fault. The problem may be the result of a habit we learned in early childhood. But does that mean we should continue to live with it?

If smoking is a problem, we shouldn’t visit the store where we typically bought cigarettes in the past, since we know we may end up buying them again.

Having first admitted that the problem exists, we should be sure we really *want* to break the habit. What are the likely outcomes of not defeating the problem—serious ill health, divorce, embarrassment? What are the pluses of overcoming—better surroundings, better health, more money, peace of mind, the joy of overcoming and building a better relationship with God? Once we have decided that we are serious about trying to break a habit, here are some techniques that we can use.

Try to think of a time when you have given in to a bad habit recently. Visualize the situation and analyze how and why it happened. What were the feelings at the time? It often helps to keep a diary of the incidents and why we think they happened. Therapists issue diary sheets, which those being counseled are asked to complete each time they encounter their phobia or nightmare. Writing things down helps our memory and also aids us in learning to recognize what is going on and to anticipate problems in advance.

We may try to think of other ways the situation could have been handled, such as asking someone else how they would deal with a similar situation. The other person's solution may not be the best for us, but the more ideas we have, the better armed we are to defeat the habit.

Try to be aware if the habit recurs over the next few days. As we become more aware, we will probably find it has less hold over us. We will need willpower, but will hopefully recognize when the habit normally takes over, and then take steps to avoid being ensnared.

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Commonsense solutions

Setting up a distraction may be helpful, such as listening to music or planning a task to keep ourselves occupied. A new hobby or other interest might prove useful.

It is best to avoid areas associated with past failures. For example, if smoking is a problem, we shouldn't visit the store where we typically bought cigarettes in the past, since we know we may end up buying them again.

Other family members or friends may also be able to help. If appropriate, we could seek competent professional help.

The spiritual dimension

Persistent prayer has been proved to work for those who really believe in God.

Speaking of Jesus Christ as our High Priest, the book of Hebrews says: "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted *as we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16, emphasis added).

We can't promise that these suggestions will work for everyone, every time. But becoming more self-aware is a tool that may enable us to resist bad habits.

For further information about how to improve our lives and relationships, read our free brochure [Making Life Work](#).

This article previously appeared in The British and European Supplement to The Good News magazine.



A Day in the Kingdom of God

By Keith Willis

A personal reflection on a day yet to come—in a wonderful world tomorrow.



I WOKE UP EARLY, but stayed in bed awhile thinking about how I was a survivor of the tribulation period that came on the whole earth. I thought about how I was the only one of my immediate family and friends who survived those horrible 3 1/2 years. Why God chose me to survive I still don't know, because I never had any interest in religion, but I am thankful that He did.

My wife was now awake, and we got out of bed together before dawn as we usually do. While I fed our horses and chickens, my wife made breakfast for us and our two young children.



While doing my chores, I was again struck by how different my life is now. I remembered back to the time before the tribulation. Then one of the first things I would do each morning was grab the morning newspaper to read with my coffee. The news was almost all bad—about crime, wars, diseases, natural disasters, tremendous accidents and unstable financial markets. Then I'd hurry to my car to make my daily commute to work in rush-hour traffic. Our lives were hectic.

Now we live peaceful, unhurried lives. Not at all like it was before—a bizarre race to an undefined future. No more commuting in rush-hour traffic to a job where no matter how much you accomplished, it was never enough, in order to make money to buy things we didn't really need.

Life is much simpler now. We work for ourselves on the land given to us by the family of God. We raise our own food and always have more than we need. We always have good weather. No more freezing winters. No more scorching summers, and we are given rain for our crops just when we need it.

Our houses are pleasant and comfortable. We don't have locks on the doors because there is no crime and no one lives in fear. Everything we use is biodegradable. We don't have all the electronic entertainment equipment we used to have, because it just kept people isolated and apart. Many of the old desires don't even come to mind anymore since Satan has been restrained.

It's time to go in the house. Before we eat my wife's delicious breakfast, we pray together as a family. I start the prayer, thanking God for His tremendous blessings, for accomplishing His plan so far and for being true to His Word. Then my wife adds to the prayer, and then each of our children. I look at our children and am so thankful they were born in the Kingdom when God has restored and refreshed all things (Acts 3:19). We have no illness anymore, and if we should suffer an accident, we can be instantly healed.

I help my wife clear the table as the children get ready for school. Farming isn't as hard as it was before the tribulation period, so today I'm going to continue work on building a house for relatives.

I take some materials to the house. When I get there, my tools are right where I left them. No one steals because Satan has been restrained; and if someone should give more than a thought to it, "Your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:20-21).

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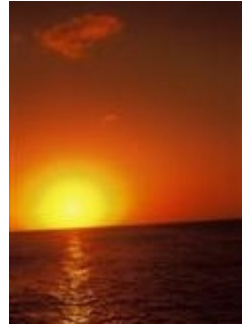


After several good hours of productive work, I take a break. A guest drops by while I'm having lunch. A mountain lion has come snooping around to see what's going on. I give him a little of my lunch and some of the water I drew from the well. I pet his head and he rolls over onto his back. I rub his belly and he purrs like a huge house cat.

After lunch he goes on his way and I go back to work. I can only work for about three more hours and then I have to start back home. You see, today is the preparation day before God's Sabbath.

I arrive home well before sundown and take care of some chores and start to get cleaned up. The children are home from school and my wife almost has the Sabbath dinner ready. It's a meal we look forward to all week.

As the sun sets and the Sabbath begins, once again I begin the family prayer. As we enjoy our Sabbath dinner, we talk about our day and about how blessed we are. We talk with anticipation about going to church and seeing all our friends and neighbors. The children are learning to play musical instruments and are excited to be offering special music with the children's orchestra at church.



It's all very different now. Everyone stops working on the Sabbath, and everyone goes to the same Church. The church is the center of everything. It is where we go to worship God together and learn more about His ways. It is also the place of our local government, administered by the family of God. It is where our children go to school, and where we have meetings and social functions. It is the center of our community.

On Sabbath morning we get up a bit later. Sabbath services begin around 10. After services we have a feast together. Each family brings food and drink, what you used to call a potluck. After the meal and much good conversation with our beloved friends and neighbors, we meet again for announcements and then break into groups for Bible studies.

After the Bible studies, there is more socializing and before you know it, the sun is ready to set and the Sabbath is nearly over. It was a joyous, most holy day. Peace has truly come to the earth.

If I had known before the tribulation period what God had in store for mankind, how blessed, how peaceful and how fulfilling our lives would be, how beautiful the earth would be, how wonderful all mankind can be with God's help—I would have read the Bible and tried to have a personal relationship with God.

I am off to bed now, and so I will leave you with this: Do all you can to be in the wonderful Kingdom of God!

For more information about the Kingdom of God, request our free booklet [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#).

Are You Caught in a Thistle?

By Andy McClain

What does God want us to learn from this tenacious weed that tends to choke out surrounding plants?



DURING THE SPRING, summer and early fall months many of us spend time outside mowing our lawns or gardening. Perhaps beautiful flowers and fragrant roses enhance the enjoyment of our properties. Or we may enjoy fresh vegetables such as a red tomato, yellow squash or green pepper. But there is one plant you will probably not appreciate if you find it on your property—the thistle.

The thistle is a perennial herb with a deep-seated, complex system of roots spreading horizontally, and these roots give rise to aerial shoots. The 1- to 4-foot tall stems are slender, green and freely branched. The heads are many and relatively small. You might identify them in your yard by their beautiful purple flowers.

Although the thistle does poorly in wet soils without much aeration, it can grow in a wide variety of soil types and can be found almost everywhere. If you are not familiar with thistles, you may think they are just another wildflower. However, once the thistle is established, its root system works to choke out surrounding plants.



Unfortunately, despite our efforts to combat this weed, thistles can be a problem for some of us in our lawns or gardens. But we can learn a great deal from this aggravating plant.

Like the thistle's beautiful purple flowers, this world is also pretty on the surface. Satan works very hard to make this world we live in very alluring and captivating. Thistles choke out plants exactly the way Satan tries to choke or stifle our commitment to God. But we cannot let this world choke our relationship with God by letting it attract our attention or capture our affection.

Christ talked about this effect in the parable of the sower: “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22). The word *thorns* used by Christ describes very closely the plant we know as the thistle.

We are reminded by the apostle John we should “not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:15-16). God strengthens us with His Holy Spirit so we can resist Satan’s pull and be filled with “the fruits of righteousness” (Philippians 1:9-11; Ephesians 3:14-19).

Getting to the root of the problem

The thistle is an incredibly tenacious plant. It mainly grows and spreads through its creeping horizontal roots that can even survive winters. It produces numerous shoots year after year and can survive indefinitely through the root system. The seedlings of thistle develop a fibrous taproot, and within a few months, the main root thickens and develops lateral roots that expand and spread. Eventually, aerial shoots with flowers then develop. What makes the thistle an obstinate weed is its ability to regenerate from just a small remaining piece of root.

Sadly, it doesn’t take much for Satan to plant his thistles in our minds. He knows our weaknesses and sends out small thoughts or attitudes for us to deal with. Each one may have a different germination rate. If we allow these thoughts to grow, they can choke out the fruit of God’s Spirit.

Thistles choke out plants exactly the way Satan tries to choke or stifle our commitment to God.

The apostle Paul tells us about a sad example of someone who became choked by this world, Demas. It seems he had been actively involved in the work of God with Paul and Luke, and he sent greetings to the Colossians (Colossians 4:14). But later in 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul says that “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world...” We must guard our minds from the thistle seeds that Satan spreads. Otherwise their roots will become deeply rooted, spreading in our minds.

Fortunately, thistles can be controlled and eradicated. By planting competitive crops such as alfalfa and forage grasses, and with repeated tillage or mowing for a few months, it is possible to get rid of thistles.

The lesson for us is that we should plant the truth of God constantly in our minds and “aerate” it with the Holy Spirit so Satan’s thistles cannot compete with our healthy root system of righteousness. Our minds should be renewed through the seeds of God’s Word as we live our lives in service to Him.

As the apostle Paul wrote, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1-2; see also Ephesians 4:17, 22-24).

We have to remain persistent in our pursuit of righteousness, despite whatever we may face in our lives. Satan will constantly try to destroy our commitment and faith in God. By rooting out the thistles possibly choking our growth, we may indeed bear fruit and produce “some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty,” as Christ said in Matthew 13:23.

“She’ll Never Sing, Write or Play Guitar Again”

By Kathleen M. Botka

After a traumatic brain injury nearly took her life, the author experienced a long period of rehabilitation, both physical and spiritual. Through this, she found the miracle of walking in His Spirit had given her a new lease on life.



ON OCT. 5, 1995, WHILE PREPARING TO TRAVEL to keep the biblical Feast of Tabernacles, I sustained a traumatic brain injury.

I was already disabled with numerous health issues, but had been encouraged by friends to go to the Feast with them in the Caribbean. As I love to travel and hadn’t taken a journey like this in a long while, I disregarded an intense spiritual warning not to go.

Staying in the basement guestroom at my friend’s home was intended to make it easier to travel to the airport. I was preparing to put the finishing touches to my packing and then go to sleep. We were to leave the next morning.



I had a few bags and a glass of water in my hands. I don’t know what I was thinking, but I didn’t grab the handrail. My girlfriend was on the phone, so she couldn’t help me down the stairs. Happy about the trip, feeling confident and always striving to be independent, I decided to go it alone.

Moving to take my first step down the stairs, I stepped into a void. That was the last thing I remember before going blind. I tumbled down the stairs, fracturing my skull. Severe bleeding caused me to lose my sight.

Both of my friends are doctors, and they immediately rushed to my side. I was at the foot of the stairs in the shape of a pretzel. I had signs of brain

death. One pupil was completely dilated and the other was a pinpoint. In a couple of minutes I was in a coma.

I had a 4 1/2-hour craniotomy to remove a blood clot the size of a grapefruit. The neurosurgeon didn't expect me to survive the surgery and told my girlfriend to notify my family that I was a dead woman. When I came out of the coma 20 hours later, he was startled. When he released me from the hospital to go to a traumatic brain injury unit in another hospital, he told me that I was one of 5 percent to survive my type of injury. He still expected me to be in a vegetative state at this point.

When my girlfriend told him that I was a talented singer/songwriter and guitarist, he answered: "Who?" She said, "That lady right there who you did the surgery on!" He replied, "Oh, that was before the accident. She'll never sing, write or play guitar again."

I was in the hospital where I had my surgery for one month. Then I spent one month in intensive rehabilitation in the second hospital and six months in rehab in an extensive recovery hospital.

I had a paralyzed left arm, vision problems and paralyzed vocal cords. To put it plainly, my body felt as if it had been hit by a train.

When I was first taken out of bed to go to rehab, I had to be lifted by two attendants on a board and placed in a special hard-backed wheelchair. My first exercise involved a therapist stretching my arm from its tight position against my chest. My clenched hand was next. I progressed to finger exercises. I felt like I was in kindergarten.

Moving to take my first step down the stairs, I stepped into a void. That was the last thing I remember before going blind.

The most profound feeling I had, however, was on a spiritual level. I felt like I was under our Father's microscope. I could no longer hide my disabilities or my sins. I could no longer hide behind a mask of self-confidence. I could no longer hide from the truth.

Rehabilitation and restoration

About six weeks after my accident, a gentleman approached my bed and asked me if I knew why I was in a hospital. I sheepishly answered no. I was so drugged and so involved in the moment-to-moment of my life that the question hadn't come to mind. When he told me I'd had a brain injury and that I was in a rehab hospital, light flooded my brain.

Rehab? "They're not going to want to hear about chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, arthritis, circulatory diseases, etc.—the things I was suffering before the accident. They're going to make me move!" The thought was terrifying. I thought my life was over. But in fact, our Father had granted me the gift of a restored life on a higher level of experience.

A month after my initial intensive rehab, I was sent to a long-term rehab hospital for six months of extended care. A variety of therapies helped retrain my body and brain. Brethren began to visit me on the Sabbath, and we had services in my room. This lifted me greatly.

I was given a Bible and had my Bible on cassette brought from home. As I filled my mind with the Word and daily made a point of doing my best and remembering the Creator's promises, I began to feel that I could overcome my difficulties. I kept reminding myself that He said He'd never leave me or forsake me. I reminded myself that our Father is love, I'm His child and that He will take care of me. As it says in Romans 8:28, He works all things to the good of those who love Him. If He is for us who (or what) can be against us?

The neurosurgeon didn't expect me to survive the surgery and told my girlfriend to notify my family that I was a dead woman.

I was confronted with the reality that although I was going through the most difficult time of my life, there were others in the unit who were in a more dire state. I saw suffering on a level that I had not seen before. It was painful to observe. As I went about my therapies, I found myself crying out in prayer for what I was seeing in others' lives.

In order to maintain my sanity in such an environment, I needed to stay in constant prayer for myself and others and to do my utmost to improve my life. Nurses, therapists, doctors and friends kept telling me that I was a miracle. But I was struggling so much that I couldn't grasp the depth of the spectacular blessing I had been granted.

Losing Mom and Dad; sharing the gift of life

Five months into my hospital stay I lost my mom to cancer. We were very close. Shortly before she died, she asked me to pray for her as I'd never prayed before. I had the eerie sense that she was telling me she was passing. I felt so helpless. I asked our Father to care for her as only He could and placed her in His loving hands.

Shortly afterward, my brothers and sister-in-law were at my bedside to tell me of my mother's passing. I experienced a feeling of numbness for quite a while. Going to the small family service helped me to see that even though I was disabled, I still had much to share and could make a difference in others' lives. I sat next to my dad, who was grieving deeply. I was able to comfort him and show him love. This helped me to cope with my loss.

Within the past year or so I've reached out to the community and now belong to three organizations and a support group.

Two days before leaving the hospital for home I was resting and channel surfing when I came upon some beautiful singing. I was inspired. I shut off the television and prayed, "Oh, Father, can I still write, sing and play the guitar?" I felt His answer was for me to write a prayer. In 10 minutes I'd written one of the loveliest songs I'd written about the Savior.

I arrived home June 6, 1996. I struggled to adjust to being on my own again in my old environment while feeling like an alien. I'd been on a journey to a foreign shore and was returning to what should have felt comfortable and welcoming. But now everything seemed so strange. My whole perspective had changed, and now I had to surrender further for the changes that our Creator was yet to bring me.



Since my accident I've composed more than 200 songs to our heavenly Father's glory. I've lost 100 pounds, despite having been an obsessive-compulsive overeater. I was sent home from the hospital with a wheelchair. Although my fatigue is severe and walking is difficult, I donated my chair to Goodwill. I use a cane and, when walking any distance, I use a rolling walker. I'm committed to continued change through the Christ. I believe, as the apostle Paul did, that I can do all things through the Christ who strengthens me.

On Father's Day in 1997, my dad, my brother James, my sister-in-law Diane and I gathered for dinner. Dad had prepared roast leg of lamb, my favorite dish. He asked me to say grace. I read John 15 and then said a prayer. I was able to discuss a sensitive issue with my dad and felt quite close. I was hoping to have a growing, intimate relationship, one that I'd always longed for.

That was the last time we were to see each other. He died three months later. When I went with my brother to Dad's apartment to help sort things out, my brother gave me the Bible that was on a table next to Dad's favorite chair. It was the Bible I'd given my parents years before. Tucked into John 15 was the last letter I'd written my dad. This was a witness to me of our Father's love. And now I knew that my dad loved me.

Within the past year or so I've reached out to the community and now belong to three organizations and a support group. One organization, "The Turn a Frown Around Foundation," visits the elderly and mentally and physically ill. I'm able through my participation to share my story and serve with the music I've been given. How glorious it is to share the gift of life with others!

I'm now attending Sabbath services regularly and getting to know my spiritual family. When we surrender to the Blessed One, He gives so much more in return! "Seek first the kingdom," He tells us, "and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). And so I rejoice in the miracle of walking in His Spirit!

Recommended reading

So many people have suffered so much. Why? Why does our loving Father allow suffering? The United Church of God has prepared a free biblical brochure on this subject, [Why Does God Allow Suffering?](#)

Letters to the Editor

[“Why No Spectacular Miracles Today?”](#)



I disagree with the author of this manuscript because it describes God as a failure in all the miracles He performed. There is one thing that God cannot do. I believe God will never fail.

The article [“Why No Spectacular Miracles Today?”](#) by David J. Sandland was in no way dismissing the miracles God performed as failures. What Mr. Sandland was trying to convey was that in early Bible times it was necessary to have great miracles so that God would be known and seen as God by the people. But the greatest miracle, Mr. Sandland pointed out, is the miracle of conversion.

As the article states, “The miracles we read about in the Bible were examples of the power and love of God that are important to our understanding. But now that we have the biblical record, there is not the need to continually repeat all the different types of miracles.”

The reference to miracles not being good for us is not a statement of any failure on God’s part, but of man’s failures. It is always man’s own carnal mind that creates failure, not God. Mr. Sandland was speaking of man’s ego and the tendency to take credit away from God and the misuse that could occur through the use of such miracles.

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity