

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 15 • Issue 3

PRESENT SEEDS, FUTURE BLOSSOMS

Taking the long view

The Green Wristband

A chain of generosity

Candle on a Candlestick

Light in a dark world



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION FINDING MEANING

One of the central questions that philosophers and theologians have struggled with for millennia is the mystery of what gives life meaning. Everyone wants to be happy and fulfilled, but how can we tell what true happiness is and where it comes from?

The ancient Greeks believed that the source of

happiness was internal and could be cultivated by living a worthwhile life. They called this state *eudaimonia*, which Aristotle described as taking part in activities that draw on our talents and challenge our abilities, acting in ways that benefit others, and guiding our lives by principles and virtues. It isn't enough to simply possess an ability or disposition—*eudaimonia* requires it to be put into action with deeds.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he begs the Christians there to live a life worthy of their calling.¹ He goes on to explain that this is done through being humble, gentle, patient, tolerant, loving, and peaceable toward those around them.

Living a virtuous and principled life sounds good. Unfortunately, as humans, our imperfect nature often makes us unable to achieve this on our own. As believers, however, we can draw on God's power to help us go further in transcending our limitations. "It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect."²

Solomon, supposedly the wisest person who ever lived, also discovered the futility of a life lived only for self and this world, but he hit on the solution. At the end of his search for meaning and happiness in the book of Ecclesiastes, he concludes, "Everything you were taught can be put into a few words: Respect and obey God! This is what life is all about."³

The more we learn to put God and the well-being of others at the center of our thoughts and actions, the more meaning and purpose our lives will have.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. See Ephesians 4:1.
2. Psalm 18:32
3. Ecclesiastes 12:13 CEV

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Valerie Therapy

BY ANNA THERESA KOLTES

IT WAS A PERFECT SPRING DAY.

A gentle wind, warm and coaxing, announced the arrival of the season. Everyone around me was in a good mood. But it's often on days like these, when we least see it coming, that God tends to surprise us with a little learning.

That morning, I received an unexpected letter from a friend. It contained a substantial smudge of bad news—enough to sink my happy boat and pull a few more down with it. I was devastated. Suddenly everyone else's cheeriness was aggravating. I wished they would all just go away and take the sunshine with them.

All kinds of dark and inconvenient thoughts were wading through my mind when my neighbor called.

"The doctor's office rescheduled my appointment to earlier this afternoon, but I have a problem. There won't be anyone home to watch

Valerie. Do you think you could hang out with her till I get back?"

My boat let out its last sputter before sinking. *Babysit? Me?* The last thing I wanted was to pollute a child's youthful innocence with my wretched mood.

I tried to get out of it but finally accepted. *Poor child!*

In a bit, I found myself standing in their flat, feeling stressed and grumpy.

Valerie bounded in. "I've got new crayons!" she exclaimed.

She was smiling, and I forced myself to do the same. "You mean ... coloring?"

She nodded, before disappearing and returning a wink later with a red suitcase bursting with drawing materials.

Honestly, I didn't much feel like coloring, but I kicked myself and helped Valerie dump everything onto

the table. We put on a Tchaikovsky CD and got to work coloring a picture of a wild woman with multicolored flowing hair. Surprisingly enough, time flew by, as I was carried away into a utopia of classical music and art.

Well, I don't know if you would call that "art," so let's settle for "therapy."

By the time three hours had passed, we'd created more than a few abstract masterpieces, listened to a whole lot of *Swan Lake*, and I'd found peace. With a clear mind, I realized that even when there are great disappointments or catastrophes in our lives, there is always a solution.

Mine was simple. Unexpected. Refreshing.

And highly recommended.

ANNA THERESA KOLTES IS
A FREELANCE WRITER AND
GLOBETROTTER. ■





Present Seeds, Future Blossoms

BY PETER VAN GORDER

WALKING THROUGH A BOTANICAL GARDEN IN KOLKATA, INDIA, I was enthralled by the vibrant and vivid colors of the flowers. For a few hours, I felt like I'd been transported away from the hustle of the city and into a world of beauty. On my way out, I popped into the office to compliment the staff on the good job they do in arranging and caring for the plants.

The director was in that day, and he was happy to share information about the place. I learned that the

1. An evergreen tree whose bark is used to produce quinine, an anti-malarial alkaloid

missionary William Carey started this institution—the oldest of its kind in India—in 1820, with a goal of helping the local people in a practical way. He saw the local farmers using inferior seeds and ineffective farming techniques, and he wanted to improve their livelihoods and help them to realize, as he put it, “the capabilities of the soil to enrich a nation to an almost indefinite extent.”

Carey's vision was a whole lot greater than just planting and exhibiting pretty flowers. He gathered near-extinct species of plants and nurtured them in the society's garden so they'd be preserved for the future. He also included maize, cotton,

tea, sugar cane, and cinchona¹ from various countries and introduced the concept of plantation farming to this part of India. He was successful in imparting this vision to others, and the society he created helped pioneer the introduction of a wide array of cereals, cash crops, fruits, vegetables, and other trees and plants.

I was struck by how Carey's legacy lives on almost two centuries after he had his initial idea. When he started this garden, it was a completely out-of-the-box concept and it is likely that he faced many challenges and much opposition. Yet, in addition to caring for his ill wife, translating the Bible into several local languages, and trying

to abolish the practice of suttee (widow immolation), Carey persevered.

The garden was moved several times, until it was finally established at its present location in 1870. Here, it has survived wars, riots, droughts, and disasters. The vast land area it sits on is now prime real estate in the center of the city, and I'm sure there are quite a few people who would like to see it turned over to more profitable development schemes, but the garden has become a valuable asset for the community, and it is unlikely to be surrendered to greed. To attempt a project like this today in this location would be a monumental—if not impossible—task. It was Carey's foresight and hard work all those years ago that make it possible for people today to enjoy a little taste of heaven on earth.

It made me realize that what we do now can have a huge impact on the future and the generations to come. Carey's work on the garden shows what a legacy we can leave behind. He followed his vision, and it has borne much fruit, both literally and figuratively. We sometimes don't fully appreciate the magnitude of our influence. Every soul we touch or help will have a ripple effect down through the ages into eternity, but it takes breaking the ground and planting that first seed to make a garden.

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“ MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The vocation of every man and woman is to serve other people.
—Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910)

“I'd like to add some beauty to life,” said Anne dreamily. “I don't exactly want to make people *know* more ... though I know that *is* the noblest ambition ... but I'd love to make them have a pleasanter time because of me ... to have some little joy or happy thought that would never have existed if I hadn't been born.”
—Anne Shirley in *Anne's House of Dreams*, by Lucy Maud Montgomery (1874–1942)

Picture the farmer. He's finished a difficult year; he's fretting about the future. Will the coming year's harvest be any better? No matter his dismay, he can't just stay in the farmhouse, staring into his tea at the kitchen table. He's got to think about the future of the farm, about his family.

So he picks himself up. He goes out with trepidation, planting his seeds. Winds will blow, rain will fall, sun will shine. In time, the crops will grow. He'll come back to the farmhouse a lot happier, with the fruits of the harvest safely in his barn.

If he had not been able to visualize the results, he never would have sown the seeds. If he had never gone out, there would be no harvest. Let's leave our comfort zone and step out to realize our goals, even when it is difficult. That's how we'll make a difference.
—Chris Hunt ■



THE GREEN WRISTBAND

BY MILA NATALIYA A. GOVORUKHA

MY FIRST VISIT TO THE EXIT ROCK FESTIVAL—held annually in the shadow of a beautiful castle in Novi Sad, a pretty Serbian town on the Danube River—was unforgettable. There were stages everywhere and the streets were filled with crowds, huge tent villages resounding with all styles of music, aromas of *chevapi*, the local meat dish, and an atmosphere of brotherhood, havoc, and freedom. But for a time it looked as though I wasn't going to take part at all.

I and a fellow volunteer from Denmark had traveled from Bosnia to attend and were met outside the festival grounds by colleagues who organized humanitarian projects in Serbia and Kosovo. The plan was to gather a 50-odd group of volunteers who would use music as a way of reaching the youth with God's love, as well as an anti-drugs and anti-violence message.

We had been assured free entrance, but unfortunately this didn't materialize. The administration offered a discount but couldn't waive the fees completely.

My companion and I didn't know what to do. It wasn't that large a sum, but we had limited funds. If we paid the entrance fee, we risked not having enough money for our return journey; and the alternative was to return home immediately, without doing anything of what we had come for. How we envied those wearing the bright green wristbands that allowed them entrance.

Then a woman we had never met before approached and began a conversation. When we introduced ourselves, she exclaimed, "Oh, I've heard of your work in Sarajevo! I need to go fetch something, but could you wait just a short while?"

The woman—Maria—came back a few minutes later, holding a couple of

green wristbands, one for each of us. As she tagged them onto our wrists, she commented, "I was planning to buy some souvenirs to take home, but I'd rather make it possible for you to attend."

That was just the beginning of a great time at the Exit festival. We sang songs on the streets and squares, we distributed Christian literature, we participated in meaningful skits, we held countless conversations with people of all ages and nationalities, we prayed with hundreds, and we spent unforgettable days with friends.

Thank you, Maria, for your generosity that made it possible for us to participate.

MILA NATALIYA A. GOVORUKHA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND VOLUNTEERS WITH AN NGO IN KHARKOV, UKRAINE. ■



WHO'S IT FOR?

BY GENE KATO

THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN I'VE FELT I WAS PLAYING A GAME OF PRETENDING TO BE A GOOD PERSON; for instance, when I was volunteering for relief work after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Part of me sincerely wanted to help and make a difference, but I also knew it was what I *should* want to do, and I was happy to be seen as someone who wanted to help.

At the time, I threw my heart and soul into relief work. It was nice to feel like I was serving. It was even nicer to be recognized for it. Soon I began questioning why other people weren't doing as much as I, and I found myself looking down on others. It didn't take too long before things started to unravel.

The breaking point came one morning when, ironically, I overslept. I was meant to be a driver in a convoy that was leaving for Tohoku at 6 AM, but my alarm failed, and I was awakened by a phone call at 6:15. I jumped out of bed, scrambled around to get ready as fast as possible, wondering how I could have let this happen. My girlfriend was planning on coming along as well, but I was in such a rush that I didn't wait for her.

As I drove off, I had a sneaky suspicion that something wasn't right, but I also had a raging headache and a carload of eager volunteers talking nonstop, so I brushed it off. An hour down the road, however, I received a series of irate SMSs from my girlfriend ending with "I hate you."

I had a five-hour drive to think about it, and the more I did, the more I too hated myself. Over the previous months, I had "left behind" other people too, because they couldn't keep up or because I wanted to be all by myself out front.

I called my girlfriend that night and asked for her forgiveness, and then I spent some time talking to Jesus, asking for His forgiveness too. I like to think that a few things changed that day. Not so much in what I did, but in the way I did it. I still have a lot of goals, but I want to accomplish them the way Jesus would, lovingly and kindly. That's the only way that what I build will last and mean something.

GENE KATO IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN JAPAN. ■

BY SONIA PURKISS

WHETHER OR NOT AN ANGEL

HEBREWS 13:2¹ SAYS, “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”

I’ve known this verse since I was a child, and I remember imagining that people I interacted with were angels in disguise, which made me try to be courteous and friendly in most situations. Sadly, as I grew up, it grew easier to show a tough exterior and to keep people at arm’s length.

When I was 17, however, I had an interesting encounter that brought to life this verse and others on the topic of kindness. My family lived in Taiwan at the time, and I had an appointment for a checkup at a hospital. My dad was supposed to meet me there to help translate, as I hadn’t mastered Chinese well enough to understand medical terms. However, he was running late and I realized I might have to manage without him, which was very intimidating for me.

While I was struggling to fill out a form all in Chinese, a young man who spoke English fluently approached and asked if I needed any help. I was

frazzled and felt under pressure, so I acted a bit annoyed and aloof—but I did need help, so I ungratefully accepted.

Once the forms were filled out, the young man helped me find the floor and waiting room for my appointment. Once he left, I let out a sigh of relief and called my dad to let him know where to find me, but he still hadn’t arrived by the time my name was called. I went into the doctor’s office and asked if he spoke English. He didn’t.

More frustrated than ever, I was about to leave, when the door opened and the same young man came in unannounced and said he would translate for me. I knew I should have been grateful, but I couldn’t hide my annoyance at the whole situation.

Finally the appointment was over. “I’d better stay with you until your dad shows up, just in case you need my help again,” the young man said as we left the room. Instead of engaging in conversation with him, I kept my arms crossed and silently brooded.

When my dad finally arrived, he and the young man quickly and easily struck up a conversation, and when



it was time to leave, they shook hands. I reached out my hand as well, but the young man backed away and put his hands up. “No, no, I was glad to help,” he said.

During the drive home, I had time to regret my attitude. *Why was I so rude to him anyway? It’s not his fault my dad wasn’t there to help, and it was actually very friendly of him to step in.* It occurred to me that if he *had* been an angel, I had certainly failed in showing him hospitality. Over the next few days, I thought about this encounter a lot—not so much trying to decide if he was an angel, but more generally considering the way I treated people.

You see, it didn’t matter whether that young man was an angel or not. This event helped to remind me of the important fact that everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect, regardless of who they are or how we feel. Here someone had gone out of his way to help me, and I repaid him by acting aloof and snubbing him. I never even asked for his name.

How much would it have cost me to be kind and show gratitude, the way Jesus would have done? Probably only a morsel of my pride.

I hoped I would bump into that young man again, so I could apologize and tell him how sorry I was for how I’d acted; but we don’t always get a second chance, as I didn’t. What I could do, however, was determine to let that experience change me so I would act better the next time with another person, in another situation.

Even if others are discourteous or plain rude, which wasn’t the case in this instance, God’s Word instructs us to “clothe [our]selves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience”² in our interactions with them. Our kindness toward others shouldn’t be dependent on how they treat us.

I have since stopped looking for angels in disguise (although it would be fun to know I have met one!) and have instead focused on trying to follow Jesus’ example of being ready to do good, slandering no one, being peaceable and considerate, and always gentle toward everyone³—whether they are angels or not.

SONIA PURKISS IS THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE JUST1THING ([HTTP://JUST1THING.COM/](http://just1thing.com/)) CHRISTIAN WEBSITE FOR YOUTH. ■

1. NIV

2. Colossians 3:12 NLT

3. See Titus 3:1–2.

CANDLE ON A CANDLESTICK

BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED



MANIFESTING GOD'S LOVE TO THOSE WHOM HE PLACES IN OUR PATH EACH DAY IS AT THE HEART OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. Writing about this, the apostle Paul went so far as to say, “the love of Christ *compels* us”¹ to do so. In whatever specific ways God leads each of us to reach our part of the world with His love, He has called us to be “the light of the world” and to “let [our] light shine before people, so that they will see [our] good works and give glory to [our] Father who is in heaven.”² Throughout the centuries—in fact, since the earliest days of Christianity—Christians have often reached the world through becoming known as a “force for good” in their community. Even when others didn’t necessarily embrace the Christians’

faith or understand their religion, or when the Christians were persecuted and maligned, their kind deeds and good works shone brightly before all men, resulting in people wanting to know what made them so different from much of society. As the apostle Peter instructed, “Live such good lives among the [unbelievers] that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God.”³

As we each strive to reach out and offer a helping hand in our local communities; as we provide assistance—spiritual or practical, or both—to those God puts in our path; as we do our part to bring His love to others and to better their lives in whatever ways we are able, our good example will grow and serve as a “candle on a candlestick.”⁴

By reaching our neighbors, and translating our faith into tangible actions that express our love and concern, we can be living examples

of God’s love. Even if you don’t have a lot of time and resources, you can still reach out to your community and take the initiative to fill a need, showing solidarity when possible, and an interest in the welfare and quality of life of others. In so doing, you’ll be putting God’s love into action.

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■

Treat everyone with politeness, even those who are rude to you. Not because they are nice, but because you are.—*Author unknown*

The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the greatest intention.—*Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931)*

1. 2 Corinthians 5:14, emphasis added
2. Matthew 5:14,16 ESV
3. 1 Peter 2:12 NIV
4. Matthew 5:15 KJV



Remembering Martha

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

MY NEIGHBOR MARTHA PASSED AWAY THIS WEEK AFTER A LONG BATTLE WITH EMPHYSEMA. I will miss Martha and have found myself thinking about her a lot these past few days.

When my husband Dan and I moved into the neighborhood, Martha invited us over for tea and cookies. We sat in her immaculate living room and talked about our family and the volunteer work we had been doing in Mexico. It felt like home, and I was thankful to have a neighbor like Martha who was concerned that we’d feel welcome.

I’ve looked out my window nearly every day for the past eight years and said a prayer for Martha. I’ve felt a responsibility to keep an eye out for her well-being and be there for her if she needed me.

Martha was alone, you see. She had no children, and her husband

had already passed away. As her health declined this past year, Dan would collect her newspaper each morning and place it by her door so she could easily reach it. One day I noticed her gardener mowing her lawn. Then the sound got louder, and I realized he was mowing *our* lawn as well. Martha motioned to me from her doorway and told me she was thanking us for Dan’s kindness.

I admired Martha’s impeccable garden and was honored when she asked me to take care of her plants while she went on vacation. Martha’s plants were like her pets. She lavished love and care on them and they thrived.

The other day, Martha’s best friend came over. We talked for a few minutes, and she explained that Martha had set up a trust and the bank would be taking over her

house. I asked about the plants and she advised me to collect them and look after them, because once the officials from the bank came and locked up the property, the plants in the backyard would be lost. Once again, I felt honored. Martha’s plants had brought her so much joy, and now they would bring joy to me and my family.

Martha taught me a lot, and I want to be sure that her legacy of kindness and friendship, like her plants, lives on. In the future, I will make a point of welcoming people into our neighborhood. I won’t pry or be invasive, but I’ll let them know I’m here if they need anything. We all need a good neighbor from time to time.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A TEACHER AND WRITER, AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, USA. ■



THE VALUE OF HEALTHY LIVING

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

STAYING HEALTHY DOESN'T HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY. It takes effort, and also usually involves some sacrifice, some reordering of priorities and forgoing certain things that would be enjoyable but not good for us. Long-term health is a lifelong investment, but it's a wise one. Better to invest a little each day in strengthening our bodies than to neglect them and suffer serious health problems.

In health matters, as with many other things in life, God usually won't do for us what we can and

should do ourselves. He expects us to take care of our bodies, and He often won't override the negative consequences when we could have made healthier choices but didn't.

GROUND RULES

Thankfully, God has laid out some pretty straightforward rules for staying healthy. These fall into three main categories: spiritual, emotional, and physical. The key to the spiritual aspect is in staying close to God, in finding and following His plan for our lives as best we can.

An important key to the emotional aspect is in maintaining a positive attitude, which reduces stress, worry, fear, and other negative emotions, all of which take a toll on our health and happiness. The physical aspect is pretty much summed up in what some health experts refer to as the three pillars of physical health: "Eat right, sleep right, and exercise right."

"Eat right" comes down to following a few fairly simple guidelines—simple, but not always easy. Changing poor eating habits takes

determination and planning, but you'll probably be surprised at how quickly you develop an appetite for the right kinds of food and lose your appetite for the wrong ones.

"Sleep right" may sound easy enough, but many people try to operate with a sleep deficit. It's true that some people need less sleep than others, but the pressures of modern living push many of us to try to pack more into our days by sleeping less than our bodies need to be in top health. That's being shortsighted, because we get more out of our waking hours when we're rested.

For people who aren't in the habit of exercising regularly, that's an easy one to neglect. It's hardest to dismiss the need for sleep, because the effects of trying to go without sleep are felt immediately. On the other hand, much like the effects of a poor diet, the results of insufficient exercise can be slower in coming. Exercise helps our bodies cleanse and repair themselves. It also strengthens muscles, bones, and internal organs, boosts our immune systems, and helps us maintain an acceptable weight. There is scarcely a living cell in our bodies that doesn't benefit from regular exercise of the right kind.

PERSONALIZED PROGRAM

The ground rules are universal, but because age, body types, and personal preferences vary greatly, what will work best also varies from person to person. Each person's needs also change over time and as other factors enter in. So how do you know what's right for you? Many "authorities" offer conflicting information and advice, and sometimes a certain kind of diet or exercise is widely acclaimed for a time, but discredited later. Whose program do you follow? Only your Creator truly knows what's best for you, and He wants to work with you toward optimum health.

Why not ask Him to show you what changes to make in your diet or exercise plan? One of the ways He has of letting you know is through your body. For example, that soreness that gets a little worse each day could be a sign of overdoing or not performing an exercise correctly.

KEEPING FIT IS A LIFESTYLE

The goal is to make getting proper diet, sleep, and exercise lifelong habits—not just something we do for a few days or a few weeks until we lose a few inches from our waist or drop a clothing size or two. Unless

we correct the bad habits that brought on those extra inches, they will soon be back. This is why diets and exercise programs that promise quick results are largely unsuccessful: They focus on the short term instead of lifestyle choices that bring long-term changes. In some cases, it's worth undertaking a short-term program to get healthier or lose weight, but then you need to build new long-term health habits if you want to hold on to the ground you've gained.

If you're serious about switching to a healthier lifestyle, the first questions to ask are, "How can I make eating, sleeping, and exercising right my daily norms?" "What changes do I need to make in my mindset or lifestyle?" and, "What specific health program is best for me?"

Replacing poor health habits with good ones takes determination, study, and planning at first, but the payoff soon makes it self-sustaining; we feel so much better that we want to keep doing the things that make us feel that way.

MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■



BY IRIS RICHARD

When Nobody Noticed

IT WAS A DULL AND RAINY DAY AS I SAT AT THE WINDOW OF A SMALL BRICK ROW HOUSE IN LEICESTER, ENGLAND, watching the rain form small rivers on the window pane. A friend was letting me stay at his house while he was away and I helped care for a terminally ill loved one. It was a half-hour bus ride from the house to the Leicester Royal Infirmary, where I spent most of my days.

I had saved up for this trip, taking a two-week unpaid leave from work, and allowing for a few extra days in case I needed to stay a bit longer before another relative arrived to take my place. However, two weeks had already turned into three, and the relative was still delayed. I was beginning to run short on cash and secretly started to worry how much longer I was going to be able to

continue on my present shoestring budget.

That evening, I called my friend Myriam and explained the situation.

"I'm on my way!" she said. "I can take a week off from work and will be glad to join you."

I picked Myriam up at the bus terminal the following evening. It was pouring rain, but I was so thankful to see her that I hardly noticed. Her arrival was an answer to prayer, and I felt God reaching out to me and my sick loved one through her presence.

Not only did Myriam help out financially—she did a grocery shopping and rented a car, which made it easier for us to get to and from the hospital and to take our patient on short outings—but she also provided much-needed moral support. I had reached an emotional low, after daily witnessing the suffering in the cancer ward.

"How will I ever repay you?" I asked when I hugged Myriam good-bye.

"Don't worry about that! I'm just glad I was able to help."

When I had thought nobody noticed my desperate situation, God showed me that He did, by touching the heart of a friend who responded and came to my rescue. This experience reminded me of how much good there is in so many people.

The next time God nudges my heart to be a "good Samaritan" to someone in need, I know I'll feel more inspired to answer the call, remembering how much Myriam's help meant to me.

IRIS RICHARD IS A COUNSELOR IN KENYA, WHERE SHE HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER WORK SINCE 1995. ■

QUIET MOMENTS

BY ABI MAY

A WORTHWHILE LIFE

WE ARE UNLIKELY TO HAVE ABRAHAM'S CALLING TO BECOME THE FATHER OF NATIONS.¹ Not many of us have the strength of Samson to bring the perpetrators of evil to justice.² It is rare to be given the responsibility, like Esther, of safeguarding the people of our nation.³ And most of us don't have the fearlessness of the prophet Daniel, risking life and limb for our faith,⁴ or even the vigor of the apostle Paul, who evangelized almost the entire known world of his day.⁵

Most of us are more like those unnamed individuals scattered

throughout the gospels, like the men and women who sat on the grass listening to Jesus, enjoying the meal of loaves and fishes, and hopefully letting His words sink into our hearts and change our lives.⁶ He's given us a lot to chew on, that's for sure.

We don't need to do something outstanding or showy with our life in order for it to be worthwhile. The secret is finding out what God's calling for us is and how we can best fulfill it. Some of the most meaningful lives are built by doing little things in countless little ways.

1. See Genesis 12.
2. See Judges 16.
3. See Esther 4.
4. See Daniel 6.
5. See Acts 13–15, 18.
6. See Matthew 14.
7. See Acts 10:38.


Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.—Author unknown, often attributed to Mother Teresa (1910–1997)

Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?—Romans 9:21 NIV

Dear God, give me faith to believe, love to put others before myself, trust to share with those in need, strength to do what needs to be done, patience to offer a listening ear, and kindness to pay attention to those around me.

I would like to be a more selfless, caring person, like You. Please come into my life and fill me with Your Spirit of love, so I can learn to think more about others. Help me to live a worthwhile life, not necessarily through some great accomplishments, but through a collection of small, loving, and meaningful actions, day after day—not for glory or reward, but because I want to follow in Your footsteps, as the one who went everywhere doing good.⁷

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

MAKE TIME FOR PEOPLE

It's easy to be a good person but still be wrapped up in your own little world. After all, you already have more work and other responsibilities than you feel you can keep up with. It's no surprise that there's so little time for reaching out to others.

When I was on earth, I was also busy, especially during My public ministry. I had only about three and a half years to accomplish My mission, but I still took time for people—even some who others thought weren't worth My time. I let the children come to Me. I talked with the Samaritan woman at the well. I noticed Zacchaeus up in a tree and asked to spend the evening with him

at his house. I also took time to personally encourage thousands of others—conversations so numerous and seemingly commonplace that they didn't make it into the gospels, yet each had a big impact on someone's life. If I could take the time to stop and show a little love and kindness and understanding to those around Me, you can too.

As you show love in the little things, I will pour more of My love into you, so you will have more to give and more to enjoy. You'll find this "extra" giving of yourself is really no sacrifice at all. I will more than make it up to you in added inspiration and other blessings, and so will those you make time for.