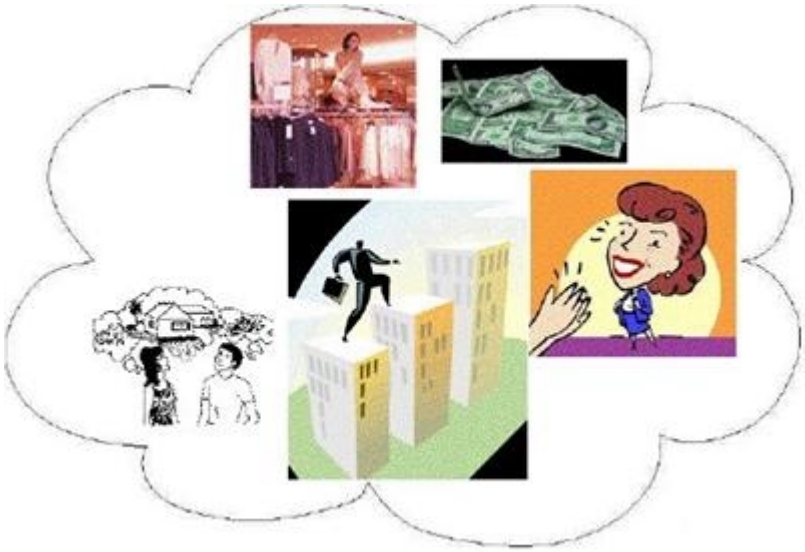
Virtual Christian Magazine
Hope And Encouragement For The Real World

"For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."
—John 13:15-17

Volume 8 Number 1 January 2006

The Quest for Happiness

By Gary Petty *Page 3*



A man in a concentration camp discovered some keys to real happiness.

Climb Every Mountain

By Robert Berendt *Page 6*



We face many difficult challenges in our lives, but it's what we learn during those adventures that counts.

Catch the Disease of Optimism

By Rod Hall *Page 9*



Why are some people overwhelmed by their problems, while others are simply challenged by them? Why do some draw back, give up and quit when facing obstacles, trials and difficulties while others with similar backgrounds, facing the same troubles, bounce back and keep working toward success? It all boils down to your frame of mind. Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.

I Was a Stranger and You Took Me In

By Jean Jantzen *Page 12*



"The rest of you, who are my eager companions, wait here, while I, with my own ship and companions that are in it, go and find out about these people, and learn what they are, whether they are savage and violent, and without justice, or hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly"—The Odyssey of Homer

Joe's Story

By Ruth Famiglietti *Page 16*



In Chicago, in 1983, Joe Bauer had an experience that was unlike any in his life up until then. And he had certainly already had some perilous times in his life!

Count It All Joy

By Bob Fenwick *Page 20*



"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2). When you have a trial in your life, is it a joyful occasion? Are you happy when things are not going well in your life?

Letters to the Editor

Page 21

***Virtual Christian Magazine* Staff**

Lorelei Nettles - Managing Editor
Lorelei Nettles - Issue Editor
Becky Bennett - Staff
Mike Bennett - Staff
Tom Damour - Staff
Jack Elliott - Staff
Michelle Grovak - Staff
Don Henson - Staff
Gayle Hoefker - Staff
Don Hooser - Staff
Jada Howell - Staff
Patrick Kansa - Staff
David Meidinger - Staff
Suzanne Morgan - Staff
John Rutis - Staff
Amy Stephens - Staff
Debbie Werner - Staff
Chris Rowland - Web Design

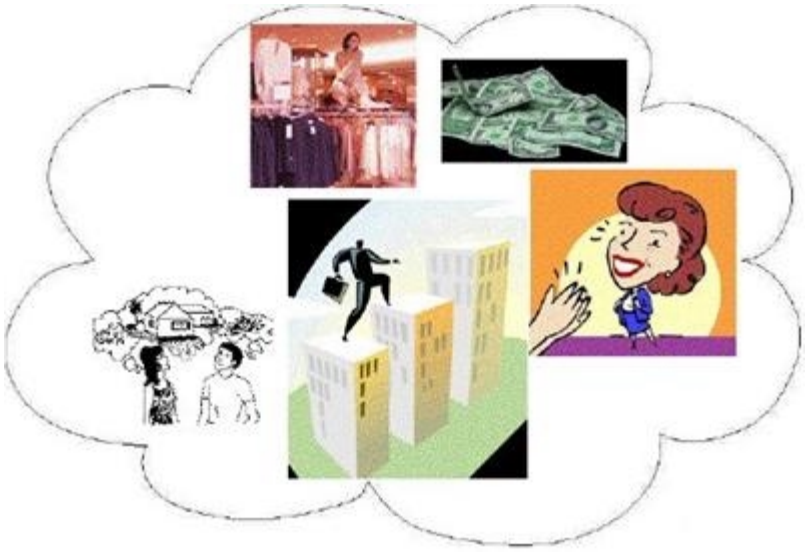
Copyright 2006 United Church of God, an International Association

---

The Quest for Happiness

By Gary Petty

A man in a concentration camp discovered some keys to real happiness.



WHAT IS IT THAT WOULD MAKE YOU TRULY HAPPY—a new car or job, a new husband or wife, more money or to be better looking? Maybe you're a young person and your definition of happiness is to find a special someone and get married and have children. Maybe your definition of happiness is to become a doctor and help others or maybe you want to be an entrepreneur and be your own boss.

Now imagine what it would be like to have everything you think would make you happy—and then suddenly lose all of it. That's exactly what happened to Victor Frankl.

Victor Frankl was one of the most promising and well-known Austrian medical doctors in the 1930s. He was highly successful, happily married and was admired by his colleagues.



One day his entire life came crashing down as he and his wife found themselves removed from their home, robbed of everything they owned and crammed into a boxcar bound for Auschwitz. Once they arrived at the infamous concentration camp, Victor was separated from his wife, whom he would never see again, was stripped of his clothes and all the hair on his body was shaved.

Victor Frankl would spend the next few years living in indescribable horror. He slept with nine other men in a bed with no mattress and only two blankets. He received so little food that his body looked like a skeleton with skin, and he endured beatings from SS guards and fellow prisoners. He watched countless people suffer and die.

Yet in the midst of this unbelievable hell on earth, Victor Frankl found important keys to happiness.

What is happiness?

What is your definition of happiness? Be honest with yourself and see if any of these sentences describe your approach to life.

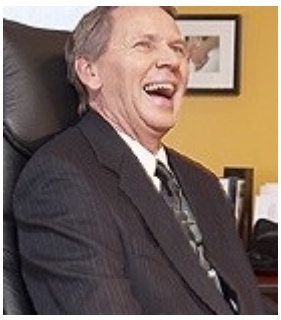
- You constantly suffer from feelings of anger and bitterness toward others and life in general.
- You're always struggling with perfectionism and feelings of never measuring up.
- You see other people as barriers to your happiness.
- You measure happiness by what you own or how much money you have.
- You are obsessed with your appearance, clothing, jewelry, makeup and body shape.
- You suffer from excessive shyness.
- You have difficulty experiencing meaningful relationships with others.
- You feel stressed much of the time and can't relax when you're not busy.
- You are in constant conflict with others, and you are always trying to bend everyone else to your will. You feel that you are right in almost all situations.
- You have a preoccupation with sex outside of marriage.
- You find yourself always comparing yourself with others and judging others by your personal criteria.
- You experience an inability to trust God or even believe that He exists.

If you are experiencing one or more of these symptoms much of the time, you have to admit you aren't very happy.

Happiness is an approach to life

Victor Frankl arrived at some profound conclusions resulting from his experiences in Nazi concentration camps. He concluded that the more a person tried to be happy, the more unhappy he or she became.

Instead of trying to be happy, we should be thinking more in terms of becoming spiritually, mentally, socially and physically healthy. This can move us away from becoming increasingly self-centered, and we can begin to understand that there are learnable principles to happiness.



At this point someone is saying, "But this isn't what I need to be happy. I need a new girlfriend or a new boss or more money." It is true that other people, places or things can give us temporary happiness. It is also true that other people or lack of health or depravation of basic human needs can cause us to suffer and feel unhappy. But if that's all there is to life, then all of us are no more than victims of our environment—jerked back and forth between good times and bad times with no control of how we think or feel. In reality, happiness is ultimately a product of how we think.

Happiness is more a product of attitude than situations. Attitude is the basic approach to life that either looks for the good, even in the most difficult of situations, or is a negative view that always sees the bad.

Steps on the journey of life

Happiness isn't a destination. It's not like one day you discover it, and it never goes away. It is part of the journey of life. If happiness is a way of thinking, then maybe it's time for some mind surgery. Here are four steps to begin to do every day to help you along the journey of happiness:

We can't always control how we feel, but we can control what we choose to think about.

1. *Take responsibility for your life.* We can never be mentally, emotionally or spiritually healthy until we are willing to take responsibility for our own actions, thoughts and emotions. Happiness isn't found by concentrating on yourself—it is discovered in objective truth, not in basing right and wrong on your immediate feelings. It is discovered in relating to other people. It is discovered in work that uses your talents. It is ultimately discovered in a relationship with your Creator.

2. *Learn to control your thoughts.* The more a person fills his or her mind with negative thoughts, the more unhappy that person will become. Many people waste their entire lives feeling controlled by hurt, hatred, feelings of being a victim and other negative emotions. We can't always control our environment or what happens to us. We can't even always control how we feel, but we can control what we choose to think about.

3. *Learn to be thankful.* We can either concentrate on what we don't have or be thankful for what we do have. If we concentrate on what we don't have, we doom ourselves to frustration and unhappiness. Victor Frankl writes of finding beauty in the midst of the bleakness of Auschwitz in a sunset or a flower.

There's an old story of an immigrant who arrived at Ellis Island with nothing more than the shirt on his back. He worked hard and eventually had a small business, a nice house and lived in relative comfort. He even managed to help his son graduate from college with a MBA.

When the son returned from college, he looked at his father's books. The son complained, "How do you even know what your profit is?"

The father replied, "I first take out the cost of the shirt I had on my back when I arrived in this country. Everything else is profit."

How different would your life be if the last things you thought about before going to sleep and the first things you thought about when you woke up were all the good things in your life, instead of dwelling on the negative?

4. *Ask God to reveal His plan for you.* God has created you for a purpose. He wants you to be His child. He has a future planned for you if you want it, and He actually wants you to be happy.

Change is never easy, but it can be exciting. If you are going to discover and respond to the Creator's purpose for your life, you are going to have to make some radical changes in thinking. It will take effort and dedication, but the rewards are worth it on the journey of life.

Further reading

To learn more about this subject, see the booklet *Making Life Work*.

Gary Petty is a host of the Beyond Today *television program seen on cable-access stations across the country. For an Internet listing of stations and times or to download programs, go to www.beyondtoday.tv.*

Climb Every Mountain

By Robert Berendt

We face many difficult challenges in our lives, but it's what we learn during those adventures that counts.



"GIVE ME MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB and the strength to climb them" was a line I once read. I grew up in the mountains, and although we did not climb in the technical sense of using ropes, pins and other devices, we did spend many hours walking the hills and mountains. The majesty of the peaks makes clear the concept of the grandeur of God the Creator. It is humbling.

Climbing produces many benefits that I've found to be helpful: strong legs, building confidence in tackling heights, considering where to place your foot for each step. They are all lessons of good planning and enable the body to become stronger and more physically fit. The sheer exuberance

of completing the task makes one want to stand on top of the peak and shout with all of your might.

One of the most important benefits of hiking is pushing yourself beyond what you think are your limits.

In the past, I have taken teenagers and young children for longer hikes in the mountains. I find resistance comes when they get tired and weary. That is normal. One of the most important benefits of hiking is pushing yourself beyond what you think are your limits. Human beings are able to go beyond what they think they can do. The body may be putting a great deal of pressure on the mind to stop, but the mind is able to override the complaints of the body and complete the task. There are lessons learned and character built that will keep you in good stead for a lifetime. One lesson you can learn is knowing when to rest or pause and when to proceed.

The safest place for a ship is a harbor, but ships were not designed for staying in a harbor. You do not become a great sailor by staying in quiet waters. Great sailors learn to be great by facing and conquering the most severe storms and conditions that the sea can give. No one would advocate that a sea captain start his career in the most severe storm. Usually, a person starts out as a helper and assistant. He gains experience during smaller storms and slowly develops the qualities needed to tackle problems with expertise and competence. The same applies to the mountains that we climb in life—whether they are real mountains or the challenges of daily life, physical struggles, emotional or spiritual issues.

A hard trail

Almighty God is very careful about inviting humans to become part of the firstfruits and first resurrection. We read in John 6:44 that only God the Father decides whose mind to open. It is not the great of the world that He chooses (1 Corinthians 1:26-27), but those chosen definitely must be able to embark on a hard trail. It is surprising how some seemingly unlikely people have great inner strength. Those chosen will have great rewards that will make the struggle worth every difficult step. It will take all the strength, determination and effort that they are able to put forth along with God's help to reach the summit. God is a strong helper during all of the struggles, and Jesus Christ intercedes on our behalf.

People who are new to the mountains do not always appreciate the dangers hidden there. They will learn through experience that there is a proper way to climb a mountain.

In Matthew11:12 we are told that forceful men lay hold of the kingdom God offers. Jesus called them "overcomers" in several places in Scripture. The obvious conclusion is that a person will have to look forward and glimpse the wonderful future with such conviction that nothing will deter them from achieving the goal. Hebrews 11 records the suffering of many. In Hebrews 12:3-9 Paul explains that we need to endure hardship as discipline; God is treating us as sons. Hardships are the mountains God has given us to climb. We need to rely on God's Holy Spirit and use our minds and concentration skills for this daunting task. God will supply what we need, with His only request being that we appreciate what is happening and learn to love His ways. Age and physical abilities are not factors in this spiritual expedition.

Luke 14:28-33 reveals the need to count the cost before embarking on an adventure. We need to know we are able to complete the task. It is certain that no person, by themselves can accomplish this task. They neither know the way nor have the strength. God gives us what we need.

It's worth the climb

Mountains are climbed one step at a time. There are periods of rest, traversing and planning. Our spiritual mountain gives us similar challenges. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 Paul stated that God only gives us that which we can bear and helps when temptations or hardship come. It is comforting to realize that we are not alone and have a thoughtful Creator who will lift us up.



People who are new to the mountains do not always appreciate the dangers hidden there. They will learn through experience that there is a proper way to climb a mountain. They will find out that the view from the top is breathtaking. This spiritual climb is the only way that leads to eternal life, and it is worth every ounce of expended energy.

It is probably true that most people would rather avoid the strenuous and demanding task of climbing mountains (real or spiritual). Most people avoid pain and suffering. The way God chose for His people is a difficult and narrow path. Jesus Christ felt the loss of many disciples when the way was too difficult (John 6:66). Even His close followers fled in panic when they saw that Jesus was not resisting arrest and torture (Matthew 26:56).

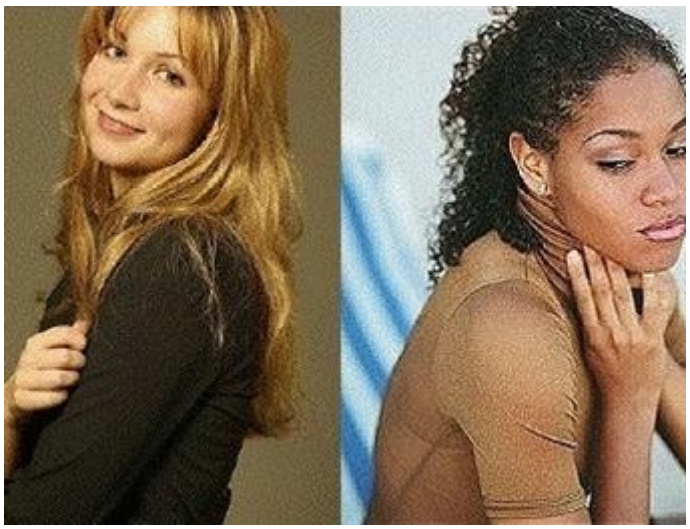
In the end, the reward will be more than worth the struggle. This life is short and full of troubles, whether we choose to follow Jesus Christ or not. This life is physical and temporary. The life we hope for, pray for and suffer for is eternal. God places this hope into the hearts of all people.

Climbing mountains is a great source of joy and satisfaction. How much greater and joyful are God's mountains when He walks at our side. So then we can pray, "Give me mountains to climb and the strength to climb them."

Catch the Disease of Optimism

By Rod Hall

Why are some people overwhelmed by their problems, while others are simply challenged by them? Why do some draw back, give up and quit when facing obstacles, trials and difficulties while others with similar backgrounds, facing the same troubles, bounce back and keep working toward success? It all boils down to your frame of mind. Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.



RESEARCH BY A PSYCHOLOGIST at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh indicates that optimists handle stress better than pessimists do. They found that optimists tend to respond to disappointments by formulating a plan of action and asking other people for help and advice, while pessimists often react to such difficulties by trying to forget the whole thing and assume there is nothing they can do to change their circumstances.

Do you consider yourself to be an optimist or a pessimist? The most successful among us are usually optimists. Successful people often credit a positive attitude as a major reason for their success. As Winston Churchill put it, "I am an optimist. It does not seem too much use being anything else."

Get infected

McGinnis calls truly optimistic people "tough-minded optimists."

Being optimistic will help you maintain your enthusiasm and your forward momentum even in the face of disappointments and setbacks. You can literally catch the disease of optimism from consistently exposing yourself to the right germs of thought. Being optimistic and enthusiastic, like measles, mumps and the common cold, is highly contagious. You can infect others with your optimism and they can infect you. Stay around optimistic people and you will become more optimistic.

Best-selling author and therapist Alan Loy McGinnis, in his book *The Power of Optimism,* gives 12 characteristics of optimists:

- Optimists are seldom surprised by trouble.
- Optimists do not look for partial solutions.
- Optimists believe they have control over their futures and are not just victims of circumstances.
- Optimists interrupt their negative trains of thought.
- Optimists heighten their powers of appreciation.
- Optimists use their imaginations to rehearse success.
- Optimists are cheerful even when they cannot be happy.
- Optimists believe they have an almost unlimited capacity for stretching.
- Optimists build lots of love into their lives.
- Optimists like to swap good news.
- Optimists accept what cannot be changed.
- And optimists usually allow for regular physical and mental renewal.

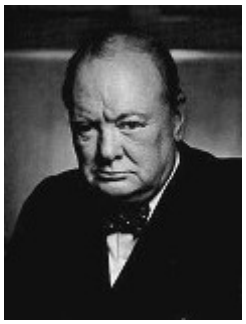
How about you, do these character traits fit your approach to life? All of us can become more positive and optimistic by learning to develop these traits. McGinnis says:

> "These tough-minded optimists may be of average intelligence and looks, but they know how to keep themselves motivated, and they approach their problems with a can-do philosophy. They are experts at building a strong, positive esprit de corps in their family or on their team, and they emerge from tragedies somehow stronger and more attractive.
>
> "There is no doubt that this mind-set enables people to rise to the top of their fields. Recent studies show that optimists excel in school, have better health, make more money, establish long and happy marriages, stay connected to their children, and perhaps even live longer" (*The Power Of Optimism,* p. 1).

McGinnis points out that anyone can learn to be more optimistic by developing the habits of thought that optimists employ. He explains that this is not being "Pollyanna, hear-no-evil-see-no-evil types either... There is a soft-headed type of thinking that masquerades as optimism, but it is quite different from the practical approach that brings success" (ibid., pp. 6-7).

Tough-minded optimist

McGinnis calls truly optimistic people "tough-minded optimists." A good example was Winston Churchill. In February 1901, young Winston, slim and elegant at 26, rose to make his inaugural speech in the House of Commons. This was to be his stage for the next 50 years, and on it he was to receive almost constant criticism and suffer many humiliating defeats. In those early years he was probably the most hated man in the House of Commons. The Blenheim Rat, his foes called him.



Thirty-eight years later, when Great Britain was on the verge of collapse from Adolf Hitler's assaults, King George VI asked Churchill to form a new government. By then he was 65, the oldest head of state in Europe. The crusty tough-minded politician had lived too long and had too many battle scars to put on a false smile or to talk in unrealistic, glowing, Pollyanna terms about the future that lay ahead for his people. Yet his speeches reinforced his tough-minded optimism. "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat," became the famous realist's words in his first address as prime minister from the House of Commons to his countrymen that Sunday night in May 1940. Laced with this blunt realism was an undaunted optimistic spirit and a belief that the dispirited and ill-equipped British nation could control its destiny and be victorious in the end.

He closed with this unrelenting optimistic vision: "You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival" (*The Last Lion,* William Manchester, p. 678).

Churchill infected an entire nation with his optimistic, can-do attitude and led them to victory in the face of unbelievable odds.

Optimism quotient

How optimistic or pessimistic are you? Lowell Peacock summarized the importance of being optimistic. "Attitude is the first quality that marks the successful man. If he has a positive attitude and is a positive thinker, who likes challenges and difficult situations, then he has half his success achieved. On the other hand, if he is a negative thinker who is narrow-minded and refuses to accept new ideas and has a defeatist attitude, he hasn't got a chance."

Take time to notice your attitude during the day. Are your thoughts positive and optimistic or down and pessimistic?

On a scale of one to 10, what is your optimism quotient? Take time to notice your attitude during the day. Are your thoughts positive and optimistic or down and pessimistic? If we are not careful, it is easy to become pessimistic and cynical. You can be a realist and still remain an optimist if you learn to control your thoughts, heart and mind (Proverbs 4:23).

Pessimistic people bring you down; optimistic people lift you up. President Lincoln once said, "The pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity and the optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." If someone asks you how are you doing and you actually tell them things are terrible, people are not going to want to be around you. Optimistic people are almost never "poor me," self-pitying people.

Seek God's help

God holds us personally responsible to do the best we can with what we have to work with in the way of circumstances, natural abilities and opportunities (Ephesians 6:8; Revelation 20:15). If we become overly pessimistic and defeatist in our attitude, we can derail our success.

When we know there is a higher purpose for our lives, we can remain more optimistic and positive. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

God wants us to put on a new attitude filled with faith, hope and positive actions (Ephesians 4:22-24). The apostle Paul admonishes us to remain positive and optimistic in our focus (Philippians 4:8).

Jesus Christ set the perfect example, which we should emulate (Philippians 2:5). He was never arrogant, egocentric or intellectually vain and often taught His disciples to avoid these mental traps (Matthew 20:26-27; 23:6-8, 10-12). He was not pessimistic or defeatist even when facing severe trials (Mark 14:36-42).

Catch the disease of optimism and never let it go.

I Was a Stranger and You Took Me In

By Jean Jantzen

“The rest of you, who are my eager companions, wait here, while I, with my own ship and companions that are in it, go and find out about these people, and learn what they are, whether they are savage and violent, and without justice, or hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly”—The Odyssey of Homer



ARE WE CRAZY OR WHAT? Grandparents of 25, shouldn’t I be crocheting slippers and my husband rocking a grandchild on his knee? Instead, we’re riding our bikes for seven weeks around Europe. We carry an eight-day train pass, food money, campground money and a ticket home. No guaranteed toilets, showers or bed. First-class luxury trip, this is not! But I’d read the classics, themes of hospitality filling pages. Plato says hospitality is one of the fundamental duties of man. Kings welcomed Homer’s hero Odysseus, a man of travel. We, too, are adventurers in a strange land.

We are vulnerable, exposed to the elements and in a position where we need God's help. Some thought we were absolutely nuts to have left the security of home to go on an adventure where we are not always guaranteed these daily comforts; but, you know, sometimes we take these very important necessities for granted. And yes, we are out in the big outdoors: no fridge, water, toilet or warm bed at hand; just our bikes and a small trailer behind one to carry a few clothes, one pot, two forks and spoons, and a good knife. We have a little burner to cook on and we pick up our food and water every day.

But sometimes vulnerability is a good position to be in. It helps renew and strengthen our faith.

"You're from Canada?"



After flying into Frankfurt and biking a few days on a bike path that followed the beautiful Rhine River through the little villages and lush countryside of Switzerland, we arrived back in southern Germany, in the small city of Bad Saeckingen around lunchtime. My husband checked on the train schedule for our trip to Aachen, while I looked around and kept an eye on our bikes. We learned the train would be leaving at 6 the next morning.

I wondered where we'd set up our tent so we could have early access to the train. Jerry went back to make a reservation for our bikes. In the meantime, this fellow who was riding a bike began to look our bikes over, and he kept returning two or three times. I couldn't help thinking that maybe he was up to no good. I kept an eye on him.

Jerry came out of the train station and, wouldn't you know it, this fellow appeared again. "You're from Canada?" he inquired. (He had noticed the Canadian flag attached to my husband's trailer.) "I have lived in Nelson, British Columbia for five years," he said, "and I am here visiting for a couple of months." We asked him about camping, and he invited us to put our tent where he was staying with the soccer club. "I have the keys to the locker room. Have a hot shower." He proudly showed us the most interesting places and historical information about his hometown.

Was it a coincidence he just happened to be riding by the train station when we were there? I knew that God was aware of our need and had graciously taken care of it. We were up at 5 the next morning, and able to catch our train at 6, traveling across Germany to Aachen, a city near the Holland border.

"Have a shower and lock up when you leave"

By the time we got there, it was 9 in the evening and beginning to get dark. We rode our bikes through the city desperately trying to find a place to set up our tent. A streetlight illuminated a cheerful face. "You're from Canada!" his friendly voice boomed into the darkness. We told him we were looking for a place to tent. He said, "It's too late to tent. You're welcome to sleep in my apartment." We quickly agreed. He locked our bikes in the basement, invited us for a drink, and we talked for an hour before we all turned in.

We are vulnerable, exposed to the elements and in a position where we need God's help.

"I'm leaving at 6 a.m. ...have a shower and lock up when you go, " he said. I could have kissed him. I didn't realize how tired I was and slept till 11 the next morning. I never even heard him leave. I lathered up, washing my hair, taking advantage of the hot water soothing my aching muscles. Refreshed, we cleaned the bathroom, washed his dishes and vacuumed the kitchen, making sure everything was in order before pulling the door shut.

Unbelievable hospitality to strangers! But how could this German man, a computer technician, have known that he was an answer to prayer? I knew that God would take care of us on this trip. I had prayed for protection and help. I had reminded Him just moments before of His promises in Luke 12:27-30:

> "Consider the lilies how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For...your Father knows that you need these things."

After arriving in Holland the weather was nasty—very windy and a little rainy. Our first night was spent in a campground and at 3 o'clock in the morning we were just about blown away with 100-kilometer-an-hour winds. We had quite a time trying to hold onto the tent. Finally we got up and moved it to a more protected spot.



Sleeping in hay

We traveled all the next day, but we were drenched and exhausted from our struggle against the wind when we finally asked at a farm (in Haastrecht, outside of Gouda) if we could sleep in their hayloft. "Sure, come in and have a hot drink," the Dutch lady welcomed us in English. Over hot tea, we learn they are bikers, too. After animated conversation, we walk a short distance to the large barn. I take a deep breath, climb the tall ladder into the hole in the ceiling and Jerry pulled me up the rest of the way. Relieved to be out of the rain and wind, it is comfy and warm in the hay during the blustery weather. The family invited us to stay the next day because of the storm. (Three people were killed from a tree falling on their car.) The family invited us to have a warm bath, wash our clothes and take the opportunity to e-mail our children at home.

We were strangers and they took us in, fed us breakfast, lunch and supper. They even invited us to meet their in-laws who lived next to them and wanted to meet "those crazy Canadians" that slept in the hay. They did not speak English, but we got on wonderful. I was able to photograph their ancestor's 1650 Dutch Bible, one of the very first Bibles printed. With their help I even attempted to milk a cow.

Ejner and Inger

Was it a coincidence he just happened to be riding by the train station when we were there?

Eleven years ago, I took a bus trip to California where I met Ejner (now 74) and his wife Inger. They said if I ever came to Denmark, give them a call. So when I knew we were going to Germany, I wrote them a letter from Canada. They e-mailed me back with the words: "We don't have forgotten Jean with the green pants from Vancouver Island. You are very welcome to come and visit us, stay and sleep some days in a room in our house, special for dear guests from abroad."

These two dear people might have been characters from Homer's *Odyssey*. We were treated royally. They proudly showed us their country. We saw their beloved Queen Margrethe's 1,000-room castle in Fredensborg and strolled through magnificent formal gardens. We drove to Helsingor on the northern coast, travelling down what Ejner playfully calls the "Danish Riviera," and then back to Copenhagen.

Being folk dancers (their outfits are wholly handmade—Inger's lace hat alone took her 400 hours to make) they took us to a heritage park where we slipped back a century or two and watched a hundred costumed dancers (people they knew) perform Denmark's traditional dance. What a privilege! Had we been ordinary tourists we'd have missed this extraordinary event. They even accompanied us on the boat to Sweden so we could say we've been there.

The art of hospitality is alive! Odysseus would feel at home.

These are only a few of the precious memories of ordinary people who made us feel loved and welcome in a strange land. This brought to our attention the importance of looking after the stranger. Humbly, we give our thanks to all who saw our need and helped us. We were reminded of God's love towards us and were reminded of our duty to look after others. The importance is stressed by Jesus, who said:

> "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry, and you gave me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: Naked, and you clothed me: I was sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came unto me" (Matthew 25:31-46).

Joe's Story

By Ruth Famiglietti

In Chicago, in 1983, Joe Bauer had an experience that was unlike any in his life up until then. And he had certainly already had some perilous times in his life!



JOE'S ANCESTRY WAS TRACED BACK to the 1700s in Germany, and included a Jewish family line there. His life began on a small farm in a suburb of Budapest, Hungary, in January of 1930. He lived with his father (the village blacksmith), his mother and an older sister. Their family had moved from Germany to Hungary in the early 1700s. At that time, the Hungarian government started a drive to push out the Ottoman Turks (who were Muslim), and bring down German nationals to take their place. To make the offer attractive, they offered people some of the land they had taken from the Turks. One of their requirements was that they had to be baptized in the Roman Catholic faith.

Times were hard in Germany because of the high taxes, so many German families put their belongings on rafts, and even built small houses on the rafts, like houseboats. They sailed down the Danube to Hungary and settled there.

Joe's family was allowed to stay, because his father was the only blacksmith in the village.

In 1945, the Potsdam Agreement was signed by the United States, England and Russia. It required the people to declare their mother language and nationality so that the German people could be returned to Germany. Joe's family declared their mother language as German, and their nationality as Hungarian.

The three governments, having considered the question in all its aspects, recognized that the transfer to Germany of German populations in Hungary would have to be undertaken in an

orderly and humane manner. Most of the people in Joe's village had to leave immediately, with each allowed to take only 160 pounds of belongings with them.

Family changes

Of the 3,000 or 4,000 people, only 36 families were excused from leaving Hungary and returning to Germany. Joe's family was allowed to stay, because his father was the only blacksmith in the village. His grandparents were forced to go back, and his older sister went back to help care for them.

There was a Jewish man named Vertes who was then running for government office in Hungary. Joe's father had helped him to get away from Hitler, and he survived the war. He said if Joe's father wanted to stay, he could give him some papers to excuse him, and he could stay with his family. So Joe's family was excused from being sent back to Germany.

Joe's grandparents died in Germany, and his sister got married while there. She and her husband then went to America and settled in Chicago, while Joe and his parents stayed in Hungary.

In 1948 the Communist pressures began to get worse, and they put his father in jail on false charges so they could confiscate his property.

In 1948 the Communist pressures began to worsen, and they put Joe's father in jail on false charges so they could confiscate his property. He was falsely accused of setting fire to a wheat field, which Joe said was impossible because of all the rain they were having at that time. His father was in the Communist jail for seven years. Joe and his mother were also put in jail for eight months.

While his father was in jail, 18-year-old Joe was the sole support for his mother. For fear of the Communists, none of his relatives or friends wanted anything to do with the family. During that time, the family was destitute. They had no home, no jobs and nowhere to turn for help. His family started off walking over the Calvary Hill (Kalvaria-domb) to the village where they had their home before the Communists confiscated it, praying as they went, not knowing where they were going to end up.

Along the way, they met a friend of Joe's father, who was living in a bombed-out house. Joe's mother told him about her husband's seven-year imprisonment, that his property had been confiscated, and that they had no one to help them. The man told them to go no further, they could stay in the bombed-out house with him. It wasn't much, but it was a roof over their heads, and a chance for a new start.

In 1949 Joe took a job as a plumber with a gas company to support his mother and himself. It wasn't long after that the Hungarian revolution against Russia took place.

Moving to America

His experiences growing up in Europe led him to seek God and learn His will for his life

His father was released from jail in 1954, and in January of 1957, they went to Yugoslavia, where they lived for seven months in a camp. About that time, a German delegation came to the area and sent all the German nationalists back to Stuttgart, Germany. There Joe and his parents lived for two years. His father worked as a blacksmith and was able to earn enough money to travel to America. But because his father had a spot on his lung, the American Consulate watched it for five years before allowing him to come to America.

Joe said that after working under Communism for 10 years, all he had to show for it was a broken-down bike. He was paid 4 forint an hour as a plumber, which was about equal to the price of a pack of cigarettes. He had to work a whole day to afford a quart of wine or two pounds of meat, and he had to save many months to buy a pair of shoes.



Meanwhile, Joe's sister and her husband were living in Chicago, Illinois, and they had saved $185 to send to Joe to come to America. In 1959 Joe left alone from Bremen, Germany, and arrived in New York. From there, he took a train to Chicago, where he lived with his sister for a while.

In 1963, Joe's parents came to America, and the family was finally reunited. In 1964, Joe married Theresia and began a family of his own.

When he first began work in Chicago in 1959, he was earning $1.75 an hour, and when he got into the plumbers union, he began earning $4 an hour, which was amazing to him. In one year, he and his wife had put a down payment on a six-apartment building, and in three years paid off his part of the mortgage, which was $20,000. Joe really appreciates the opportunities he has had in America, and it has meant a great deal to him to be able to prosper after experiencing the deprivation of the past.

His experiences growing up in Europe led him to seek God and learn His will for his life. Joe had been in the Catholic Church, but had never seen a Bible. The Communists taught him about Marx and Lenin, and the two didn't seem to fit together. Joe would ride his bicycle to work and think about life and what was really true.

Discovering the Church



At some point before 1983, Joe began getting information from the Church of God. He was also studying the Bible on his own and soon became a coworker of the Church.

Then he heard Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong on the radio and on TV, and he said it was as if a magnet was drawing him to God's truth at last. He went through all the booklets available, and all the Bible correspondence lessons.

Joe was a diabetic. In the past, he had fallen so ill he ended up in a hospital. But in 1983, as he was coming to understand more and more of God's way, Joe asked God to make him well again. Joe said he felt a powerful surge go through his body, and he was well from that time on. Joe found that he was completely healed of his diabetes! His doctor could not believe he was really cured—he told Joe that he was probably "misdiagnosed" and that he had never really had diabetes.

But his life almost ended abruptly that same night in 1983. Joe was a very heavy sleeper. He joked that a marching band couldn't wake him up. He was sleeping soundly, but his wife was still awake, waiting for their daughter to return home.



Suddenly, Joe was wide-awake, and he heard a crackling in the ceiling. This wasn't that unusual, because they had radiant heating in the concrete ceiling, and it was known to make noises when it heated up. But Joe said he felt like he was literally thrown out of bed. He shouted to his wife, "Get out! Get out!" She wrapped a blanket about her shoulders and followed Joe out of the room, but she wasn't moving fast enough for him. He grabbed her by the arm and pulled her into the adjoining hall. Just then, the whole concrete ceiling collapsed, crushing their furniture and driving the bedposts two inches into the floor.

Joe was determined to follow God's way, and in 2001 he was baptized. Today, Joe is a happy, thankful man. His life began in a bleak, hopeless way. But now he and his wife have a home of their own, two daughters, a son, four grandchildren and God's Holy Spirit.

That's quite a story!

Count It All Joy

By Bob Fenwick

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2). When you have a trial in your life, is it a joyful occasion? Are you happy when things are not going well in your life?



IMAGINE THIS SCENARIO: You have been out of work for six months, your car has been repossessed, and your house is in foreclosure. You're just so joyful that you would break out the champagne and celebrate, except you can't afford any...

Is this what James is talking about?

The Living Bible states it this way: "Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy." It is not the suffering itself that brings joy, but the knowledge that the suffering will work together for good and bring immense benefits (Romans 8:18, 28).


Dennis Luker

Mr. Dennis Luker, a minister in United Church of God, gave a sermon entitled, "Seven Good Reasons for Trials in Our Lives." The first good reason for trials is to lead us to a deeper repentance. "Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4).

The Bible tells us that it is God's goodness that leads us to repentance—that He intervenes in our lives at a certain point to open our hearts and minds and to begin to show us where we are wrong. (You can read a transcript of the sermon in its entirety at http://ucg.org/sermons/transcripts/200409trials.htm).

First the pain, then the gain

The Bible, among other things, is God's child-rearing book. A child that is being disciplined does not feel joyful. "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it"

(Hebrews 12:11). But a child matures into a responsible young adult as a result of discipline from loving parents. At that moment, all the chastening and all the discipline becomes joy. Looking back, the person is joyful that he received the wise and valuable discipline as a child.



Consider an Olympic athlete in training: There are many years of hard work, pain from strained muscles, disappointments and discouragement... Then comes the moment. While he stands on the podium, the flag of his country is raised, and the national anthem of his country is played. A gold medal is placed around his neck, and at that moment all the pain, all the discouragement, all the disappointment becomes joy.

Consider also the individuals that God has called into His Church and is working with spiritually. "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

At the moment of their resurrection to eternal life, all the heartache, all the suffering, all of the disappointment and discouragement they have felt will become joy. Not because of a gold medal that is won—for that lasts only a moment. But it is because of a crown that lasts for eternity. For at that moment they will be entering the Kingdom of God, not as little children, but as mature sons of God into God's family. This is the joy that is spoken of by James.

Further reading

For more helpful information to guide you, please request our free booklet *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

Letters to the Editor

Volume 7, Issue 9



Good articles in this edition—as usual. Being a longtime Boy Scout myself, I especially enjoyed the one on the Boy Scout teachings, etc.

— D. Hooser

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity