

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 17 • Issue 10

A CUP OF COFFEE

Get your priorities straight

Strawberry Fields Forever

Finding peace

Sanctuary

Safe and secure





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION LAYING BRICKS

One of the most mind-boggling questions is “How does God relate to time?”

The Bible does its best to give us God's perspective. “Don't forget that for the Lord one day is the same as a thousand years,” it explains helpfully, “and a thousand years is the same as one day.”¹ Our relationship

to time seems to be a lot simpler, but the truth is we still haven't figured it all out.

My daughter recently turned five a few weeks after my son's first birthday. Oh, the anticipation and thrill as she first counted the days to her brother's big day, and then began looking forward to her own! To be sure, at that age at least, birthdays are the most exciting and wonderful days of the year; but although she doesn't realize it, it's her daily progress toward other less grandiose goals—her reading, for example—that will do much more to shape and change her life.

God didn't design our lives to careen from major, consequential moment to major, consequential moment. In fact, most of us don't go through life-changing situations too often. The character and quality of our life is forged in little moments. Every day we lay another layer of bricks on the structure of what our life will be.

Unfortunately, it's all too natural to fall into routines and learned ways of doing things. And to pay no attention to the little moments because they seem so “little.” But in reality, these are the moments that make up our lives, that set up our future, that shape our relationships.

The concept of mindfulness has become an increasingly popular subject, as more and more people realize that they want to live each moment to the full and embrace the concepts of paying attention, doing few things at a time but doing them well, and living in the moment.

If we have a “day-by-day” approach to everything in our lives, we will choose our bricks carefully and place them strategically, starting with setting aside time for our Father. “Look at the birds of the air,”² Jesus said. “Consider the lilies of the field,”³ He insisted. “Do not worry about tomorrow.”⁴ He could have added, “Live in the moment.”

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. 2 Peter 3:8 CEV
2. Matthew 6:26

3. Matthew 6:28
4. Matthew 6:25

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A CUP OF COFFEE

BY MARESHA VOORN

Spending time with God is the key to our strength and success in all areas of life. Be sure that you never try to work God into your schedule, but always work your schedule around Him.

—Joyce Meyer (b. 1943)

I FIND THAT THE DAYS I START WITH GOD ARE THE BEST. He's like a good cup of coffee: I breathe deeply of its aroma, savor its taste, enjoy its warmth on a cold morning, and let its goodness stir me into action for the day. It makes getting up in the morning something to look forward to, and I carry the happy memory of it throughout the day.

When I start the day off with God, I have the assurance that He is with me, He's on my side, and He hears my prayers and will answer them. It's a wonderful reassurance to have. Just like I love to hear my

husband say: "Call me if something comes up or you need anything. I look forward to seeing you this evening. I love you." When God promises to spend the day with me and be there to help me in whatever comes up, I know that's what He'll do. He's a true gentleman, and He cannot break His Word. He says: "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me,"¹ and "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."²

When I seek Him first thing in the morning, His presence tends to linger throughout the day, bringing with it an awareness of His nearness and ability to lead and guide my thoughts and actions to be as productive as they can be. The connection has been made,

and after that, it's easier to retain the thought of Him throughout the day.

The stillness of the morning, before all the busyness of the day floods into our mind, is a perfect time to hear God whisper into the ears of our soul. He loves to hear from us through our prayers, but He also loves to communicate back. He can give us wisdom, inspiration, and ideas, as well as peace. Whether we need some practical guidance, spiritual insight, or just peace of mind to get us through the day, it's worth taking the time to seek, hear, and know Him.

MARESHA VOORN IS A HOMESCHOOL EDUCATOR AND WORKS PART-TIME IN MIND/BODY/SPIRIT HEALING. ■

1. Proverbs 8:17
2. Exodus 33:14



TAKE ONE, TAKE TWO

BY IRIS RICHARD

TAKE ONE

Hearing the crunch of metal against metal as I backed out of my parking spot almost made my heart stop. I was in a hurry and had quickly scanned the parking lot before climbing behind the wheel, but somehow I had overlooked a pick-up that was parked in an unusual place.

I quickly got out of the car to examine the damage and found a nasty crack and dent on my bumper, plus a broken tail light on the pick-up. I scribbled an apology and my phone number on a piece of paper, which I stuck under the windshield wiper of the other car. I would have

to deal with this incident once I got back home. With ruffled nerves I drove out the gate.

I had planned to beat rush hour, but as I reached the main road, I realized to my dismay that traffic had already been building up, which meant I would be late for an important meeting. I impatiently drummed on the steering wheel as the traffic crawled along the congested two-lane road.

I felt irritated about the incident at the parking lot and kept replaying it in my mind, trying to figure out how I could have overlooked the parked vehicle. The day had only just begun and my stomach was already in knots when a minivan cut in the

line right in front of me. I rolled down my window and shouted an angry rebuke. *So much for Christian graces*, I thought. Actually, I didn't feel *any* grace for the day, which had started off on the wrong foot.

Sitting in traffic gave me time to think and reflect on my morning routines of recent weeks, and I realized that my usual moments with God had been squeezed out because of an increased workload and tighter schedule. It seemed that since then I had become easily irritated and unusually short-tempered. Right there, as the traffic slowly cleared, I committed to getting back my moments of devotions in the morning.



Those who wait
on the Lord shall
renew their strength; they
shall mount up with wings
like eagles, they shall run
and not be weary, they
shall walk and not faint.

—Isaiah 40:31

TAKE TWO

The next week's schedule was packed, and glancing over my agenda, it didn't seem that there was much of a margin for anything but work. To weather the workload, I surely would need an extra amount of endurance and patience. I needed a plan.

I decided to set my alarm for half an hour earlier and put together a variety of devotional material and a blank notebook with a pen to keep in the living room for my early morning touch-base-with-God time. I knew that waking up early was going to be a sacrifice, as I treasure each minute of sleep, but I was determined to give this new commitment a try.

When my alarm rang the first morning, I mustered up the energy to crawl out of bed and sleepwalked

to the living room, where I settled into a corner of the couch. It was still dark outside, but the first birds' crystal clear song began to announce the soon-coming sunrise. Their song sounded like praise to God and inspired me to likewise get going with counting my blessings.

As the first timid sunrays crept into the room, I felt more awake and took up my daily devotional book to read the day's passage. Inspired by the text, which happened to be almost tailor-made counsel for my busy week ahead, I copied a paragraph into my notebook. I then prayed for all the aspects of my to-do list and spent some time meditating on the answered prayers of the previous week. After the half hour was over, I felt refreshed and ready to face the day.

As I started keeping my half-hour appointments with God, it wasn't the absence of problems, setbacks, or snags that made my work a success, but the way I *reacted* to them, which helped to smooth rough edges, preserve my nerves—and, I'm sure, made me a more pleasant person to be around. My moments with God in the morning have once again become a habit. This first appointment of the day has given me strength to weather the storms of life, to keep the peace, to have more clarity of thought, and to process situations in a more beneficial way.

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

BY ELSA SICHROVSKY

LITTLE WHITE STAR

ANOTHER STRESSFUL, exhausting day was finally over. Frustration and fatigue hung heavily over me, a combination of hassles with my cranky computer, a gloomy sky with drizzles and chilling winds, the exasperation of burning the chicken for dinner—and a dozen other everyday annoyances.

After dinner with the burnt chicken, I set out for a nearby park. My mom often says that “nature can soothe ruffled nerves like nothing else can,” and I decided to put her advice to the test.

I wandered through the park, half-expecting some “magic” to work itself on me. A discarded cigarette package crunched under my shoe, and some wilted flowers in a pot drooped wearily in front of me. A little farther ahead, a toddler was crying as his mother pushed his stroller, while behind me, a middle-aged couple was arguing. Sighing

in disappointment, I turned toward home.

Perhaps it was a subconscious determination to find “nature’s magic” despite the unlovely surroundings, for as I turned to go, I paused and looked up at the pitch-black sky. It was such a cloudy evening that I didn’t expect to see any stars, but to my surprise, there was a little white star twinkling at me. It was the only visible star and it shone so brightly, as if rejoicing that I had finally noticed it. I suddenly realized how rarely I took time to really look at the sky. Why didn’t I gaze at it every day and savor its uplifting beauty? Why didn’t I let it remind me of the One who made it—and me?

As I admired the little white star, I was reminded of the opening lines of Psalm 19, which I memorized as a child: “The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or word.”¹ Perhaps,

in their own way, the heavens are narrating the love story of our God who “richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment,”² writes us love letters in the colorful ink of rainbows, sunrises, and sunsets—and winks at us in little white stars.

I lingered for a last look before starting home. There it shone, a sole light in the drab darkness. It didn’t matter that the other stars were obscured by air pollution and clouds or that on any other night my star might be obscured as well; I’d know the stars are still up there. And so it is with God’s love, I mused. It is constant and vibrant, even when struggles and doubts seem to shroud it. Nothing can snuff it out; it is always here, waiting to pierce the fog and shine into our lives. Now I know why nature soothes ruffled nerves: through its wonders, it whispers to us of our truest Lover and His eternal love.

ELSA SICHROVSKY IS A FREELANCE WRITER. SHE LIVES WITH HER FAMILY IN TAIWAN. ■

1. Psalm 19:1–3 NLT

2. 1 Timothy 6:17 NIV



A Child's Choice

BY ANNA PERLINI

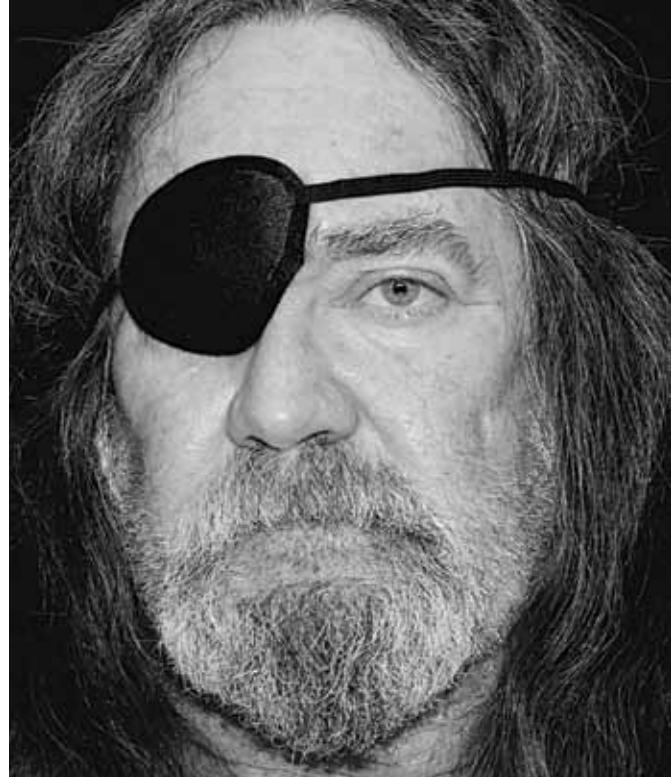
IT WAS 1996, and our family had just moved from the safety of Italy to a somewhat still troubled and unstable post-war Croatia, settling in a large apartment on the outskirts of Rijeka.

Our neighbors—a mix of refugees, widows, and elderly relatives caring for children whose parents had died or left to find work—had all gone through traumatic experiences as a result of the tragic conflicts that had only recently ended.

Ivan lived on the floor below ours. He wore a patch over one eye, he couldn't hear well, and he also suffered from extremely strong headaches due to a piece of shrapnel in his brain that the doctors couldn't operate on.

Ivan had a wife and two daughters, but it was easy to see that he was finding it challenging to adjust to family life. He was no longer the strong man beaming in the photos in his living room, but a broken soldier suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), who spent most of his time caring for his kids or looking pensively at the horizon.

My youngest son, Jeff, who was five at the time, was a bit scared of our neighbor—and I wasn't sure what to think myself. I realized that I never really spoke to Ivan, due to



my limited knowledge of Croatian at the time, but also because I didn't know how to face such obvious suffering.

One day, I explained to Jeff about what our poor neighbor was going through and the reason he wore a patch. I taught him to say, "Molim za vas," "I'm praying for you" in Croatian, and suggested that he say that to Ivan the next time we saw him.

I will never forget that moment the next time we met Ivan, when this fierce-looking man bent down to hear what a small five-year-old whispered in his ear. Then he straightened, and I could see tears trickling down his face as he whispered "Thank you."

From that moment on, Ivan and Jeff became good friends, and we often visited to sing songs, read God's Word, and simply keep him company.

Ivan passed away not long after. He had been struggling with a lot of health problems and discouragement, but in his final years he found solace and comfort in Jesus.

Jeff is now a grown man and a father himself, but I still fondly remember that day God worked through my little boy to help replace fear with love.

ANNA PERLINI IS A COFOUNDER OF PER UN MONDO MIGLIORE,¹ A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION ACTIVE IN THE BALKANS SINCE 1995. ■

1. <http://www.perunmondomigliore.org>



BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER

IT IS SAID THAT OUR LIFE HINGES ON FOUR MAIN DECISIONS that lead us to become what we are: the career we choose, whom we marry, the friends we make, and what we believe in. I would say that what we believe in is the most important of the four, as that will largely determine what happens with the other three.

Each one of us likely has a story of some pivotal moment that helped shape our belief system. These experiences are part of what is known as our testimony. Our life story speaks volumes. It tells the listener that if it happened to us, then it just might work for them. You can read how Paul told his story in Acts 22. Perhaps your story is still in the making. Here is mine:

I was 19 when I decided to spend the summer on my family's abandoned farm out in the middle of the Pennsylvania wilderness in America. It could hardly be called a farm anymore. Only the shells of a few buildings remained. Forty years earlier it had been a bustling farm for my father and his family of seven rowdy brothers and sisters, but a tractor that was strip-mining in the area ran over a fuel line that ignited, reducing the house to ashes. No one bothered rebuilding the house, and the surrounding property reverted back to its natural wild state. Away from everything and everybody, it was the perfect distraction-free place to chart the path for my future. Nineteen can be a pivotal age and a time many make important

crossroads-type decisions—and so it was with me.

My dog and I lived for six weeks in complete simplicity. Taking long walks through the forest, swimming in the river, meditating, and writing poetry. I lived on wild strawberries, granola, and soybeans. I nicknamed this place my “Strawberry Fields Forever” after the popular Beatles’ song that romanticized an idyllic eternal world that I hoped to find in this natural simplicity.

At the time, I sought to express myself by writing in the “stream of consciousness” style, and my photography was equally as confusing. Some friends and I had put together an exhibition of our “art,” which we had dubbed “Weirdism” in the hopes of starting a new art movement. It



was short-lived, though, as we found our exhibition in the trash the next morning. The janitor had mistaken it for garbage.

At this time in my life, I was taking LSD and marijuana occasionally, and it was messing my head up badly, giving me a very distorted sense of reality. All of this was happening against the background of the turbulent '70s, with the Vietnam War, race riots, the civil rights struggle, and a nation of searching youth all thrown into the mix. I longed to find a simple life to reconnect with nature and try to find my spiritual roots.

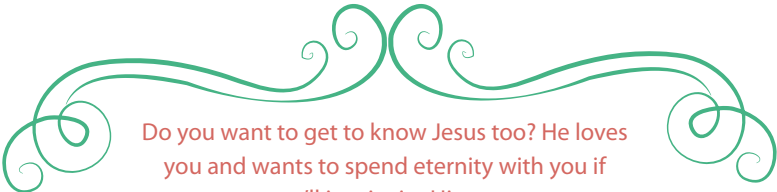
I thought perhaps I could find it in Zen archery. I was in awe of the great masters that I had read about, who could shoot an arrow and hit

the bull's eye, then with the second arrow split the first arrow in half. I tried and tried to hit the bull's eye, but I spent most of my time searching for the arrows. It would take me a few lifetimes to master this art, I figured. Now I knew why the masters were always pictured with long beards and bald heads—it took them that long to learn to shoot straight. But I was in a hurry to find enlightenment.

I longed for a “somewhere” and a sense of community rather than the heaven of “nothingness” that some creeds promised. So even though I found a measure of peace by living a semi-hermit's life, I realized that the peace I found in nature was only temporary. I needed to find a more lasting peace when I was confronted


by the harsh realities of everyday life—a peace that was not dependent on external circumstances, someone or something that could still the tempestuous waves of life. I had gone to church occasionally and was a nominal believer, but didn't have much of a heartfelt understanding of what Christianity was all about or how it applied to me.

It was then that my sister told me about Jesus. I discovered that Jesus was much more than traditions and rituals. He was the man who lived the perfect “simple life,” going everywhere doing good. He not only talked about love, but gave His life for it. In the context of that time, He was the perfect “flower child” without the bummers of drugs and all the other hang-ups I had experienced.



Do you want to get to know Jesus too? He loves you and wants to spend eternity with you if you'll just invite Him to.

Dear Jesus, please come into my life and give me Your peace and purpose and joy. Forgive me for the wrong things I've done. Help me to stay by Your side always. Amen.





I asked Him into my heart, and a seed was sown that grew and grew as I watered it with His Word, prayer, and sharing my faith with others.

A few months later while on vacation in Canada, I waded into a lake and cut my feet on the sharp rocks in the shallows. As I lay on the shore trying to nurse my wounds, I looked up at the turquoise sky. Being on the verge of a life-changing decision, I wondered if this incident had some significance for me, so I asked God to speak to me about what had happened.

1. 1 Kings 19:12
2. Proverbs 3:26
3. See Philippians 4:7.
4. See Psalm 23:2.
5. <http://elixirmime.com>

It came not in audible words, but via what the Bible calls “a still small voice”¹ to the heart. It said, *Jump in all the way, or stay on the shore. But if you wade in, you’ll get cut.* I knew this meant that I was to go ahead and make my decision with boldness, doing what I knew to be right and not worrying about the consequences.

I took the jump and decided to devote my life to serving God in many ways and in many lands, and here I am some 40 years later, glad I did. Proverbs says, “The Lord will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught.”² He has certainly done that in my life many times.

It was in Jesus that I found the peace of mind that I was looking for.

Not in running away from the world, but being *in* the world, yet not fully *of* the world. Sure, we sometimes need quiet and to get away from it all—even Jesus had to leave the multitude to get alone and talk with His Father. But we shouldn’t forget that there is a world out there, in need of that peace that we have received from Him—the peace that passes all understanding.³

Looking back on my crossroads decision, I can say that I have no regrets. Jesus is the truth and the way to life. He has led me to green pastures beside still, clear mountain waters.⁴

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A SCRIPTWRITER AND MIME ARTIST⁵ IN GERMANY. ■



KITCHEN WHIZ

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

YOU CAN HEAR ME BANGING POTS IN THE KITCHEN.

Slamming doors and rattling glassware, I hastily put away the dishes. Clanging loudly, I slam the iron pot on the stove. Mom is in the kitchen and everyone knows to stay away until I am done.

Of course, I will be done quickly. I learned a long time ago that the key to getting a job done that you don't particularly care for is to do it fast. So I speed through the jobs, knowing a little noise is worth it to "Git 'er done!"

There are times when I put a lot of effort into my cuisine. I plan for days, studying recipes, writing lists and gathering ingredients. Everything that can be made ahead of time is completed and placed in pretty serving bowls. But regular

meals are not like that! On any normal night, I could win awards for getting a meal on the table in record time. *Step back! I'm coming through!*

Naturally, I have a few disasters. Broken dishes or burned fingers are not uncommon. Bruised feelings either. "Could you just wait a minute until I'm done here?" I snarl through a fake smile. And I'm serious. I will be done in a minute—if everybody will just leave me alone and get out of my way.

I have dinner done on time. I have a clean kitchen. I serve nutritious food. But something is missing and needs to be attended to.

When my kids were little, I had a record player and a collection of classical records in the kitchen. Being a working mom with a large family to organize and feed, I always had a

lot on my mind. The classical music helped me slow down and lifted my spirits as I prepared the food. I would put out a plate of raw vegetables or a salad, and if some hungry preschooler appeared at the kitchen door unable to wait another minute, I would tell them to help themselves to the veggies.

Perhaps I should work on my work habits. I am probably missing moments that I really would enjoy. Even if dinner is a few minutes late and the kitchen isn't perfect, I really should slow down and enjoy the aromas of the food as it cooks. Maybe I should even accept an offer of others' help, and we could laugh and relax together.

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

THE 60-MINUTE CHALLENGE

BY TINA KAPP



I READ AN INTERESTING SELF-HELP ARTICLE CALLED “Take Charge of Your Life in Just One Hour,”¹ by Anna Rich. It stood out to me because the advice was simple, clear, practical, and putting it into practice actually fits into one hour. Here are my favorite tips (and a few personal adaptations) of what you can do in that one hour. Some points might work for you and others might not, but hopefully, a few things will make sense and help you get *your* day in order.

ONE MINUTE: MAKE YOUR BED

It might seem silly or inconsequential, but once your room looks neater, you’ll feel better already. If you’re a relatively neat person, it helps you feel on top of your day when things are in place. If you’re on the opposite end of the scale, making your bed may help you find your favorite, long-lost slippers or that bank statement you were sure the dog ate.

As the Bible says, “God is not a God of confusion but of peace.”²

FIFTEEN MINUTES: EAT BREAKFAST

There are a lot of health benefits to eating breakfast, although not everyone is a breakfast person. The main point is being aware of your health, making good choices, and not letting them be made *for* you by running out of time before you can manage to catch a bite.

King Solomon wisely told his sons, “Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.”³

TWO MINUTES: WRITE A TO-DO LIST FOR THE DAY

Having a to-do list helps you see exactly what you need to do so you can make sure you get the most important things done *first*. Being able to tick things off your list gives you that fantastic well-deserved feeling of accomplishment and helps ensure you don’t neglect or miss doing things that are timely or that have a deadline.

The author of Hebrews wrote, “We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”⁴

1. *Fairlady*, April 2013
2. 1 Corinthians 14:33 ESV
3. Proverbs 19:15 NIV
4. Hebrews 6:12 NIV
5. Acts 17:11 NIV
6. Psalm 150:6
7. 1 Corinthians 3:16
8. 3 John 1:2 NIV
9. www.just1thing.com





TEN MINUTES: READ A BIBLE CHAPTER AND PRAY FOR SOMEONE OR SOME EVENT

Getting your spiritual side geared up is as important as the physical side. Take some time to pray for friends and loved ones that come to mind, as well as for the things you're working on or your upcoming projects. Did you hear about something tragic in the news? You can take a few minutes to pray for those involved.

There are a lot of great Bible-reading programs that can help you choose a chapter or two to read every day and also help you to get through big sections over time. Other ideas are reading a Psalm or a Proverb each day, or a chapter from some other uplifting book or devotional selection. Referring to the Bereans, who were exemplary in the daily reading of God's Word, Luke says, "They received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day."⁵

TWO MINUTES: PRACTICE GRATITUDE

There are so many things we take for granted each day—like our eyesight, our health, opportunities to study and work, friends and family, a roof overhead. Taking a few minutes every day to thank God for the things He's given you helps you to see life from a better perspective. Positivity is a powerful thing; it has hosts of health benefits and can even help you walk through doors of possibility that you may not have attempted if you were focused too much on the negative.

King David ruled out nearly all excuses for not praising the Lord when he said, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."⁶



THIRTY MINUTES: EXERCISE

We are physically inactive for much of modern life: studying, working at a desk, reading, driving or riding in a car or on public transport, sleeping or watching TV, sitting in front of a tablet or a PC. The challenge is to see if we can give ourselves at *least* 30 minutes to go for a walk or do something active that we enjoy. The Bible refers to your body as "the temple of God."⁷ That means that taking good care of yourself is important.

John said it well: "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well."⁸



If you can add these things to your daily routine, you may be surprised at how much better you'll feel and how much more on top of things you'll become. I've just started, and I love it already.

The most important thing is sticking with it. Anything good that you do, even for a few minutes every day, pays off over time!

What are sixty minutes worth to you?

TINA KAPP IS A DANCER, PRESENTER, AND FREELANCE WRITER IN SOUTH AFRICA. SHE RUNS AN ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY THAT HELPS RAISE FUNDS FOR CHARITY AND MISSIONARY PROJECTS. THIS ARTICLE WAS ADAPTED FROM A PODCAST ON JUST 1 THING,⁹ A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. ■



NILO'S SMILE

BY ANDREW MATEYAK

WHEN I PONDER WHO THE GREATEST PEOPLE IN MY WORLD ARE, I find there are so many to choose from. There are great men and women from the past with outstanding accomplishments, my wonderful parents who raised me well, my teachers, and so many good people making sacrifices to help others around the world.

Someone else who comes to my mind is my friend Nilo. I first met Nilo at a market several years ago. I was walking by and I saw him pushing himself along. You see, Nilo is disabled. I didn't have much money with me but I took what change I had and put it in the cup which he held out. He looked up at me with a wonderful smile.

"Thank you, my friend," he responded, and something about the

way he said it made me feel good inside.

The next time I was at the market, I went back over to the same spot to see if Nilo was still there. As soon as his eyes met mine, they lit up with that wonderful smile again.

"Hello, my friend!" he shouted out across the road and waved his hands as I went over to see him.

We talked for a while, and from that day on, whenever I was at the market, I always tried to take the time to see him.

"What is it about Nilo that makes him different from other people I see there on the side of the road?" I asked my wife.

We thought about it awhile, then came to the conclusion: "It's his smile!" In spite of his hardships

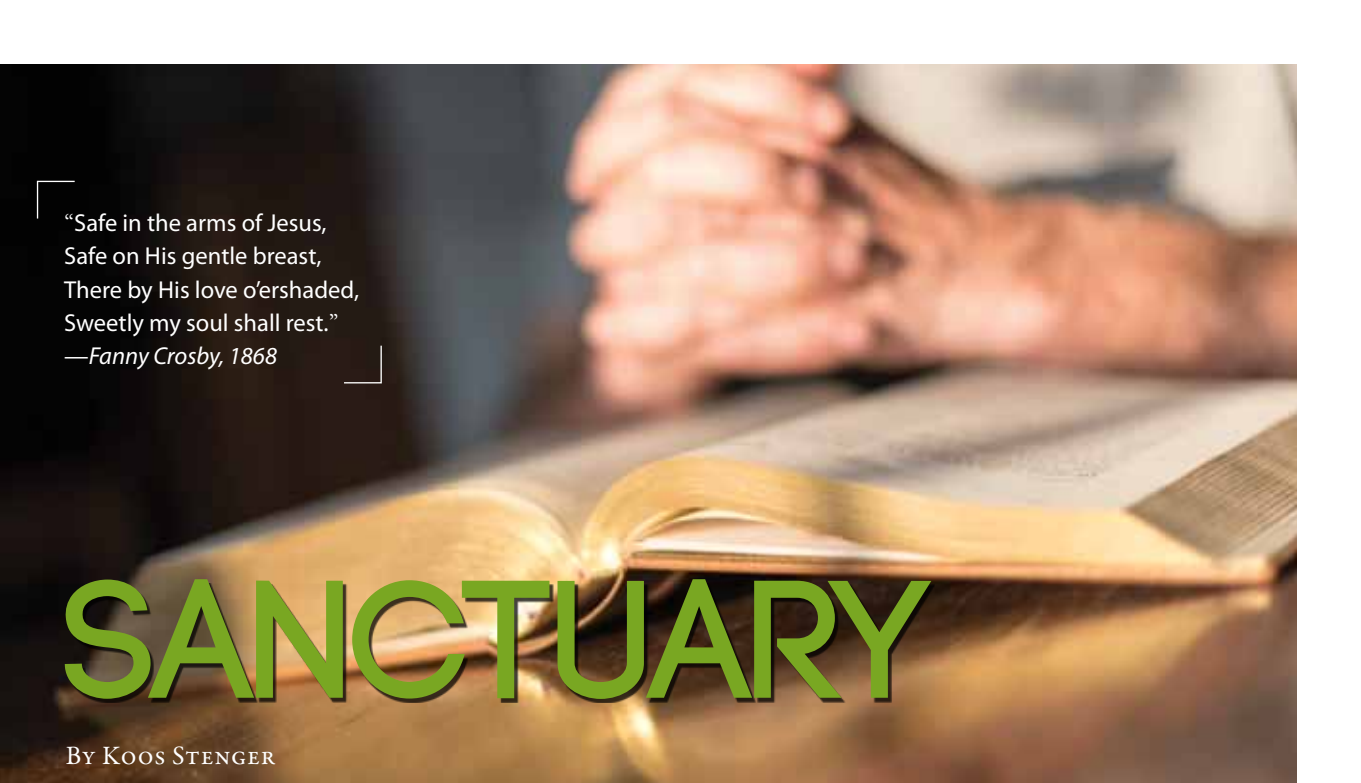
For the test of the heart is trouble,
and it always comes with years,
And the smile that is worth the
praises of earth is the smile that
shines through tears.

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850–1919)

and his disabilities, he doesn't sit looking depressed as if he hates life and the world around him. No, he always has that wonderful smile on his face and cheerfully calls me his friend, even if I don't have much to give him.

That's a great person! That's someone I respect, someone who can face the hardships of his life every day with a smile and keep moving forward in spite of the difficulties. If we could be like that, the world would be a better place for everyone.

ANDREW MATEYAK IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE PHILIPPINES. FOLLOW HIS WORK ON HIS FB PROFILE, ACTIVATED CDO. ■



“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o’ershadéd,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.”

—Fanny Crosby, 1868

SANCTUARY

BY KOOS STENGER

“THE CONCLUSION”—the speaker said in a booming voice—“is simple. Thank God for the small things in life. Don’t look for the millions, but be thankful for the cents.” Everybody applauded.

The seminar was over. With my notebook full of hastily scribbled notes and two new self-help books on how to enjoy life, I left the meeting hall somewhat bewildered.

It had actually been a decent seminar, but I hadn’t heard anything new. The message—to enjoy the small things in life and to do so daily—is as old as the hills. How to do that remained a mystery even after the seminar.

At the start of the year, my life was in shambles. Our bank account was almost empty and health troubles were looming. And now,

fear had found a comfortable resting place in my daily meditations.

How could I be thankful for small blessings like a cup of hot tea under the winter sun, or the reassuring purr of a cat on my lap, when I didn’t know how to survive the next month? There wasn’t a moment where the cares of this life weren’t besieging me with their taunts and logical explanations for why my life was a failure and I wasn’t going to make it.

Sanctuary.

I heard the word in my mind as clearly as if someone had spoken it directly to me. I needed sanctuary.

In the olden days, sanctuary referred to a person’s right to protection within the walls of a consecrated church. As long as the person seeking shelter stayed within the confines of the church, their right to sanctuary was usually respected.

How did that apply to me, though?

I too was on the run. My fears were as real as the pursuers of a miscreant in medieval times. Trying to hide from them was impossible. But there is a sanctuary. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run to it and are safe.”¹

Safe! What a wonderful word.

In the strong tower of Jesus, I can find rest and strength. It’s where I can discuss everything with the Savior and He will show me how to deal with each problem and fear.

What about all my troubles? Aren’t they still there?

After time in the sanctuary, their sting is gone. There’s nothing that Jesus and I together cannot handle. And the best part is, I can run back to the sanctuary as often as necessary.

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1. Proverbs 18:10



THE SECRET PLACE

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

I see your struggles and hear your calls for help. When you feel all alone, I am there. I feel your heartaches, and wait for you to come to Me in prayer. Come into My sanctuary, into that secret place that you and I can share. There I am able to lift the worries, the cares, and the confusion. There I can restore your feeling of purpose and infuse you with strength to go on.

Life can be a struggle, but you do not have to struggle alone. Many times I have allowed burdens in your life that seemed like mountains. They weigh your spirit down and you wonder why I have allowed them. I have not allowed these things to reprove you or as some sort of punishment. I have allowed them so that you would draw closer to Me. I know your heart better than anyone else ever could, and love you more dearly.

The problems and obstacles that I allow in your life can be taken two ways: They can make you either bitter or better. When you have found the peace that only I can give, I can then use you as an instrument of My love to comfort others.

Many events in life can seem unfair or even unloving, but when you look at them through My promise of “all things work together for good,”¹ that gives a whole new meaning to things. That promise holds the key to easing any heartache, relieving any problem, and conquering any fear.

1. Romans 8:28