The Signs of the Times newsletter is a collection of stories and quotes from past issues of Signs and These Times.

Those who are in need of encouragement almost always feel overwhelmed by the negatives currently raging in their lives. When people are down, the bad seems worse than it usually is. To have someone else point out the good, which is also always present, reeducates the mind, transforms thought patterns, and frees people to think in new categories.

A good example is the story of Fanny Crosby, who was born in 1820. When she was six weeks old, a physician treated her for an eye infection. Unfortunately, the treatment left her totally blind. The next year her father died, forcing the mother to seek employment in order to provide for herself and her blinded baby.

To make that possible her grandmother offered to care for the baby. Quickly, the grandmother became eyes for the little girl. She taught Fanny about the beauty around them, describing in vivid detail the wonders of the world—clouds, rainbows, sunrises, sunsets, stars, and the moon.

Also, when the grandmother saw that Fanny had an interest in poetry, she encouraged the little girl to put her thoughts down on paper and praised her for every verse she wrote. The grandmother’s focus upon positives in her life prompted the little girl to write this poem when she was just eight years old. It reveals her own joyful, independent spirit:

Oh, what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don’t;
To weep and sigh
Because I’m blind,
I cannot and I won’t.

The end result: Fanny Crosby became America’s most prolific hymn writer, producing some 8,000 songs and hymns. Although she died in 1915, more than 60 of her hymns still appear in church hymnals.—By Victor Parachin, Signs of the Times, February 1991.

Quote: “I have always said, and always will say, that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands.”—By Thomas Jefferson, Signs of the Times, February 1, 1938.


The German poet and author Heinrich Heine lay dying. Family and friends waited out his last moments, whispering softly among themselves, fighting back their grief with repressed sobs. His mouth opened. They bent close. “God will forgive me. . . . It’s His profession,” the poet said with his last breaths.

And God truly does forgive.—By Gerald Wheeler, These Times, July 1980.

Quote: “So long as we love we serve; so long as we are loved by others, I would almost say that we are indispensable; and no man is useless while he has a friend.”—By Stevenson, These Times, December 1961.

NEW from Pacific Press—13 Weeks to Peace by Jennifer Jill Schwirzer. In 13 Weeks to Peace, Jennifer Schwirzer reveals a Divine Healer who longs to bring peace to hurting hearts and minds, and skillfully demonstrates how He goes about the work of transforming us, re-creating us into His own image. Each chapter ends with discussion questions, and, if
you should desire to explore the topics further, there are numerous tools for further examination in the Toolbox section at the back of the book. *13 Weeks to Peace* is a great resource for individual or small group study.

Read the first chapter of this book online at [http://www.adventistbookcenter.com/Detail.tpl?sku=0816324948](http://www.adventistbookcenter.com/Detail.tpl?sku=0816324948) Order online or from your local Adventist Book Center--1-800-765-6955.

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A little girl in a wretched attic, whose mother had no bread, knelt down by the bedside and said slowly:

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

Then she went out into the street and began to wonder where God kept His bread. She turned around the corner and saw a well-filled baker shop; so she entered confidently and said to the baker:

“I've come for it.”

“Come for what?”

“My daily bread,” she answered, pointing to the tempting loaves. “I'll take two, if you please—one for mother and one for me.”

“All right,” said the baker, putting them into a bag and giving them to his little customer, who started at once to go into the street.

“Stop, you little rogue; where is your money?”

“I haven't any,” she said simply.

“Haven't any!” he repeated. “You little thief, what brought you here, then?”

The hard words frightened the little girl, who, bursting into tears, said:

“Mother is sick and hungry. In my prayers I said, ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ and then I thought God meant me to bring it, and so I came.”

The rough but kind hearted baker was softened by the child’s simple tale, and instead of chiding her he said:

“You poor, dear girl! Here, take this to your mother.” And he filled a large basket for her.—Selected, Signs of the Times, November 22, 1899.

Quote: “When the pulpit is not filled, is it any wonder the pews are empty?”—Unknown, Signs of the Times, May 28, 1912.

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“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”—Ephesians 2:8.

There are a good many independent souls in our world much like Tommy, who came into the kitchen one morning and asked his mother to guess what he had in his tightly clenched fist. When he finally opened up his hand his mother saw several coins—dimes, nickels, pennies—which his daddy had given to him.

“That’s all the money I have,” he confided to his mother. “daddy gave it to me. But I don’t want him to give this to me. I want to earn it.”

“Sonny boy, daddy gave you that money,” said mother. “You do not have to do one single thing to earn it. It is yours. Your daddy loves you and he gave the money to you because he loves you. Of course, Tommy, if you really love daddy you ought to show him you love him by being a real good boy, by doing what he wants you to do.”

There are a lot of independent adults who reason as did Tommy. They cannot fathom how eternal life can be a gift. They must do something to earn it. Pay some price, make some great sacrifice, earn eternal life by their deeds. God loves us so much He was willing to give His only-begotten Son, that you and I might have eternal life. It is an out-and-out gift from Him. Money cannot buy a ticket to heaven. Nothing we could do would buy our way into His kingdom. Eternal life is His gift to us, because He loved us.—By C. L. Paddock, Signs of the Times, November 10, 1953.

Quote: “Afflictions are but as a dark entry into our Father’s house.”—By Thomas Brooks, Signs of the Times, February 8, 1910.

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George Muller’s life is a study in contrasts. Rejected as physically unfit by the military, he lived to be 92. He played cards while his mother lay dying, but also provided homes for over 10,000 orphans. He gave up a salary of £55 a year to live on freewill offerings, yet received £93,000 for his own use during the following years, £81,000 (or $405,000) of which he gave away!
Born in Prussia on September 27, 1805, by the age of 10 Muller was stealing government funds which his father held in trust. He spent most of his school years drinking—he once drank five quarts of beer in a single afternoon, just to prove he could.

Muller also had the habit of staying at expensive hotels, living extravagantly, then vanishing without paying his bill. He attempted this once too often, however, and spent a month in jail.

While attending Halle University, however, Muller became a Christian. “There were but eight Christian students in the whole twelve hundred,” he writes. “We who were not Christians made it hard for them.

“Along toward the close of my university course something seemed to go wrong with me. I was not sick, and I had no misfortune, but I was unhappy. So I hiked down into Switzerland, where I expected surely to drop my burden, but I did not.

“I grew frightened and hurried back to Halle, and took up my studies again. But my burden grew heavier and heavier. At last I remembered the eight Christians and their prayer meeting.

“One and another told me of Christ. They prayed with me, and I prayed for myself. At last I saw Christ as my Saviour. The burden rolled from off me, and a great love for Christ filled my soul.”

At the age of 25, Muller married Mary Groves and moved from Germany to England. He became the pastor of an 18-member church, with an annual salary of £55—about $275.

When he learned that his salary came from the rental of church pews, however, Muller would not accept it. Instead, he placed a box in the chapel with a note stating that offerings placed in it would go toward his support.

It was then that Muller resolved never to ask anyone for money in God’s work. Instead, he would present his needs to the Lord in prayer and trust Him to provide.

A few years later, Muller learned that English prisons held six thousand children. Their only crime: they had no other place to live. He began to plan an orphanage, and prayed for £1,000 as an indication of God’s leading. Some days later, he spoke to a group of his desire to begin this work, purposely failing to mention money or take a collection.

Following the meeting someone slipped 10 shillings into his hand. It was a far cry from £1,000, but it was a start. That same evening another listener donated a cabinet. The next day a man gave three dishes, 28 plates, three basins, one jug, four mugs, three salt stands, one grater, four knives, and five forks.

We have this unusual list today because Muller itemized the gifts, just as he did every penny that was given him. That’s because he refused to spend money for any purpose other than that for which it had been given. He might be in need of food but would rather die than touch £100 given for a building fund.

Yet Muller’s faith was not presumption. He refused to go in debt. Before he acted upon any plan, he made sure he had the money to do so.

By 1845, Muller had 130 orphans housed in four rented buildings. Not content with that, however, he decided to build a single orphanage—one that could house 300. The fact that he had but £5 wasn’t a serious drawback. God was his partner, after all.

Muller began praying on December 14, 1845. By July 5, 1847, he had sufficient funds to build the new orphanage. Two years later, with the building completed and the orphans moved in, £776 remained in the building fund. And he had never asked anyone for a penny!

Before he died on March 10, 1898, Muller built four other orphanages the same way. Total cost: about $575,000. His personal assets when he died, totaled less than $300. He had wanted his life to be a witness to the fact that God will provide for those who trust Him.

He succeeded.—Unknown, Signs of the Times, February 1991.

Quote: “The music of earth should be a rehearsal for the music of heaven.”—By Charles G. Bellah, Signs of the Times, November 12, 1929.

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