

Game Plan for the New Year

Tackling all Kinds of Terrain

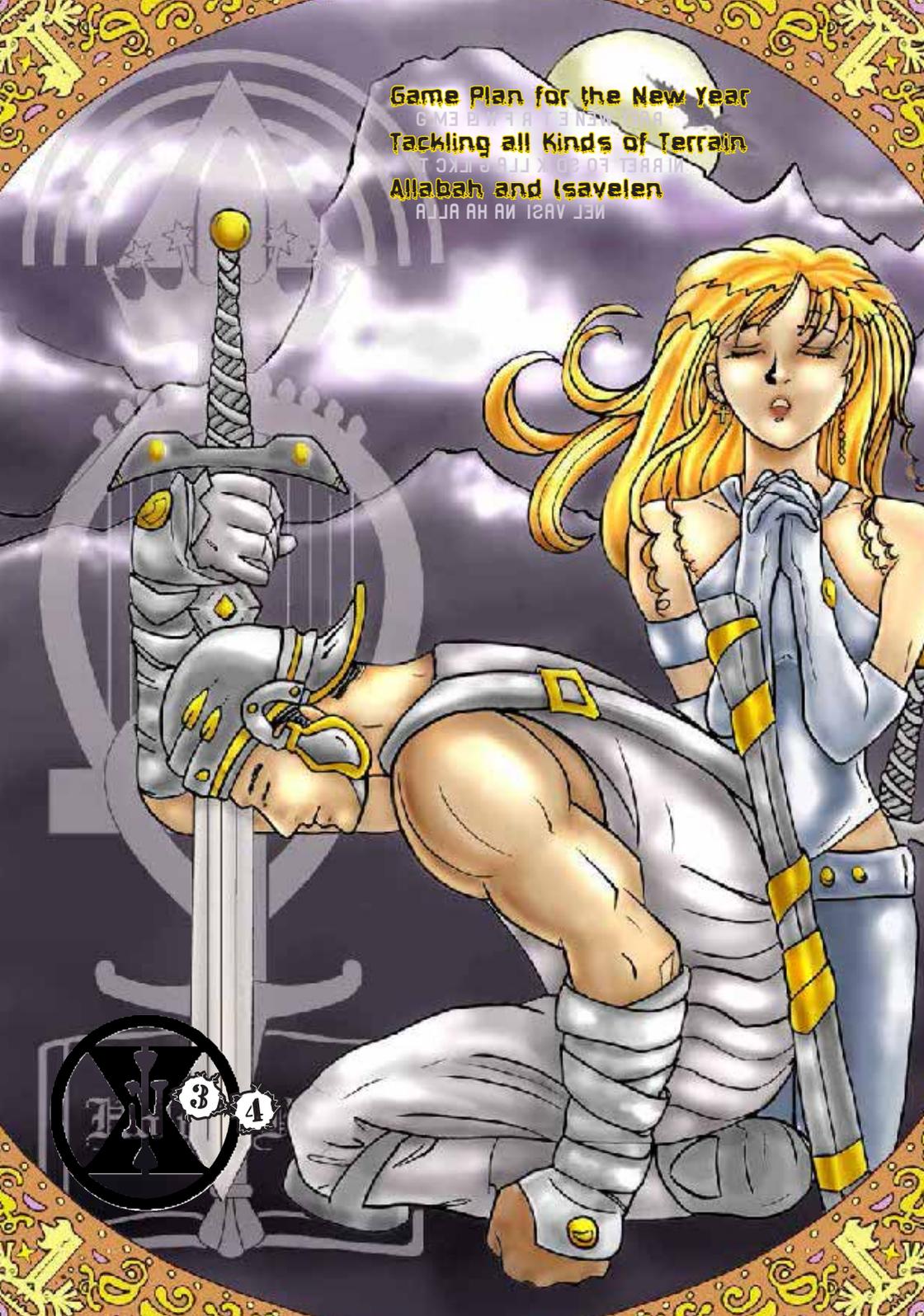
Allabah and Isavelen

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Happy 2nd Xn Anniversary!

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(JESUS:) DO YOU SECRETLY PRAY FOR THE DRIVER AHEAD OF YOU IN TRAFFIC,

DIRECTING THE POWER OF MY SPIRIT DIRECTLY INTO HIS OR HER LIFE?

DO YOU AIM POWERFUL PRAYER BEAMS AT THE PERSON YOU MEET OR GREET ALONG A WALKWAY?

DO YOU PRAY FOR THE ACTORS IN THE MOVIES YOU WATCH?

HAS THE CHECKOUT GIRL SECRETLY BEEN KISSED AND BLESSED BY MY SPIRIT TODAY—

BECAUSE YOU PRAYED?

THIS WORLD AND THOSE AROUND YOU WON'T KNOW WHAT HIT THEM

AS YOU LEARN TO USE THE GREAT POWER OF PRAYER,

THEY CAN NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN BECAUSE YOU PRAYED.

AS YOU OPEN THE TAPS BY FAITH AND DIRECT THE FLOW,

BECOME A LIVING PRAYER.

YOU MAY NOT ALWAYS SEE THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS, BUT ONCE YOU PRAY AND DIRECT THE FLOW OF MY POWER AT A PERSON OR SITUATION, THINGS WILL CHANGE,

THINGS WILL BE DIFFERENT.

BECOME
A
LIVING
PRAYER!

KEYS PROMISE: TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR PRAYERS, CALL ON THE KEYS.

NOTABLE QUOTE: (JESUS:) YOU CAN PRAY AT NIGHT WHEN YOU'RE AWAKE, OR WHILE YOU WASH DISHES, OR WHILE YOU HANG THE LAUNDRY OR HAVE GET-OUT WALKS, OR WHILE YOU'RE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT. THERE ARE LIMITLESS OPPORTUNITIES TO FIT IN INTERCESSORY PRAYER DURING THE ACTIVITIES THAT YOU ALREADY DO. ("FEAST 9003...", ML #3433:937)

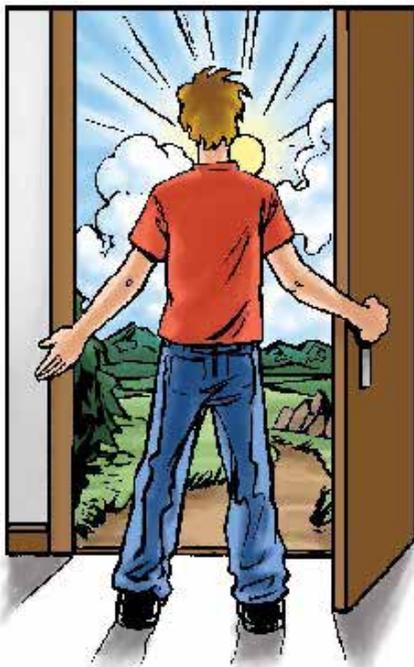
GAME PLAN FOR THE NEW YEAR



B (Jesus:) Each passing year opens the door for the new, for the things that are to come.



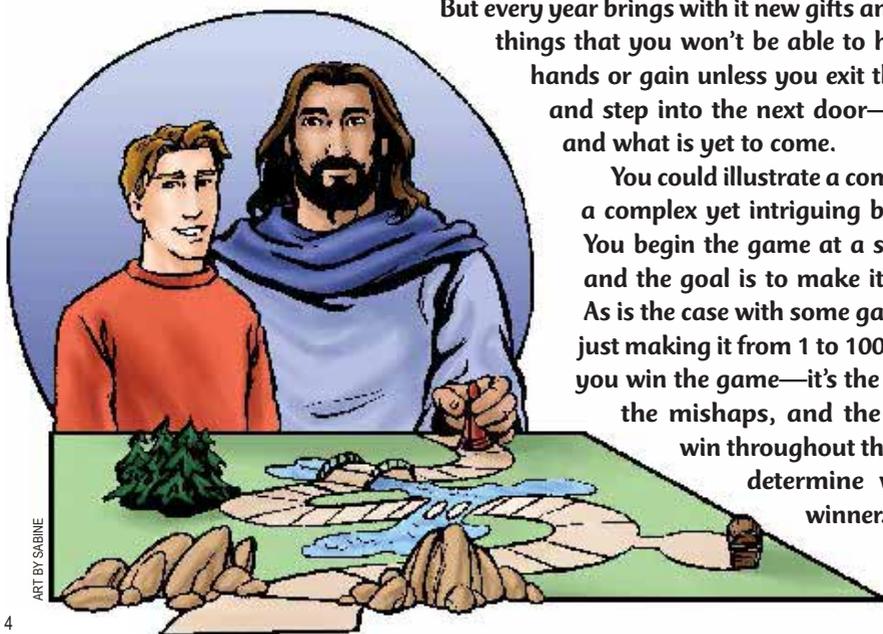
It's the closing of one door on that which has passed and the opening of a new door that leads to what is still to come.



Sometimes it's a little daunting to realize you have a whole year of growth and change and progress ahead, and you wonder if your passing year was all that it could have been.

But every year brings with it new gifts and treasures, things that you won't be able to hold in your hands or gain unless you exit the one door and step into the next door—the future, and what is yet to come.

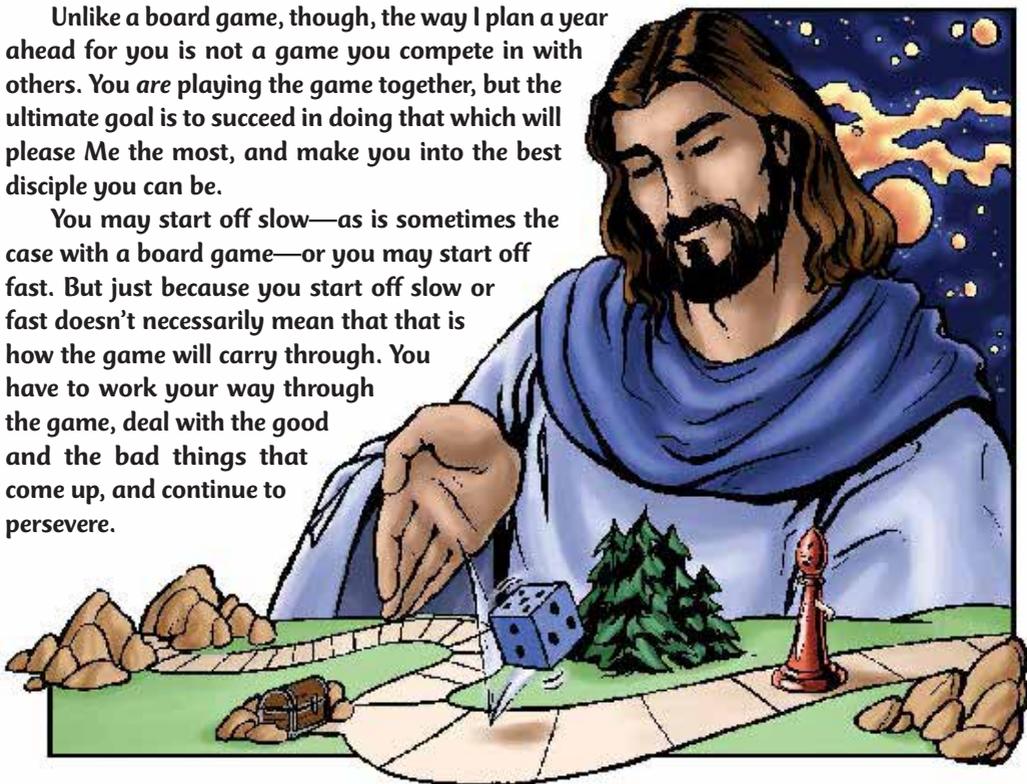
You could illustrate a coming year by a complex yet intriguing board game: You begin the game at a specific spot, and the goal is to make it to the end. As is the case with some games, it's not just making it from 1 to 100 that makes you win the game—it's the adventures, the mishaps, and the prizes you win throughout the game that determine who is the winner.



ART BY SABINE

Unlike a board game, though, the way I plan a year ahead for you is not a game you compete in with others. You *are* playing the game together, but the ultimate goal is to succeed in doing that which will please Me the most, and make you into the best disciple you can be.

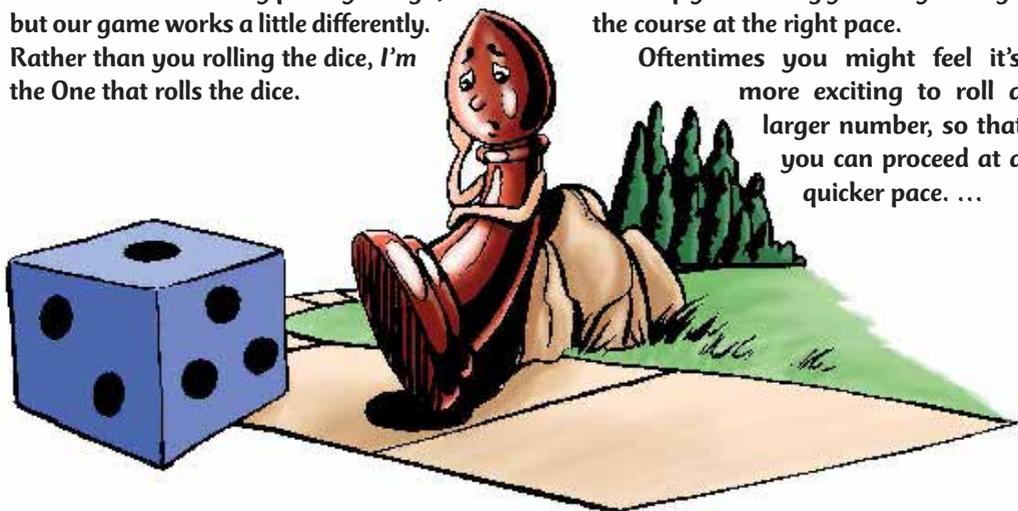
You may start off slow—as is sometimes the case with a board game—or you may start off fast. But just because you start off slow or fast doesn't necessarily mean that that is how the game will carry through. You have to work your way through the game, deal with the good and the bad things that come up, and continue to persevere.



In many a board game you roll the die to determine how many paces you'll go, but our game works a little differently. Rather than you rolling the dice, I'm the One that rolls the dice.

Only I can roll the perfect number that will keep you making your way through the course at the right pace.

Oftentimes you might feel it's more exciting to roll a larger number, so that you can proceed at a quicker pace. ...



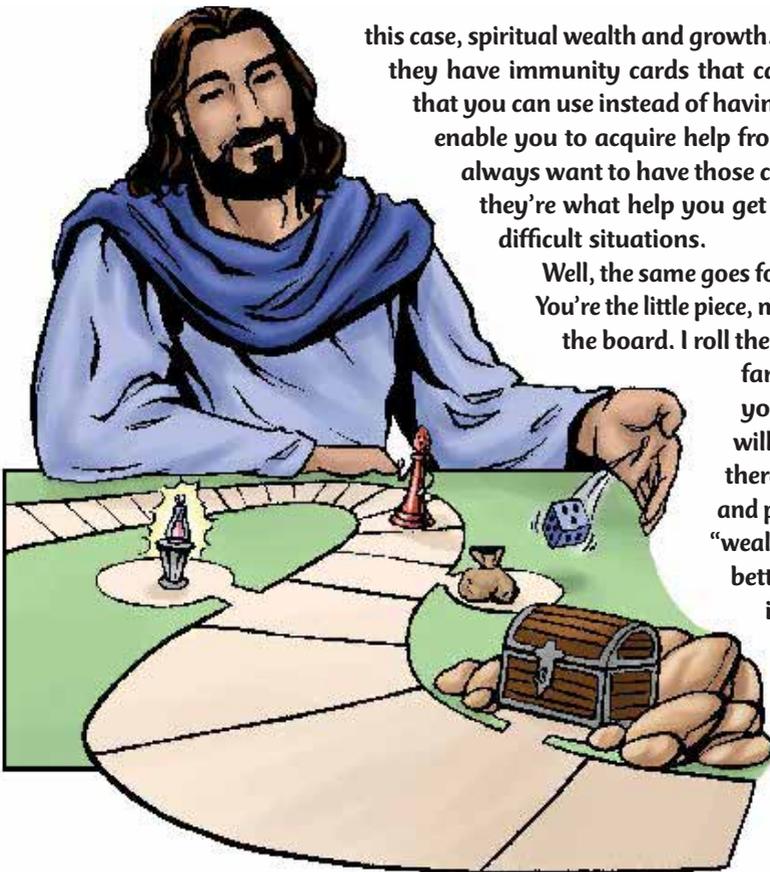
...But there will be times when I'll choose lower numbers, and through the lower rolls you're able to gain adventures, prizes, or additional attributes that you'll need throughout the rest of the game.

There are little secrets and tricks to this game that can help you get the most out of it, to where you don't just make it from start to finish, but you gain little prizes that add to your wealth—in

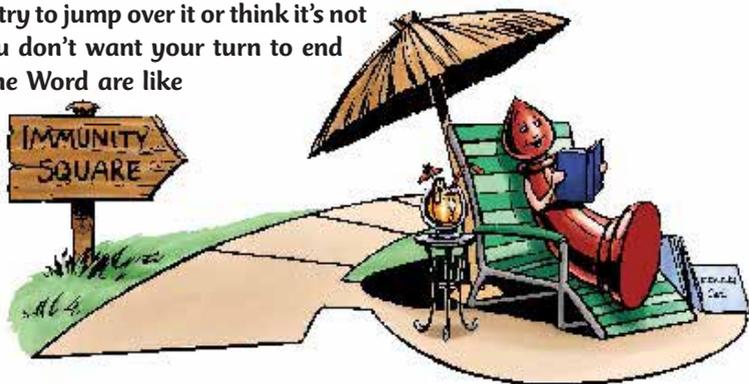


this case, spiritual wealth and growth. In many board games they have immunity cards that can get you out of jail, that you can use instead of having to pay a fine, or that enable you to acquire help from another player. You always want to have those cards on hand, because they're what help you get out of tight spots and difficult situations.

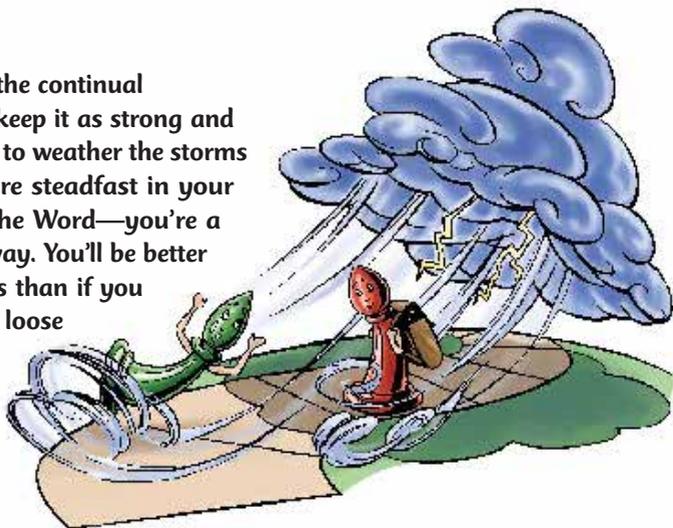
Well, the same goes for this new year's game. You're the little piece, making your way across the board. I roll the dice, determining how far you should go, where you'll land, and what it will mean. Along the way there will be things to gain and pick up, and add to your "wealth," which will give you better standing and ability to withstand the obstacles you may encounter.



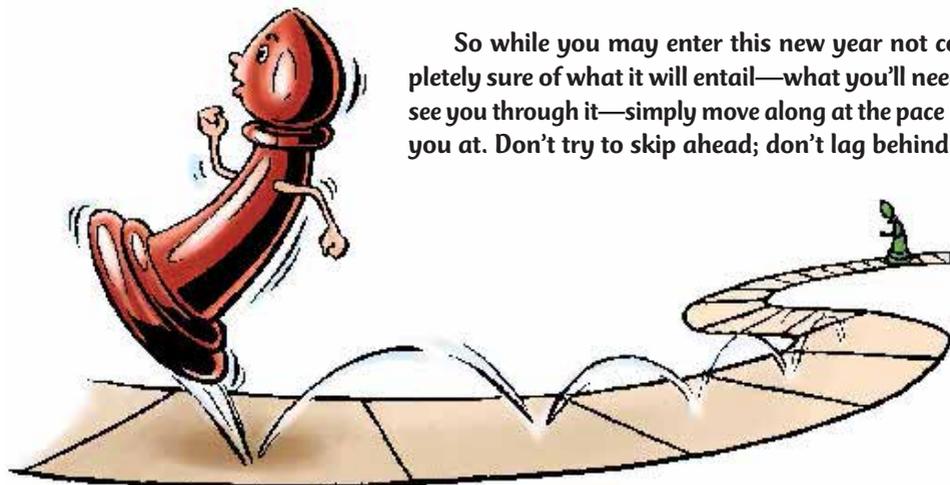
When you come across an immunity square, it's important that you don't try to jump over it or think it's not necessary, because you don't want your turn to end there. The keys and the Word are like that immunity, and taking the time to gird yourself spiritually—by making sure you've got your back covered with sufficient immunity cards on hand—is what helps you traverse the complications and rise above the obstacles.



Your spiritual life needs the continual nourishment and boosts to keep it as strong and healthy as it can be, in order to weather the storms that may arise. When you're steadfast in your foundation—grounded in the Word—you're a lot less likely to be blown away. You'll be better able to withstand the storms than if you were just flailing in the wind, loose and floundering, swept to wherever the wind might carry you.

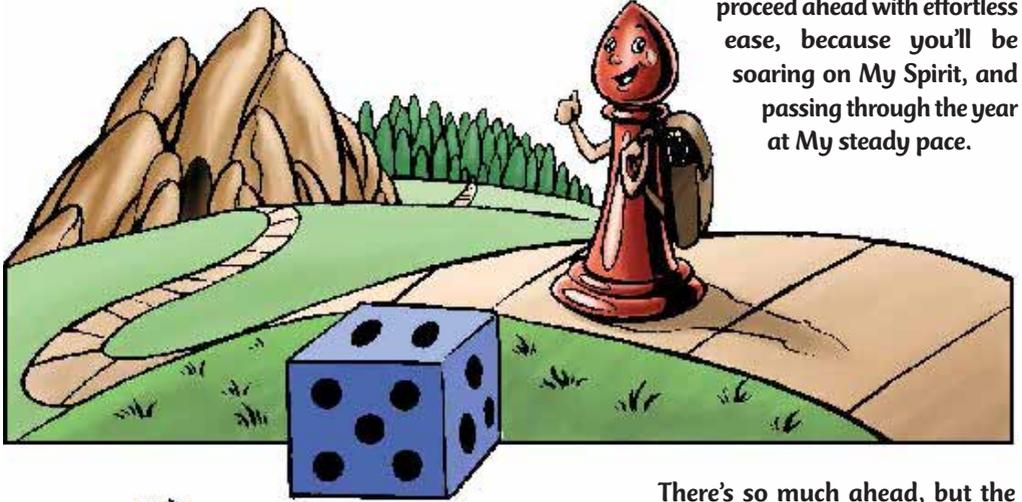


So while you may enter this new year not completely sure of what it will entail—what you'll need to see you through it—simply move along at the pace I set you at. Don't try to skip ahead; don't lag behind.



If you let Me take you at My pace, I'll be able to stock you up with all that you need for what's to come. I'll help you make it through the slower places, and gain what you need to during those lower rolls. And then when it comes time to speed up—if you're letting Me move you along—you'll

proceed ahead with effortless ease, because you'll be soaring on My Spirit, and passing through the year at My steady pace.



There's so much ahead, but the path only opens up to you one roll at a time. So you've got to take it as it comes, gain the most that you can out of each turn, and yield to where

I would place you on the board. Take the immunity cards as often as you can. Keep a good stack. That way whenever the Enemy attempts to foil your progress or hinder you from taking another turn, you can just flash that immunity card and overcome. Okay?

I love you.

Notable Quote: (Jesus:)

I have created the key of destiny to help anyone find and fulfill their destiny. ("Keep the Faith!" ML #3459:58)

Keys Promise: Claiming the power of the keys of empowerment at the start of a new year brings down My blessings upon you—anointing, power, challenge, faith, and hope for the future.

WHEN LOVE STRIKES!

Chapter 7: Out and About

"We stop first at the cultural exhibition at the Museo Amparo," said Marisa. "There's a class that starts at ten o'clock, which goes on for about an hour, and then there's a slide show. Then we go to the *Museo de Artes Populares*, where they have Mexican arts and crafts, pictures and information about native cuisine and things. I'm supposed to take notes and do a field trip report. I've brought a video camera, so I'm to do a documentary on this whole thing."

"Sounds busy."

"And on top of that, I have to cover today's event, *Cinco de Mayo*. It commemorates the victory of the *Batalla de Puebla*, fought on May 5th, 1862, when Napoleon III had his troops come to try and take Mexico City, and it was outside Puebla that the Mexicans won a historic battle against the French."

Abner nodded. "Cool."

"Are you into history?" Marisa asked.

"Kind of. Not so much this type of thing, though. I'm more into ancient history—Rome and all that. Although this looks pretty cool."

"Well, I'm not so into it myself. Look," she whispered, as the car wound carefully through the festive crowd. "At lunchtime, Renato usually gets a few burritos, drinks a couple of beers and crashes in the car, and he's not going to miss out on today's celebration, which should give us some space. We can hang out at a restaurant in the Zócalo plaza, get a pizza or *Chile Poblano*—something like that—and you can show me your magazines."

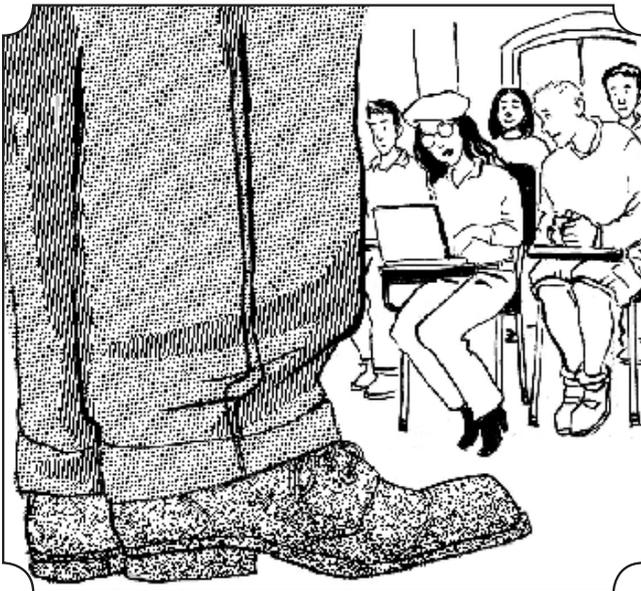
"S ... sounds great."

The lecture went on for about three quarters of an hour, during which time Marisa donned a pair of glasses and furiously typed notes into a notebook computer. The class being in Spanish, Abner understood little, but contented himself with the pleasant experience of sitting close to his attractive companion, studying her and lapping up her gracious smiles.

"So sorry," Marisa said at the end of the lecture. "It must have been so boring for you."

"Not at all," said Abner, thinking how much more fun this was than sitting at home with Tim, realizing of course that the pleasure had nothing to do with the lecture's subject matter, and that he would willingly

ART BY TIAGO



endure many boring activities if he were in the same present company.

The slide show, being visual, was a little more interesting, although the pre-recorded narrative—also in Spanish—broke down halfway through, which set the proceedings back for twenty minutes, during which time Marisa took the opportunity to quiz Abner about his background.

"Wow! What a cool upbringing," she said at length after listening enthralled to Abner's offhand account of a few of his and his family's missionary exploits. "I mean, Papa's line of work..." Marisa glanced around and caught Renato's eye, he was sitting four rows back, reading a newspaper. She dropped her voice. "He doesn't say too much about it, though. Why do you think I have a bruise as a 'chauffeur'! Papa's paranoid of my getting kidnapped—I don't blame him. Anyway, because of Papa's work, as a family we've been around, and my folks have always stressed me getting good cultural experience, but it's dull compared to all you've just told me."

There was an announcement that the playback system had been repaired; the lights went off and the slide show resumed. Abner caught his breath as Marisa, who was keeping her eyes fixed on the screen, cautiously slipped her hand in his. He felt his heart thumping in his throat and the next twenty minutes dissolved into a timeless blur.

The lights came back on and the audience stood up. Abner, feeling at the mercy of his agonizing vulnerability, blushed and stuffed his hands in his jacket pockets. Then, with as tough a countenance as he could muster, suggested that they take a bathroom break.

"I need to chill," he said, feeling stupid even as he spoke.

"Sure," said Marisa with a forbearing smile. "I'll wait for you in the car. Get ready to be on video!"

Jesus! thought Abner as he stared up at the bathroom ceiling, having splashed water on his face. He was gasping. *Help me. I claim the keys of ... I don't know what. Please help me. She's too much. I just don't want to blow it! I feel like a stupid, immature jerk. She's going to hate me once this day is out. Help me to be a witness. Help me remember all those witnessing tips...*

Honesty and humility. Honesty and humility, Abner. Remember that.

Yes, Lord.

Marisa was true to her word as they wandered around the *Museo de Artes Populares*. Her video camera became a faithful recorder of every goofy expression and silly antic that Abner had up his self-conscious sleeve.

"I thought you were supposed to be filming the exhibits," protested Abner.

"You're the most interesting curio around here," Marisa retorted, her eye squinting into the viewfinder. "Besides I want to show Mama what you're like. She hasn't met you."

Abner straightened up and attempted to appear nonchalantly natural. "Then be sure to erase all that goofy stuff."

Marisa giggled. "No way! Who knows when I might need to use it as leverage!"

* * *

The phone was ringing and Mer picked it up. Kyra entered the room and stopped in her tracks to see Mer's expression of alarm.

"What's up?" said Kyra.

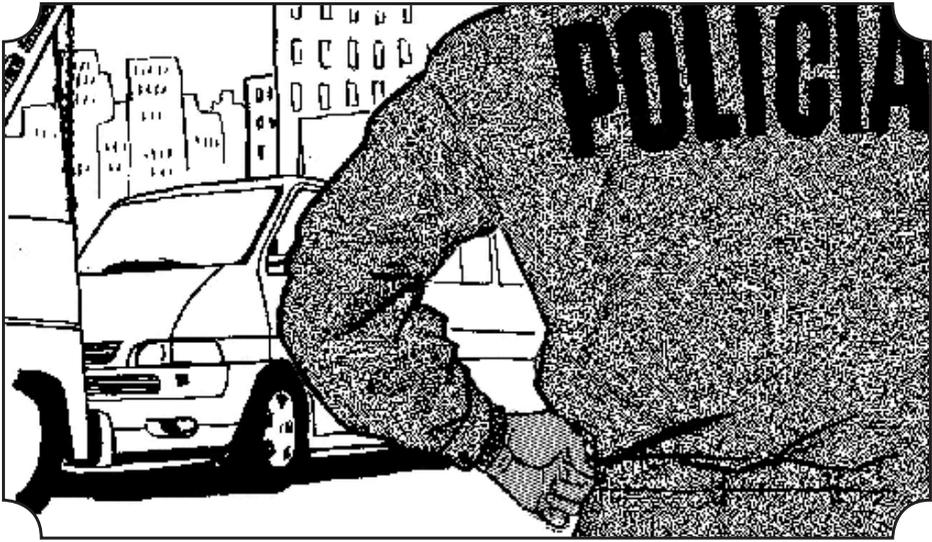
Mer raised her hand as she listened to the explanation at the other end of the line.

"Okay, we will. What time will you be home?"

After saying goodbye, she put the phone down and turned to Kyra.

"That was Clay. He and Amy had an accident in the van. Neither of them were hurt, thank the Lord. But the van was rear-ended by a drunk driver as they were pulling out of the supermarket car park. There's a real shindig spirit in town today, as you can imagine. Anyway, the van's being towed now to the shop, and they're getting a taxi home. They asked for prayer."

* * *



Mer and Tim helped unload groceries from the taxi.

"Thank the Lord that neither of you got hurt," said Mer.

"Er ... do you want to take a little walk?" Clay asked.

"Sure. Anywhere in particular?"

"No, not really. I was praying on the way back, and the Lord said for you and me to go somewhere we could talk ... a restaurant or cafeteria."

"Okay. Let me grab a jacket and tell someone."

As they strolled down the sidewalk, Clay was pensive and Mer didn't feel like pressing for conversation as the event with the vehicle was evidently weighing on him.

"It's okay," said Clay after awhile. "I'll talk eventually. I usually do most of the talking when we're together, anyway."

"I've met my match," said Mer.

"But I want to hear from you," said Clay.

"What about?"

"Just talk. If there's anything about me and my attitude lately that you've noticed. Anything stinky?"

"Stinky?"

Clay nodded.

"You're the teamworker," said Mer. "And my shepherd. If I've noticed anything, it's probably not the Lord showing me. I have noticed a few things, but I've hesitated, because it's a weakness of mine to use the Word to point the finger at others without really seeing my own error, or the ways in which I could be

story feature

guilty of similar things, or even worse."

"You love me, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Then I trust that the Lord is going to use whatever you feel to help me right now."

"Phew," said Mer. "That's a lot of trust." Mer gulped and her eyes watered. "Okay. I was praying for you about a month or so ago, when the whole thing came up about Amy and kids moving here, and you offered to sleep in the maid's room with Abner."

"Uh-huh."

"It didn't work out, and I was glad. Maybe for selfish reasons, I don't know, I didn't check in with the Lord about that. But I was concerned that you were spreading yourself too thin. You're so busy, and I saw that option as being another pull that you didn't need. Please shut me up if I'm talking like, out of it, okay?"

"Keep going," said Clay.

"Well, I prayed about it later on, and the Lord said ... I have it at home, I can give it to you when we get back. I don't remember all He said, but it was something about your being like the CO in the GN, 'What Is Jesus Worth to You?' You want to hang out after a long day of practice and responsibilities and business and stuff, and it's kind of crowded out your Word. It says when you start crowding out the Word in your life, your weaknesses start showing up."

"Which are?"

"Clay! That's not for me to say. Love has an extra spiritual eye, remember?"

"Okay. But love tells the truth even if it hurts."

By now they had reached the restaurant of a contact, and after a prayer in which they claimed the keys of supply and provision, the owner cheerfully led them to a corner table, and instructed them to order anything they wished.

Chapter 8: Honesty and Humility

"Look who just walked in," whispered Marisa. "Your brother and the blonde singer girl, what's her name ... Meredith."

Abner turned to look and his face fell.

"Let's go and join them," said Marisa, already on her feet.

"M ... maybe not. Looks like they're getting into a heavy conversation. Three's a crowd, right?"

"Okay. They haven't noticed us anyway." Marisa sat back down and a mischievous twinkle flashed in her eyes. "Maybe we'll get to see something we shouldn't!" she added. "Or maybe they'll get to see something *they* shouldn't!"

Abner blushed.

"You're ill at ease with girls, aren't you?" Marisa enquired.

"Er ... I dunno."

"Do you have a girlfriend?"

"No, er..."

Honesty and humility,
Abner!

"Yes."

"More than one?"

"Er..."

Honesty and humility!
Honesty and humility.

"No, just one."

"Are you in love with her?"

"I thought I was ... I mean, yes."

"Is she pretty?"

"I think so."

"Do you have a photo?"

Abner hesitated, then reached into his backpack.

"What's her name?" asked Marisa after a few seconds of studying the crumpled photograph.

"Ivana. It's a terrible picture."

"No it's not. I can't compete with that."

"What do you mean? You're absolutely ... you're very nice!"

"Abner, that girl's got what we call *alma profunda* in Spanish. Deep soul!"

"Yeah. She is pretty deep."



Marisa went silent again and smiled despondently at Abner who put the photo back into his backpack.

"We could look at those magazines, if you want," he said.

"Is she in love with you?"

"Who, Ivana? I don't really know. I think she looks at me more like a kid brother or something. She 'watches for my soul!'"

Marisa took a deep breath and put her hand on his. "Abner. I'm realizing something. You've been admirably honest with me, and I should be the same with you ... oh, shall we order the pizza before it gets too late? You like *cuatro estaciones*, right?"

"Yes, but..."

Marisa winked and motioned to the waiter. "I have a credit card. Today is on Papa's account."

* * *

"The accident," said Clay, "I think it was a result of my attitude. My pride to be more specific."

Mer nibbled her lip and nervously picked up the menu.

"We already ordered," said Clay. "You want something else?"

"N ... no. Go ahead. I'm listening."

"Anyway, when it happened, I'd just gotten done letting Amy know how important our ministry to the rich here is, like I was some sort of big expert. Looking back on that conversation, I'm seeing how proud I was. I didn't say it in so many words, but I was looking down on the other Homes and belittling their ministries. Lord, forgive me."

"That's sweet of you to confess that," said Mer, "but I'm sure the accident wasn't all your fault."

"I still need to pray about it and hear from Him," said Clay, raising his hand, "but I was off guard and over confident. I even wondered if it was necessary for me to have taken Amy shopping when I still needed to do my P&P for the day. I want to know what you think."

"I don't want to rub it in," said Mer. "You're already having to bear all of this. But I want to help. I want to be a safeguard to you, if that could be possible, so Lord, help me as I say this."

The pizza arrived and after a short blessing on the food, Mer continued.

"To me, you're like, perfect. You're super diligent, loving, faithful. You don't have any worldly hang-ups that some of us are into—you're too busy for that anyway, you burn the candle at both ends. That's the point, I think. You get your Word time, but it seems

story feature

very serious and work-oriented at the same time. Like, no prob' applying it, even to yourself. You go on a super big attack, and I admire you for it. But ... is this making sense?"

Clay nodded. "But..."

"Okay. Like your last point about whether it was necessary to go with Amy. It's that deal again of you spreading yourself so thin. But something else comes to mind. One time I was using the bathroom in your old room, and you were talking to Kyra. I couldn't help but overhear you both discussing Justin and his appetite for movies, novels, Internet surfing, you name it! True, the guy has his weaknesses, and he's trying hard to overcome them, but the way you guys were discussing it left me thinking he had like, one foot in the System and the other on a banana skin. I prayed about it afterwards and the Lord said some incredibly sweet things about Justin and how he was seriously working on those problems. He's often asked for prayer, and he's changing. I wanted to show you the prophecy, but I was like, 'Who am I?'"

"You should have. ... I remember the time you're talking about. We hadn't committed that conversation to the Lord, and I felt like ... er ... *mud* afterwards. You're right. I need safeguards. I ... I need *you*."

Mer fidgeted nervously as Clay's blue-gray eyes stared pleadingly into her own.

"Even when you're picking your teeth with a fork!" he added with a smile.

"Oh no!" Mer exclaimed, slamming the fork down on the tablecloth. "I *was*. Talk about needing safeguards, I don't even know when I'm doing those things."

"I'm sure the president was impressed."

"Clay! I trust I didn't do anything like that in front of him!"

"I'm sure you didn't, 'cuz he probably would have pointed it out if you had."

"Yeah, right."

"That's why you need me along at all times."

"I do, Clay."

Clay sighed and took a bite of pizza.

"So what's next?" Mer asked.

"Next?"

"With us. We have now established the fact that we need each other."

"I guess we leave it in the Lord's hands."

Mer rolled her eyes. "Okay. We *continue* to leave it in His hands. Have you asked Him about it?"

"Er ... have you?"

Mer smiled wearily. "I asked you first."

* * *

"Okay," said Marisa, breaking a short period of light conversation. "Like I said, I should be honest with you. When I first saw you on the plane I thought you were a typical little teen gangsta wannabe!"

Abner blushed and shook his head.

"Then when you gave me that pamphlet and I looked into your eyes, I saw something different. What we say in Spanish *eterno*—ageless. It was weird, and I felt very attracted. It kind of freaked me out at first, as I usually go for guys a lot older. Or at least more mature. But you have a strange sort of 'childish' maturity, if there can be such a thing. And I like being with you."

"I like being with you, too," said Abner, in amazement at all she was saying.

"But I've been trying to put a handle on my feelings," Marisa continued. "And I'm realizing that I love you, but I'm not *'in love'* with you. Do you understand?"

"Oh great," said Abner. "That's the usual convenient cop out."

"Why?"

"Tim says that's what chicks say when they're not interested. 'I love you but I don't *like* you.' 'We're just friends,' etc., etc."

"Really? Look, I haven't had feelings like this for anyone, except maybe my parents, but even that's different. There are tons of guys that I *like* for in-

stance, but I could never say I *love* them, not like this."

Abner's heart leapt and he couldn't resist the beam of satisfaction that came with a blush. "*Really?*"

The pizza had arrived.

"No question," Marisa replied and lifted a slice onto her plate.

"But," her eyes narrowed slightly as she took a bite.

"I have a feeling that there's some reservation there. Like there's something wrong with it?"

"There's nothing wrong," said Abner. "But we have rules."

"Like not playing around?"

"Sort of. ..." Marisa got the point from Abner's expression.

"Okay ... and the chap-erone thing?"

"What do you mean?"

"It seems you can hardly go anywhere without checking in, and this being alone with me seems to be a problem."

"Look, Marisa," said Abner, his heart beating with a silent desperate prayer for the right answers. "It's a rough world out there ... here, and you obviously understand that, or at least your folks do."

"You're right," said Marisa, as she wiped her mouth. "They watch me like hawks, but for different reasons, and I *hate* it! But I agree it's a rough world and getting worse, and I hope I don't have to find out the hard way. Anyway, at least you don't have a bodyguard looking over your shoulder

every minute! But Renato's sweet, he wouldn't hurt a fly. He just *looks* scary!"

Marisa took another bite of pizza, and munched thoughtfully for awhile before continuing. "But can you explain these weird feelings I have?"

Abner took this opportunity to produce an *Activated* magazine from his backpack.

"Here, this article explains it, it's from our recent Valentine's *Activated* mag."

"The Source of True Love.' Hmmm....," said Marisa and thoughtfully browsed the article for a couple of minutes.

"This spiritual love ... this Spirit of God," she said at last, "how does it work?"

Abner laughed and Marisa looked surprised.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It's hard for me to tell. You're very beautiful. ..."

Marisa's flattered smile faded quickly. "Yes, but..."
Honesty and humility, Abner. Honesty and humility.

Abner, holding Marisa's gaze, felt an irresistible power surging in his breast, and he took the plunge.

"I can't explain it, Marisa, but I'll try. Although you seem to know a lot, and are quite ... er ... you know, *mature*, it seems you are simple—kind of. That's not bad, because Jesus said in the Bible that He was thankful that His Father had hidden these things from the wise and prudent and had revealed them unto babes. It's weird, but that's how I see you sometimes, Marisa, as a babe, and I want to *feed* you from the Word. Do you understand?"



story feature

Open mouthed, Marisa nodded.

"Jesus loves you, and I love you. I guess you could say in a spiritual way."

By this time tears were rolling down Marisa's cheeks and Abner, who was trembling, was squinting his eyes to hold back his own.

"You're a wonderful friend, Abner. Thank you for telling me all that," said Marisa.

After a period of awed silence, Abner blinked his eyes. "Man, I don't know what came over me just now."

"Whatever it was, it was beautiful," said Marisa. "I feel *zapped*."

"Me too."

"Abner, this has been the best day of my life. I wish it didn't have to end."

"It doesn't have to, at least not yet. Look, we have a gig at nine-thirty in this plaza—"

"And a rehearsal at four-thirty!"

"Clay!"

"I figured this point in the conversation was an okay time to make my entrance!"

"You guys look inspired," said Mer.

Abner responded with a contented "Phew!"

"We only just noticed that you guys were here," said Clay. "Otherwise we would have invited you both over."

"That's okay," said Marisa with a grin. "We had things to discuss."

"We did too," said Mer. "Are you coming to the show in the plaza tonight?"

Marisa looked at Abner and smiled. "I don't see why not. It's only a couple of hours back to Mexico City, and Renato will welcome any chance to enjoy the jamboree!"

After inviting Marisa for dinner, Clay and Mer bid them goodbye and left.

"I take it they're close," Marisa whispered.

"They haven't said anything about it yet," said Abner. "But it's pretty obvious."

"She's only about my age too," Marisa added.

"A little older. Eighteen."

"She's got a beautiful voice," said Marisa.

"Yeah, she is anointed."

"Anointed?"

"But I think I like Kyra's singing the best," said Abner, reflectively.

"That's 'cause you're biased," said Marisa with a giggle.

Abner blushed. "Kyra? Come on! She's my ... er ... shep... er..."

"Anyway," said Marisa decisively as she folded her napkin and placed her knife and fork neatly on her empty plate. "We have more field *research* to do. Get ready for more video shots!"

Abner groaned.

Marisa stood up and threw her backpack over her shoulder.

"No, really!" she added. "You're a natural for a zoology study! *Vamos*."

Chapter 9: "Aleluya!"

"Pssst!" Timothy signaled to Abner from the empty dining room.

"What d'ya think?" he asked, thrusting out his arm and looking furtively around to make sure they were alone.

"An Omega Seamaster! Wow! How many meters?"

"Three hundred."

"Cool! How much did that set you back?"

Timothy winked and said nothing.

"Did someone give it to you?"

Timothy chuckled. "Not exactly."

"That watch is *expensive*," said Marisa.

Startled, the two youths turned around.

"Papa gave one to my cousin for his birthday," she said with a questioning look. "I'm surprised you can afford it."

"I can't," said Tim. "I'm just borrowing it. Right, Ab?"

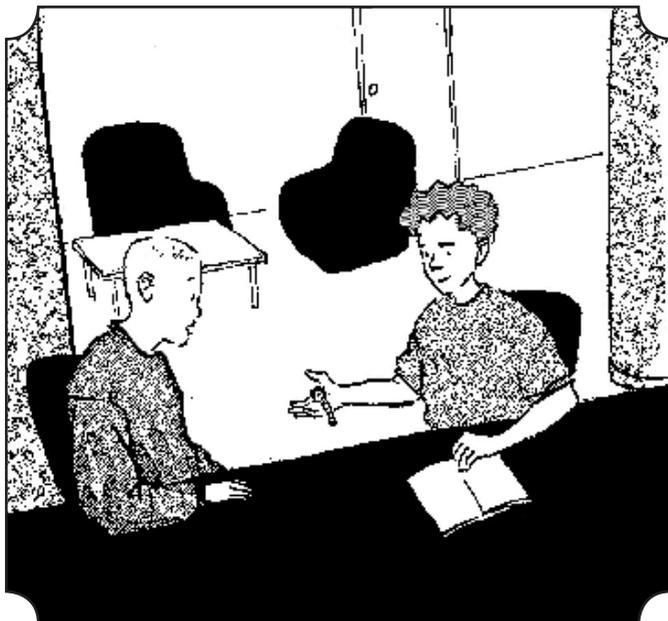
"R ... right," mumbled Abner, flashing him a heated glare.

"I was just going to ask you guys if there was anything I could do to help with the set up of the table or something for dinner. But I guess I'll ask Kyra."

"Yeah. Er ... K ... Kyra would know. She's in the kitchen."

Still wearing a puzzled expression, Marisa walked out of the room.

"Dude!" said Abner angrily. "I can't believe it!



Do you think she didn't pick up on your game? This could completely destroy our ... er..."

"Testimony?" said Tim with a sneer.

"Exactly!"

"Come on. People 'lift' things all the time."

"We don't! I can't keep your secret, Tim."

"You'd better!" Tim hissed through gnashing teeth.

"Or you'll what?"

"Look, man. Tell ya what. I'll sell it tomorrow and we can split the money. Then we can forget the whole thing. Is that a deal?"

"No deal! That's not going to regain Marisa's trust."

"You can tell her I returned the watch."

"Do you think she'd buy that?" snapped Abner and walked away in disgust.

The meal passed under a rather strained atmosphere due to the unexplained silence of their preoccupied guest; although many present at the table made efforts to include her in the conversation.

At one point, Abner squeezed Marisa's hand under the table in an attempt to reassure her, to which she responded with a weak smile.

"Maybe she's not used to such a large company," Kyra whispered, as they prepared to leave for the plaza.

"I know what it is," said Abner, glumly. "I'll tell you later."

* * *

"You're not coming to the show?" Abner exclaimed as he and Marisa stood by the front door.

Marisa shook her head. "I've informed Renato that I want to go home. He's disappointed, but I just can't stay."

"Why not?" pleaded Abner. "Does that mean that I won't see you again?"

"Renato's waiting," snapped Marisa as she turned and walked out of the front door. There were tears in her eyes.

With a desperate prayer in his heart, Abner followed her.

"Hey, Abner!"

He looked around; it was Tim.

"And you, Marisa, wait."

"What do *you* want?" she asked scornfully.

"Look," Tim mumbled through trembling lips while staring at his feet. "I want to apologize. I stole that damn watch. It was a stupid thing to do, and I just wanna say that it's not what we believe, it's not what I've been taught. ..." Tim blinked hard to hold

story feature

back tears of shame, and Marisa took his hand.

"Stealing is a sin," Tim's voice broke as he spoke.

"Abner knows that, and he wasn't in on it. I am really, really sorry, Marisa. I could never have forgiven myself if you had walked away because of this. I couldn't have lived with it."

"*Pobrecito*," said Marisa, hugging him as tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Thank You, Jesus," Abner whispered. "Thank You."

"You must look at me as a mega creep," said Tim, finally.

"Just the opposite," said Marisa. "Do you know how many of my dad's friends' teenage kids are into stealing? But for one of them to 'fess up like this, no matter how petty, would be a miracle."

Just then, the Mercedes car horn sounded.

"It's okay, Renato," Marisa called out. "We're staying for the show!"

* * *

The *Cinco de Mayo* festivities were in high gear when Luna pulled into Zócalo Plaza in their rented van. Apprehensively, they went about setting up their sound system, wondering how their music was going to be heard above the competing din that blared from the surrounding restaurants and tortilla stands. A rowdy element in the crowd started yelling for Santana, and Mer politely informed them that unfortunately they were not on the bill that night.

"But if you stick around, you'll hear Luna!" she added with a shout.

Being accustomed to performing at such functions, the band handled the crowd remarkably well, with Mer especially taking control of the situation and diplomatically declining drunken requests for ungodly musical fare.

Their opening number, "Scaling Up," however, was met with indifference by the carousing mob, during a part of which Kyra had to share the attention with a scantily clad woman who had climbed up onto the stage and was insisting on treating the audience to a drunken display of salsa. The woman was soon firmly escorted off protesting by Clay, who then solicited the help of Renato to keep the stage free from the intrusion of any further uninvited stars.

The rest of the set proceeded in much the same manner, with Mer occasionally managing to draw the crowd's attention to the up-tempo numbers, by screaming into the microphone for them to "*bailar*."

Baffled and scratching his head, Justin finally suggested that they shut down and go home. "We're just casting our pearls before swine," he added.

"We haven't been paid yet," said Kyra.

"And we're not giving up," said Mer.

"We claim the power of the keys for this performance," prayed Clay.

"Hey!" Javier suddenly yelled from the stage.

"Jessica! Carol! Get up here!"

Amid the bewilderment of the rest of the Luna members, the two children clambered up onto the stage. With fire in her eyes, Jessica turned to Javier.

"Okay," he said, "introduce the song!"

"Which one?"

"You know!" he replied and began thumping out a familiar rhythm on his congas.

"Ladies and gentlemen," announced Javier. "*Las Perlas!*"

With surprising confidence that caught the attention of the majority of the crowd, Jessica took the microphone and in a commanding voice and flawless Spanish introduced "*Aleluya*," featuring "Javier and his 'baba dooms.'"

The energetic performance that followed, which featured the two children singing in harmony over Luna's driving musical accompaniment, while they danced around Javier, who gutturally delivered the verses, so mesmerized the swaying crowd that at the song's conclusion, an encore was loudly demanded.

And another.

Then another, and yet another until the whole plaza was alive and dancing with the insistent chant

of "*Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia, te amamos Jesús!*"

The surrounding restaurant owners and street vendors had turned off their respective sound systems, the hitherto more boisterous and intoxicated elements of the crowd were seen waving their hands in the air while looking ecstatically up at the night sky as they joined in the chorus.

The evening culminated with Luna passing out tracts and *Activated* subscriptions and praying with spellbound individuals who had been participants in the "phenomenon," as the event was to be dubbed by the following morning's local newspaper.

* * *

"Thank You, Lord," said Justin, looking over the front page as he, Javier, Mer, Abner and Amy had gathered in the kitchen for breakfast. "That was such a vic."

"A little child shall lead them!" said Javier.

"It was so great how Mer got in on the action, crouching down next to the girls, strumming her guitar and singing with them," Amy said.

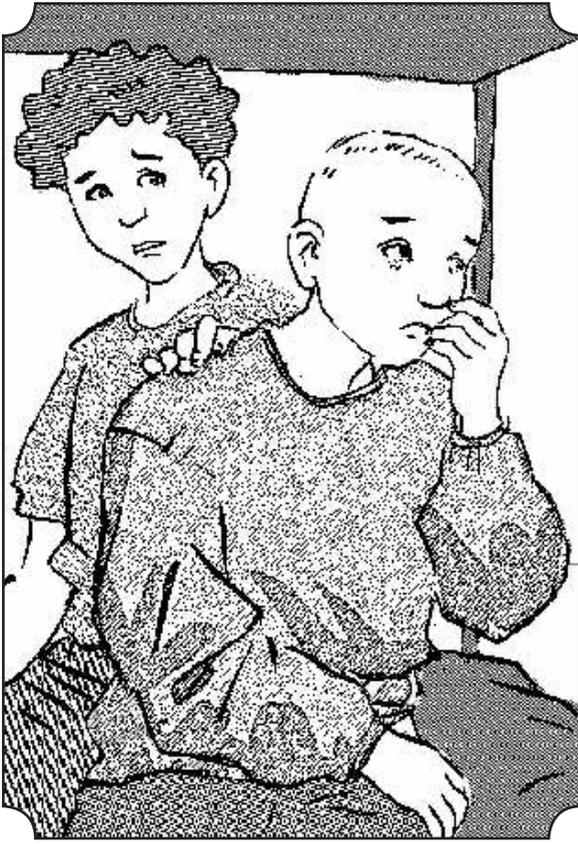
"And Marisa got it all on video!" Abner said, proudly.

"The music sounded cool on that number, too," said Justin. "Surprising, especially considering we hadn't rehearsed it."

"We've always needed a male lead singer," said Mer. "And Javier sings pretty good."

"Earthy," said Amy.

Javier growled and



laughed. Suddenly the kitchen door swung open and Kyra marched in. "We need to pray desperately," she said. "Marisa's been kidnapped."

Abner's mouth dropped open. "Wh ... when? How?"

"Victor called at about four in the morning asking if Marisa was still here. I was awake so I got the phone. I told him that she'd left from the plaza at eleven o'clock last night, just after the show ended. Victor was freaked out, poor guy. He just called back with the news."

Dry mouthed, Abner gulped down an unchewed morsel of a peanut-butter sandwich, got up from the table and dashed to his room.

Everyone else immediately closed their eyes and claimed several rounds of keys promises they'd committed to memory.

Kyra prayed first. "Lord, You said, 'Are you afraid? Be strong; fear not! Call on the power of the keys and I will come with a vengeance to defeat the Enemy and to save you.' We pray against fear and claim the story feature

keys of peace for Marisa right now. We pray that You show Yourself strong on her behalf, that You come with a vengeance to defeat this attack of the Enemy and to save her."

After a few more prayers from the others, Clay wrapped it up. "Lord, you said that 'The keys of protection open the door of safety and refuge in the fortress of the Lord.' We claim the keys of protection for Marisa right now, wherever she is, so that the Enemy cannot lay a finger on her. You said, 'You are Mine, My beloved bride, and the Enemy cannot take you away from Me,' and we claim that promise, that You protect Your bride, your little sheep, and keep her close to You right now."

After a heartfelt "amen" everyone was silent for a few moments. Justin broke the silence first.

"Another kidnapping," he said in quiet amazement. "What do they want this time?"

"A lot," said Kyra.

"I'm not sure of the exact amount, but apparently it's enough to wipe Victor out. He and his wife are driving up to see us this afternoon. For moral support, I think."

Tim excused himself from the breakfast table, saying he had to use the bathroom.

With red eyes, Abner looked up from his pillow at Tim standing awkwardly in the doorway.

"You're praying, I'll ... er ... come back..."

"No, it's okay," said Abner, sitting up on his bed. "I was just ... yeah, I was praying. But come in."

"Sorry about this, man," Tim mumbled. "She's a good chick, and I have the faith that she'll be okay."

Abner shut his eyes and bit his lip, but couldn't hold back the tears. Tim put a hesitant hand on his trembling shoulder.

"Jesus," Tim whispered, "please, we claim the keys of deliverance and safety for Marisa. She is a good ... er ... girl. She's one of Your sheep. We ask that You bring her home safely, unharmed and *soon*. Judge those that have done this. We ask this in Your Name, Jesus."

"Thanks," said Abner. "That was a good prayer."

Tim grinned wryly. "One of the few public ones I've ever meant. You know, it's weird that it has to take something like this to get *real*. ..." He clenched his teeth and looked out of the window before continuing in a faltering voice. "But I respect you, man. Especially after last night. I wanted to punch you out at first for saying what you did. No one my age has done that before. At least not told me stuff like that to my face. You're the first."

"Thanks. And thanks for 'fessing up. It kept Marisa."

"I wouldn't have done it if it wasn't for you stick-in' up for what's right. You're cool."

Abner shook his head. "I'm a jerk."

"Wanna know who's the jerk?" said Tim.

"Remember all that I told you about the girls?"

"Er ... I guess."

"You know, all the times I've *done* it and stuff."

Abner considerably feigned recollection. "Oh *that*. It doesn't matter, Tim. You don't have to try and impress me. I learned that one real good being with Marisa. I try to be something I'm not even for a second, and it's like I'm transparent. But she's cool—she just shines it on. I feel like a jerk without her having to say anything."

"I wish I could hang around with a chick like that."

"You could! But 'hagin' around' gets pretty deep sometimes, even when I kind of want to chill out! But I'm fine with it."

"How did you do it? Win a chick like her, I mean."

"It took me thinking the plane was going down to give her a tract! That's how it started!" Abner threw his head back and closed his eyes. "Lord, *please* deliver her."

To be continued

KEYSPROMISE:

If you've been disobedient, ask Me

for forgiveness, call on the keys of

obedience, take the steps I ask

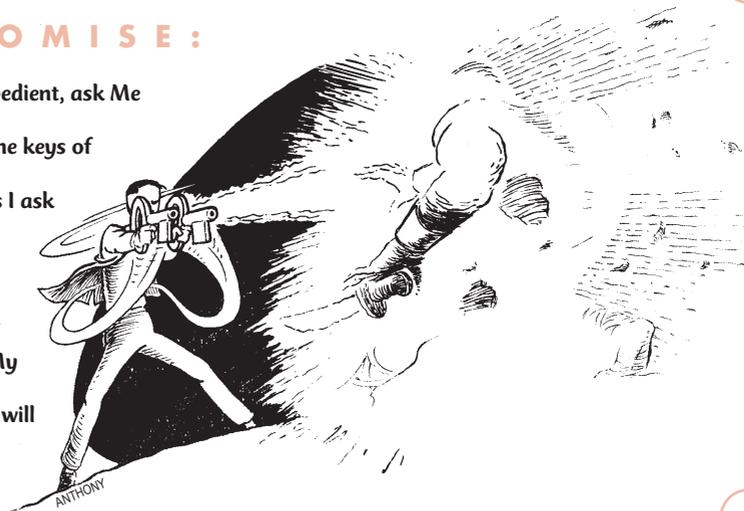
of you, and then I will

blast away the barrier

that was holding back My

supply, and the rewards will

once again flow freely.



TACKLING ALL KINDS OF TERRAIN

(Jesus:) When you hesitate in your obedience or acceptance of My Word, it's most often because you're simply distracted by the cares of this life, by the spiritual clutter that accumulates, and by all the things you think you have to do each day. You're easily distracted from your priorities because you're interested in so many things, and sometimes you put your fingers in too many pies. It's important to constantly remind yourself of your priorities, and one of those priorities should be diligently studying My New Wine to see what it is I'm asking of you today.

My Word is the key to all the wonderful projects you want to do in your service for Me. It's the fuel you need to get you through this year and the next and the next. It's what will keep you going. So don't neglect My Word in favor of all the projects. That's kind of like deciding you like a car so much that you want to try it out in all sorts of terrain, but forgetting to tank it up with fuel first. You may be all jazzed about where you're going, and have all kinds of ideas, and even have the vehicle to get you there, but you have to have the fuel of My Word—and a daily tanking up of it—if you want to see all those places and do all those things. It is My Word that will empower you to drive over the roughest terrain to see things no one else has seen.

STICKY KEYS

Keys Promise:

Without the Word running through you, you're like a car without gasoline. You may be nice to look at, but you're not going anywhere. Claim the keys of spiritual desire and I'll stick My "nozzle" in you, fill your "tank," and you will win the race.



TACKLING ALL KINDS OF TERRAIN



Allabah & Jarelen

Sometimes spirit beings are assigned to you because they need you.

*They must have practice influencing earthlings even if
their skills are not specifically needed at this time.*

(Xn: This personal prophecy was received by an SGA.)

(Jesus:) I've given you a Muslim companion—one of the original Muslims, a man who was a follower of the Prophet Muhammed. He loved the prophet and understood the message that he preached, a message that has become weighted down with traditions through the ages. He is one of the reasons that you feel a flame of desire in your heart to reach the Muslim people, and he has helped you at certain times. Although you do not need him as much now, you will need him in future times, and so he has been a companion for many years, since Dad's revelation about the Muslims when you were younger. His name is Allabah, which in Heaven means "Witness for God." He is a quiet man, with a gentle soul, but whenever he thinks of his beloved people of the Middle East, passion blazes in his eyes. There is nothing he would not do for them.





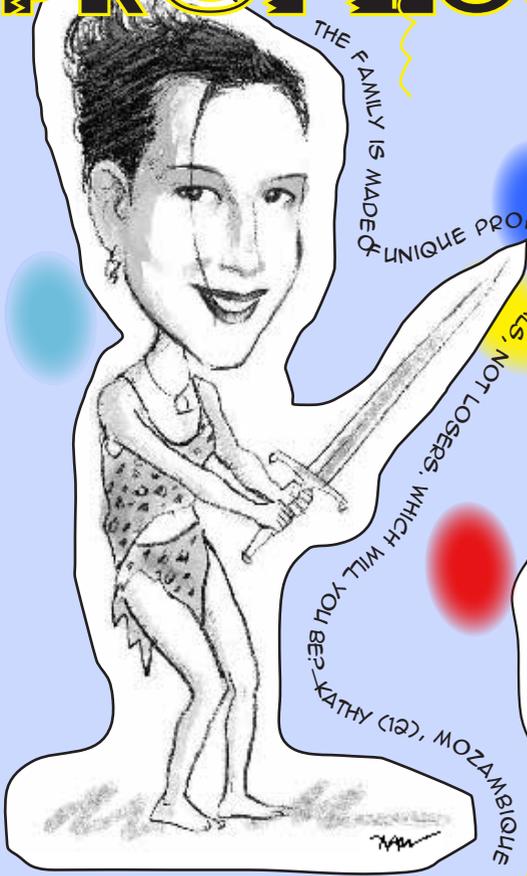
There is a woman from the ancient roaming Saracen tribes, whose voice is low, musical, and enchanting. Her skin is the color of the desert sands when the red sun is imparting its final kisses to the earth at the end of a day. She was a queen amongst her tribe, and she also cares deeply for her people in the Middle East. Her eyes are deep and longing, and she dances oft in memory of those evenings amongst her tribe's people, when they sang and played music and danced in swaying rhythm around the fires. Her name is Isavelen. She comes to you sometimes when you dance.

Sometimes spirit beings are assigned to you because they need you. They must have practice influencing earthlings even if their skills are not specifically needed at this time, for the times are coming when multitudes of heavenly helpers will pour down to Earth to assist My children in the final years. At that time many and diverse skills will be required, and they are practicing now so that when the time comes they will have their skills of communicating with my Earth children honed and ready. (End of message.)

(Xn: Do you have a burden to live amongst a particular race of people? It might mean you have spirit helpers from that race—you'll never know until you ask!)

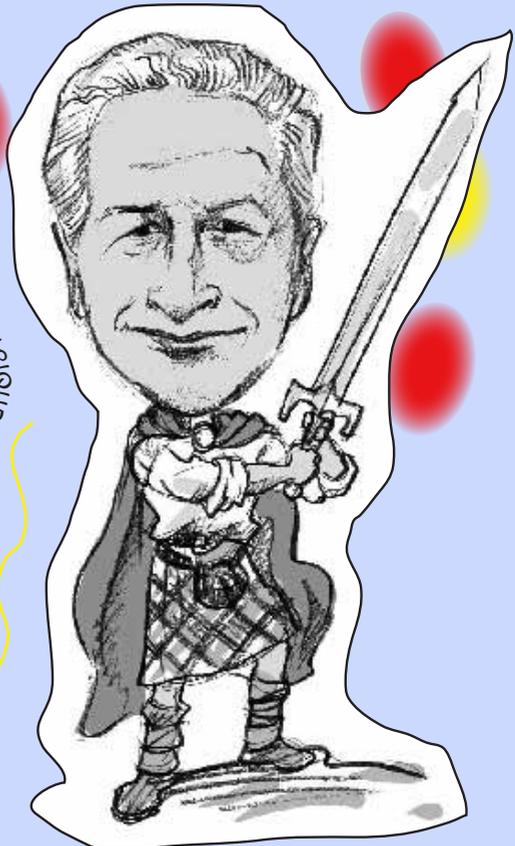
From You to Jesus
Thank You for Your amazing world of the spirit, and the priceless privilege You give us to partake of its pleasures and joys. Thank You for Your spirit helpers, who so willingly instruct and guide us. (To Jesus—With Love, book 3)

CARICATURE OF A PROFESSIONAL



THE FAMILY IS MADE OF
UNIQUE PROFESSIONALS, NOT LOSERS, WHICH WILL YOU BE?
KATHY (19), MOZAMBIQUE

KEYS PROMISE: THE KEYS CAN
CLEAR THE FOG DESCENDING
UPON YOUR CONVICTIONS, SO
THAT YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT
YOU'RE LIVING FOR.



A PROFESSIONAL FIGHTS TO KEEP HIS SPIRITUAL EYES OPEN, SEES THINGS THROUGH THE LORD'S EYES, IS A PURE CHANNEL OF JESUS' LOVE AND LIGHT. IN REALITY, A PROFESSIONAL IS JUST A COPYCAT OF JESUS.
—PAUL (OF LILAC, JOINED 1975), CONAKRY, GUINEA

Spirit of Today

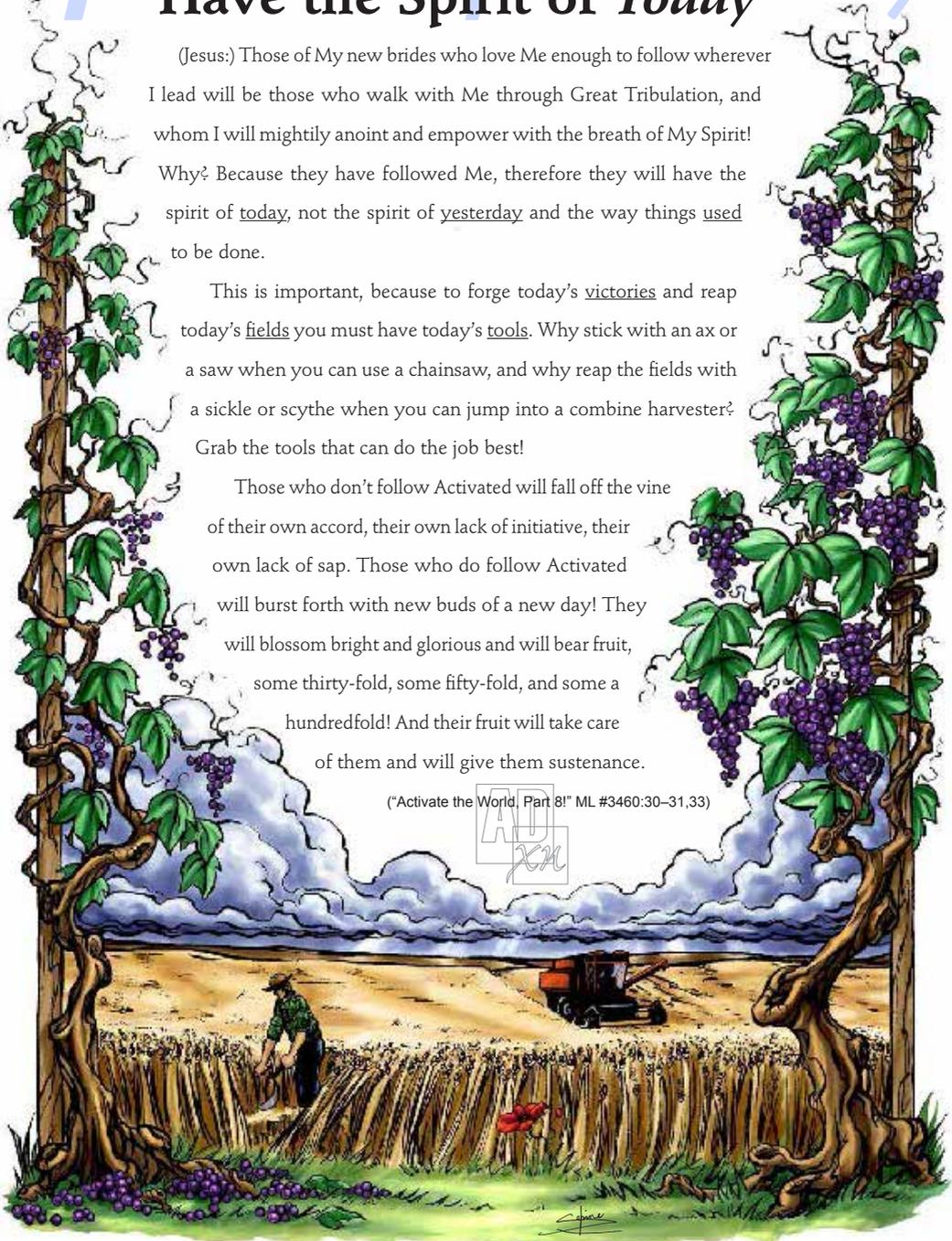
Have the Spirit of Today

(Jesus:) Those of My new brides who love Me enough to follow wherever I lead will be those who walk with Me through Great Tribulation, and whom I will mightily anoint and empower with the breath of My Spirit! Why? Because they have followed Me, therefore they will have the spirit of today, not the spirit of yesterday and the way things used to be done.

This is important, because to forge today's victories and reap today's fields you must have today's tools. Why stick with an ax or a saw when you can use a chainsaw, and why reap the fields with a sickle or scythe when you can jump into a combine harvester? Grab the tools that can do the job best!

Those who don't follow Activated will fall off the vine of their own accord, their own lack of initiative, their own lack of sap. Those who do follow Activated will burst forth with new buds of a new day! They will blossom bright and glorious and will bear fruit, some thirty-fold, some fifty-fold, and some a hundredfold! And their fruit will take care of them and will give them sustenance.

("Activate the World, Part 8!" ML #3460:30-31,33)



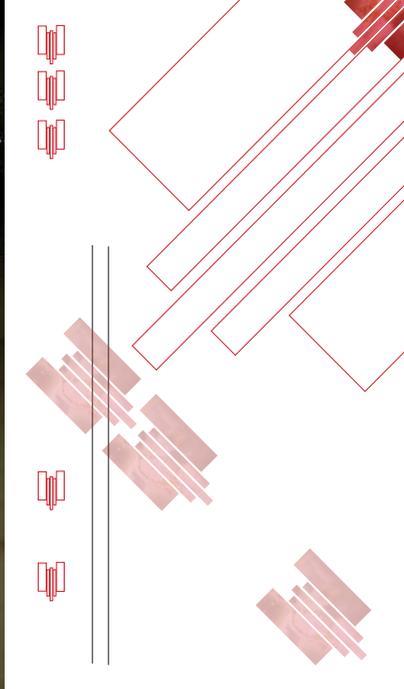


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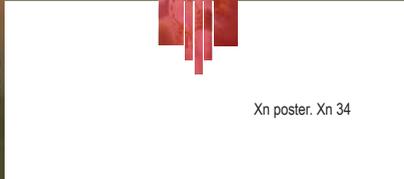
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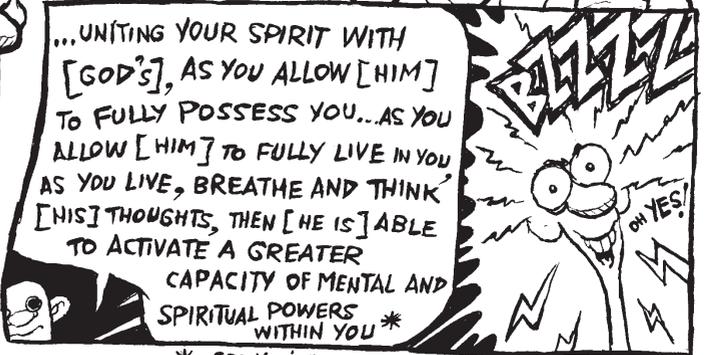
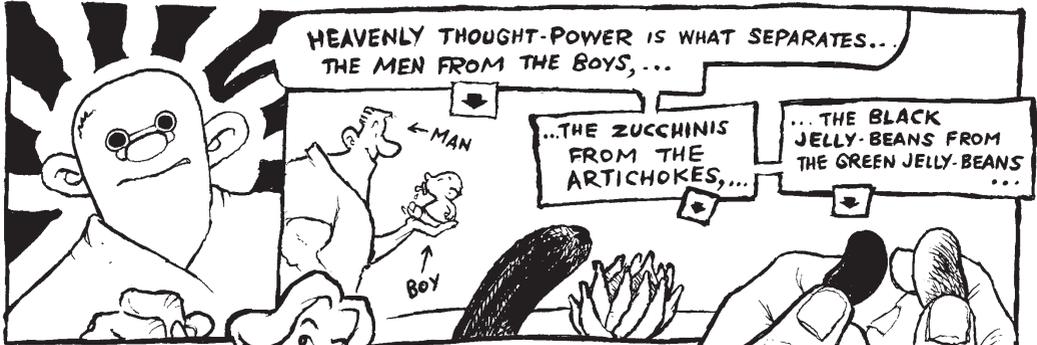
KEYS PROMISE:

The keys are the ultimate weapon and force in the final campaign to preach the Gospel in all the world for a witness to all nations before the

End comes.



MAT BF



* See Maria # 595

