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Vol 19 • Issue 10

SALT AND LIGHT

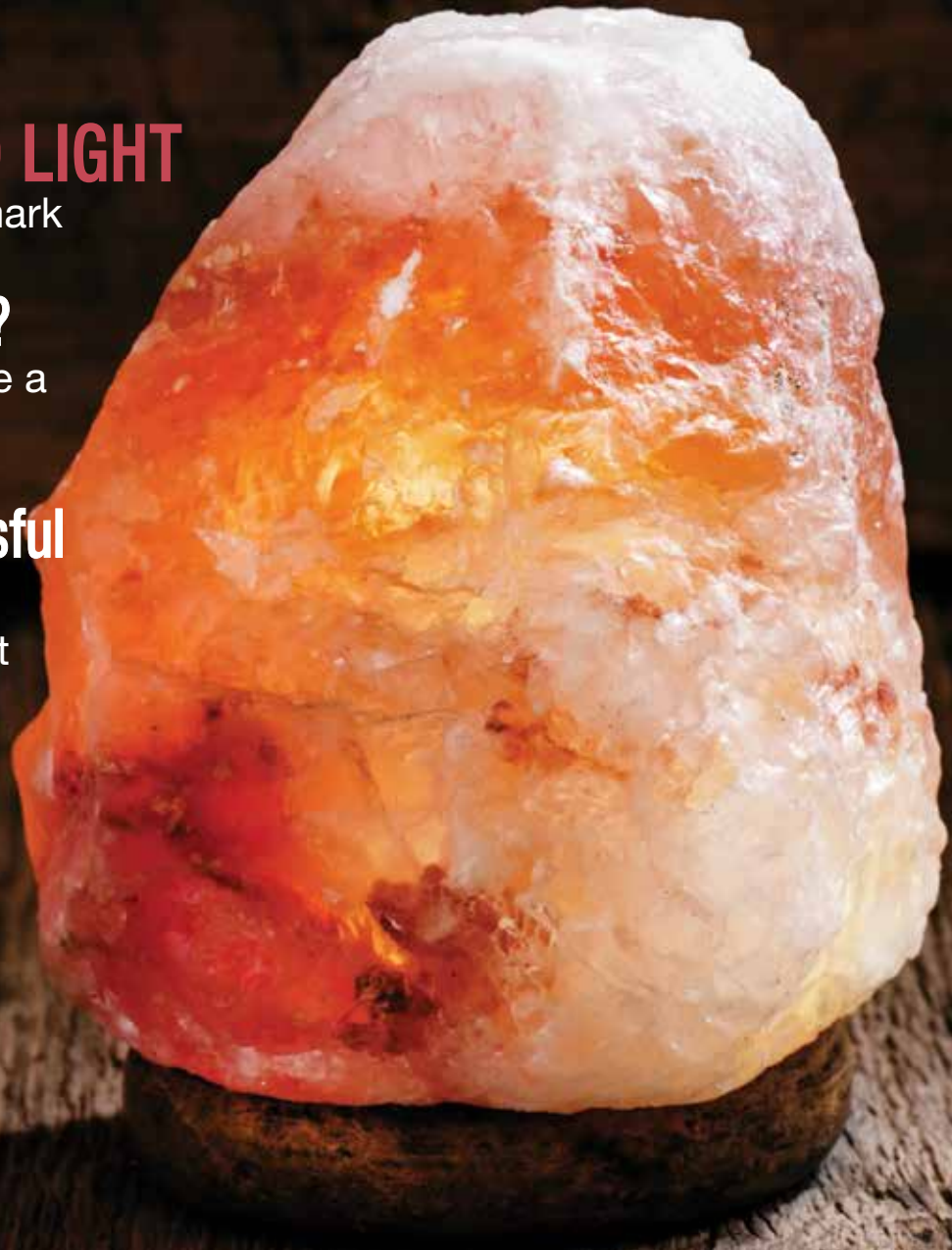
God's benchmark

Whose Fool?

Willing to make a difference

The Successful Sales Pitch

Be the product





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

A LIFE WELL LIVED

The Bible has a lot to say on the topic of what our purpose in life should be. King Solomon, described in the Bible as the wisest man of his time,¹ discovered the futility of living only for this world. He gives these concluding remarks in the book of Ecclesiastes: "Respect and obey God! This is what life is all about."²

The author of Psalm 73, a man named Asaph, relates his search for meaning after he saw wicked people enjoying life, seemingly without a care in the world. In the end, he discovers that being God's friend is the highest benefit. He concludes: "As for me, how good it is to be near God!"³

But that's only one side of the coin.

The Benedictine nun Sister Noella, who holds a doctorate in molecular and cell biology/microbiology and won a Fulbright scholarship to study French cheeses, gives inspirational presentations where she likens cheese-making to her spiritual life. While a part of our growth as Christians comes through prayer and the study of God's Word, Sister Noella says it also comes by getting our hands dirty and *doing* God's work, which she relates to the Benedictine order's motto—*ora et labora*, pray and work.

While the spiritual aspect—an ongoing commitment to draw closer to God, to spend more time reading His Word, and to grow in our relationship with Him—is important, this issue of *Activated* will focus on some of the practical aspects of living a Christian life.

I'll close with this quote by Albert Barnes: "If we have no other way of doing good—if we are poor, and unlearned, and unknown—we may yet do good by our lives. No sincere and humble Christian lives in vain. The feeblest light at midnight is of use."

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. See 1 Kings 4:30.
2. Ecclesiastes 12:13 CEV
3. Psalm 73:28 NLT

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BY IRIS RICHARD

FINDING JESUS IN UNUSUAL PLACES

I WAS CAUGHT in one of our congested city's dreaded traffic jams. The endless line of cars, trucks, and buses was crawling forward at barely a walking pace, while pedestrians, motorbikes, and bicycles managed to make a bit of headway, weaving between the lanes. The polluted air was heavy with the fumes of exhaust, and I felt sick to my stomach. With lips pursed in impatience, I observed the puddle-strewn unpaved sidewalk, still muddy from a recent downpour, and amongst the vendors displaying secondhand wares, fruits, and vegetables on tarps, I spotted a crippled beggar boy, not older than seven, holding out his hand.

The lane next to me was closest to the sidewalk, and it was occupied by a cart pulled by a man dressed

in worn pants, a torn T-shirt, and muddy shoes. His face was strained and dripped with sweat and his muscles bulged as he tried to maneuver the heavy cart piled high with potato sacks.

Then the crippled boy's and the man's eyes met and he stopped, reached into his pocket, pulled out a coin, and placed it into the boy's outstretched hand. The boy's face broke into a beautiful smile and he cheerfully called, "Thank you, sir. God bless you."

I couldn't help but be reminded of the example Jesus set for us when He reached out to the downtrodden, the lame, and the blind. My prayer that evening was to let myself be God's hands and feet for someone in need, to "be ready in season and out of season"¹ to be Him for others.

Soon after, I had a chance to put this prayer into practice. When my

daughter was in the labor ward and about to give birth to her third child, the woman in the next bed behind the dividing curtain was having a really hard time coping with her labor pains.

She was a stranger, but I felt compelled to go over and ask her if I could help. Having been a birth coach during many deliveries, I offered to assist her with a breathing pattern that could help her. She clung on to me and soon got the hang of it, managing to relax between contractions. "You're an angel," she huffed after another strong contraction.

"I'm no angel," I replied, "but I try to follow what God shows me."

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

1. 2 Timothy 4:2

SALT AND LIGHT

BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED



JESUS OPENED THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT with the Beatitudes, which provide an overview of how He intends for those who follow Him to live their faith. Throughout the rest of the Sermon, He expressed further and more detailed principles which build on the Beatitudes.

One of those principles, following right after the Beatitudes, is:

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the

house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”¹

In the ancient world, salt was much more important than it is today. The Mosaic Law required that sacrifices made in the temple contain salt, and Roman soldiers received a portion of their wages in salt. A small amount of salt added to food permeates the whole dish, making it taste so much better. The attributes spoken of in the Beatitudes and throughout the Sermon on the Mount radiate from true followers of Jesus and influence others for the better. Thus they are like “salt,” flavoring everyone around them.

Since ancient times, salt has also been used to preserve food, mainly fish and meat, keeping them from becoming putrid and decaying. The

influence of believers in the world can and should influence individuals and society in a manner that works to preserve good and godly values, and counter those the Bible describes as ungodly. We Christians are meant to be a positive spiritual and moral force in the world through our example of living Jesus’ teachings, doing what we can to emulate Him, and sharing the good news of salvation with others.

We know today that pure salt (sodium chloride) will not lose its saltiness. However, salt in Jesus’ day wasn’t pure, since there were no refineries. Salt in Palestine generally came from the Dead Sea. It was more powderlike than the salt most of us are familiar with today, and it contained a mixture of other minerals. Since sodium chloride was the most soluble part of the mixture, it could

1. Matthew 5:13–16 ESV



be washed out or dissolved if it was exposed to condensation or rain-water. When that happened, even though the white powder that was left still looked like salt, it neither tasted like nor had the preserving properties of salt. It was good for nothing. Like tasteless salt, disciples who lack genuine commitment to discipleship become ineffective.

Jesus then used another metaphor about light, pointing out that a disciple's life is meant to light up the world around them, and that disciples whose lives do not reveal the Father's works are like lights which aren't seen. The world needs the light of Jesus, and His disciples are to be visible, like a city on a hill—which can be clearly seen from far away in both day and night, due to its lights.

Jesus also spoke of a lamp that gives light within a house. A typical

peasant house in Israel contained only one room, so one lamp would have lit up the entire house. A domestic lamp in Jesus' day was a shallow bowl of oil with a wick. It was normally stationary, placed on a lampstand. Jesus points out that people put the lamp on the stand to light the whole house; they don't put it under a basket where the light can't be seen. A basket, translated in some Bible versions as a bowl, was a vessel which was used to measure grain and held about nine liters. It was made from either earthenware or reeds. Putting such a vessel over the lamp would completely hide the light and eventually put it out altogether.

For the lamp to fulfill its purpose of giving light, it needs to be visible; so covering the light would be absurd, since it would work against

the purpose of the lamp. Likewise, to be effective Christians, we are to live in a manner which allows others to see that we are Christian, to see how a life in alignment with Jesus' teachings is lived. In the same way that a city set on a hill is clearly seen, and a lamp gives light to the whole house, we are to be light from God to those we interact with.

Later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructs His disciples that they shouldn't let others see when they do good works, which seems at first glance to be in conflict with what He says here: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

In living our faith, we are to do all we can to reflect God—being loving, merciful, and compassionate



in our actions; helping others, giving to those in need, etc. Our goal, however, should be to do these things for God's glory, not our own. Our purpose for helping others, for putting Jesus' teachings into action, needs to be our commitment to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. It is part of who we are as Christians, as our purpose is to live in a way that glorifies God. Since we have become part of God's family, we reflect His attributes because He is our Father.

Being followers of Jesus and His teachings is meant to set us apart. As Jesus said, "You are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world."² The apostle Paul expressed it this way: "One time you were darkness,

2. John 15:19 ESV

3. Ephesians 5:8–9 ESV

but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)."³

Disciples of Jesus are the light of the world, and like a city set on a hill which can't be hidden, like a lamp that gives light to all within the house, we are called to let the light that is within us shine in a manner that others can see, so that they will give glory to God. As Christians, we are meant to reflect the light of God into our world in order to light the pathway to Him. It is part of the job description of a believer.

The calling of Christians is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. To be effective and true to our calling, we must remain salty and keep our light from being covered; otherwise we become

ineffective—salt that has lost its flavor, light which benefits no one. Our commitment as followers of Jesus is to live His teachings so that the light within us shines before others; so that they will see our good works, our loving actions, how we conduct ourselves in God's love, and they will take notice and see God's reflection within us. The hope is that they will want to know what has made us the way we are, thus opening the door to tell them of God's love for them, resulting in them entering a relationship with Him and further glorifying Him.

May each of us truly be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

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

A close-up photograph of a woman with voluminous, curly brown hair, smiling broadly and showing her teeth. She is wearing a light blue top. The background is a light blue wall with horizontal lines.

THE SUCCESSFUL SALES PITCH

BY MARIE ALVERO

I WENT TO THE RETAIL STORE, Costco, today to return a vacuum cleaner I had purchased that turned out to be defective. After making our return, we were in need of a new vacuum cleaner and made our way to the aisle that offered several makes and models. It just so happened that a sales rep for one of the brands was on the floor demonstrating her wares.

This lady was a great sales representative. She wore a logo-embossed shirt, and she described how she personally used this brand of vacuums in her home. These vacuums cost twice the amount of the other brands, but she spoke so passionately about their value and performance that it was pretty easy to be talked into making the purchase, all the while being convinced you were

getting a real bargain. She knew her product, she was proud of it, and she made you believe you needed it too!

As we shelled out a larger than expected sum for our “must have” vacuum cleaner, and I thought of the feat it is to get me to pay so much for anything, I asked myself if I could ever sell anything that successfully. Specifically, do I “sell” Jesus that enthusiastically? When you look at me, can you tell I “represent” Him? Do I have enough passion for my “product” that I can convince you that you need it too, even if it costs?

This wasn’t an easy question to answer. I think the ultimate goal of those of us who are followers of Jesus is to make other people want Jesus by watching the way that we live and hearing us talk. And, if we’re coming

up short on that, I think there’s only one solution: get to know the “product” better.

I came to the conclusion that if I’m not wildly passionate about Jesus, then maybe I don’t know Him well enough. If I am not making you want more of Jesus in your life, that’s probably because I don’t have enough of Him in mine. If our hope is to draw others to Christ, then we need to draw closer to Him ourselves. And, just as with any outstanding product, the result will speak for itself.

MARIE ALVERO IS A FORMER MISSIONARY TO AFRICA AND MEXICO. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES A HAPPY, BUSY LIFE WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN IN CENTRAL TEXAS, USA. ■



FINDING OUR NICHE

BY WILLIAM B. MCGRATH

THE GREAT BRITISH WRITER GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON wrote a series of short stories about a parish priest, Father Brown, with a knack for forensics. This lowly priest investigated criminal cases while maintaining compassion and understanding toward the guilty.

In one episode, Father Brown gives some advice to a guilty individual who has climbed up into the church spire. He tells him: “You know, it can be dangerous when

individuals place themselves in high places. Even to pray from a high place can be dangerous. Good people who allow themselves to gain a lofty opinion of themselves will begin to look down upon others and become judgmental towards others. Soon, they will feel comfortable with putting other people down verbally, and then they may even grow comfortable with criminal acts of violence. But humility is the mother of giants, and one can see great things down in the valley, in one’s rightful place.”¹ After this, Father Brown tells the man that what he knows about him can remain confidential, but he asks him to take the path of honest repentance, to turn himself in.

In the series, Father Brown is depicted making the most of one’s

1. Paraphrased from *The Innocence of Father Brown*, originally published 1911.

2. See 2 Corinthians 10:12.

3. See 2 Kings 5:1–15.

4. See John 6:4–14.

5. See Mark 12:29–31.

humble station in life and being content and useful there. He doesn't own a car, but he often wears a smile while riding his bicycle. If others insult him, he's hardly moved and will often reply with a simple compliment for the other person or point out something that they can together be grateful for. He just keeps moving forward with what he believes he should do each day.

His keen eye for solving criminal cases is sharpened by a favorite pastime: reading murder mysteries. Others try to persuade him to stay strictly in the traditional activities of a parish priest. He attends to those well but knows deep down that he was also meant to meddle in the serious affairs of solving crime. His interest becomes part of his vocation, his niche, enabling him to right some of the wrongs that he sees around him. Father Brown also prays for unjust situations to be found out. The local chief inspector resents the priest's intruding into his investigations, but while Father Brown bows out of taking any credit for solving the mysteries, he repeatedly proves himself indispensable.

God made each of us with a specific place and purpose in mind. Perhaps we could find deeper fulfillment in our station in life if we

could learn to make the most of our position by equipping ourselves to do our best, wherever we find ourselves in life's journey.

There's nothing wrong with aspiring to be good at what we do and receiving recognition for it, but we can become disheartened and discontent if we belittle our own place in life and long for a seemingly more preeminent position. Certainly there are many individuals who excel in positions of great usefulness or prominence. But many of us fill a place in life that would be considered more common and ordinary. Nevertheless, we are each given valuable hidden skills that can be developed in our current circumstances. And when we accept our situation and do all we can in it, we will often find ourselves developing those hidden or formerly dormant talents, which we can then use to help others. This in turn brings us contentment and fulfillment.

Some people know exactly what they want to do and who they want to be from a very young age. But many more simply have to find their way, pick an occupation, and often start small and learn as they go. Peer pressure, this world's culture, and the human mind can often work together to cause us to belittle our

place and position when it is a seemingly more ordinary and common one. But no place or position is really common or ordinary if it is the place and position God meant us to have, and where He meant for us to develop our unique skills.²

The Bible has plenty of people brought out of the ranks of obscurity and the commonplace, who ended up being key players—for example, Naaman's maid was the one who mentioned where her master might find healing for his leprosy³ and the lad who gave Jesus his lunch, which was then multiplied to feed 5,000 people.⁴

Our place in life may not be one with lucrative income nor a position in the limelight, but it becomes a very special place and one of deep fulfillment when we put the principal values in first place—loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves.⁵ Wherever He has us placed in this world, and for whatever length of time, we accept it and learn to make it better. That is what Father Brown did.

WILLIAM B. MCGRATH IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SOUTHERN MEXICO. ■

WHOSE FOOL?

BY LINDA CROSS



“REMAIN IN ME, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. . . . If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”¹

This verse is proving so true in my life. When I make the effort


1. John 15:4–5 NIV
2. 1 Samuel 16:7 NLT
3. See 1 Corinthians 4:10.

to put Jesus in first place in my life, opportunities drop in my lap and doors open to share my faith with others—oftentimes, as I’m going about my everyday routine, such as while traveling by public transportation.

On one such trip, as I approached the bus station, which was teeming with people, I noticed two men who were obviously intoxicated. One man was holding a plastic bag filled with beer cans. They seemed noisy and obnoxious, and my initial reaction

was to keep at a distance, as I didn’t want to be inconvenienced.

But then I felt God’s nudge: “Talk to them!” It dawned on me how quickly I had judged them by their appearance and behavior. The Bible says, “People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”² Jesus didn’t care what social standing or label people had when He chose to give them love and attention. He was even accused of being a drunk and denounced for fraternizing with the wrong crowd.



He chose love above reputation and comfort.

I struggled with doubts whether I should follow the Lord's nudge but decided to give it a shot. I handed each man a gospel tract and told them I hoped it would make their day. The man with the beer cans told me he'd had plenty of bad experiences with Christians that talked about Jesus' love but were condescending. "I want nothing to do with them!" he added.

As more and more people began filling the bus station, they quietly listened to our out-of-the-ordinary conversation about salvation.

Finally, the ruder one of the two smirked and said loudly and clearly, "I'll take Jesus if I can get into your pants!" I realized that it was just an attempt to scandalize and embarrass a believer, and I was right, as before I had a chance to answer, he added with a sigh, "—Or if you just give me some food!"

"When was the last time you ate?" I asked.

"I haven't had a meal in two days," was his response. There was silence. I asked God to show me how to proceed. I knew this was His

opportunity to reach out to this lost man to show him He really does love him.

"Okay," I replied. "I'm cooking spaghetti tonight for my family. I can meet you here with a warm meal by dinnertime." He happily agreed on a time to meet, and with that, his attitude changed from scornful to respectful.

Time was short, as the bus would be arriving any minute, so I felt God's lead to offer to pray for him.

In response, his drinking buddy, who had been the gentler of the two, started yelling angrily. "How's Jesus gonna help him?!"

But the man I was talking with told him off, saying, "Respect prayer, man! She's gonna pray for me!"

I put my hand on his shoulder and we both bowed our heads in front of a staring crowd while I prayed for his salvation, for him to understand how much Jesus loves him, and for his deliverance from alcoholism.

He was moved and said in a choked voice, "I felt a warm sensation in my heart when you prayed. I've never felt that before!"

The bus arrived and I got on. "Thank you!" he said, as we parted.

When cooking dinner that evening, we made enough extra food for two and packed it with plastic silverware and napkins.

I was wondering if the man would actually show up at the appointed time, and he did, now sober. We stood in the empty bus station and talked for a while longer about Jesus' healing power. As I handed him the food, I explained that we had added enough for two meals. "Thanks!" he exclaimed. "My roommate is hungry as well, and I was planning on sharing this meal with him!"

"Nobody's ever done a thing like this for me before!" he said.

I was so inspired at the result that came from being willing to be available when Jesus asked me to step out of my comfort zone to witness to and show His love to this man, even if it was hard at first because of the onlookers. It makes me want to dare to be a fool for Christ,³ no matter what He asks of me or how difficult it may be initially. As the challenge goes, "I'm a fool for Christ. Whose fool are you?"

LINDA CROSS IS A STAY-AT-HOME MOM TO SEVEN WILD AND WONDERFUL CHILDREN IN SWEDEN. ■

BY MARA HODLER

JONATHAN'S INTEGRITY



I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT PRINCE JONATHAN, the son of Israel's first anointed king, is an amazing example in the Bible of honor and integrity. Think about it: he was logically expected to succeed his father, King Saul, as king—but the prophet Samuel anointed the boy David instead.

Now, if I were in Jonathan's position, I think I would have succumbed in one of two ways. Either I would have become consumed with envy, feeling that I had been dealt an unjust hand. Or I would have not cared about the affairs of the kingdom from then on.

The truth is, I've actually had both those reactions to things far less impactful than losing my place in the succession to a throne. It's easy to lose sight of what I would regard as "my morals" when I feel like I'm getting the raw end of a deal.

But what did *Jonathan* do? For as long as he remained a prince, he was the best prince that he could be, right up until the end when he died fighting a doomed battle.¹ Even while he filled his role of prince, he also honored and protected the future king, David, on numerous occasions.

Jonathan was brave in the service of his country. He had the courage to take on thousands of Philistines with just the help of his armor bearer.² He also seemed to have been concerned about the welfare of Israel and played an active role in his father's

administration. Jonathan once told David, "Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without confiding in me."³

I don't think Jonathan saw ruling Israel as a self-serving opportunity. He didn't seem to care who was king, as long as they led the country in God's ways. He put his full weight behind David, God's anointed, simply because he *was* God's anointed. That takes integrity—the kind of deep-seated integrity that comes from complete confidence in God's providence.

His father Saul, by contrast, showed a lack of integrity on many occasions. He repeatedly went against his own word, disobeyed God's prophet, and was more interested in preserving his reign than he was in doing a good job as king. Saul's fear of losing his kingdom prompted him

1. See 1 Samuel 31:6.

2. See 1 Samuel 14:1–16.

3. 1 Samuel 20:2 NIV

4. www.just1thing.com



to make many wrong decisions that eventually ended up costing him the kingdom and his life.

Now we'll talk about me. A few years ago, I had some major issues in my workplace. It all came to a head for me when someone I felt was doing less for the company than I was got the promotion I'd pretty much been in line for. I'd been putting my all into working for the company and honestly felt that I deserved the promotion. I tried to be gracious, but it frustrated me to no end. My "team spirit" was sorely dampened.

I hate when I feel something is unfair! Sometimes it leads to my thinking that someone else's unjust attitudes or actions justify my own bad reactions. Or worse yet, I think that their behavior actually *entitles* me to have a poor attitude.

There I was, stewing in self-pity for a week or so before I finally got down to praying about my situation. Guess who God brought to mind? Yes, Jonathan. God reminded me of Jonathan's love for David and how he didn't question God's choice. Jonathan would probably have been a good king for Israel, but God chose David, and Jonathan trusted God's choice.

To be the kind of person that can do their best in their God-chosen post even when it doesn't offer prestige or "perks" takes integrity and honor. To be able to recognize the part God has for you to play and play it without looking over your shoulder to see if anyone else has a better part or is doing as good a job as you are takes a very big person. As my little story shows, I didn't quite live up to this standard.

I had to put some work into aligning my actions to make them consistent with my beliefs. That's become my personal definition of integrity, and a question I can ask myself when wondering if I am making the right choice: "Are my actions consistent with my beliefs?" Only when I can answer with a resounding "yes" can I be sure that my integrity is not in question.

The happy ending is that I did bring my actions and my attitude around to match my beliefs. I learned the value of playing my part, and sure enough, my superiors soon began to notice.

THIS ARTICLE WAS ADAPTED FROM A PODCAST ON JUST 1 THING,⁴ A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. ■



MY DAUGHTER ONCE ASKED ME if I regretted devoting my life to Christian service.

I answered, “No regrets whatsoever. The idea has been to work with eternity in mind.”

The word “eternity” has been popularized by an amazing guy who passed away in 1967, named Arthur Stace, whose life story has been remembered in a book, an opera, and a film.¹

Raised in an abusive and alcoholic family and involved in petty crime for the first 45 years of his life, Arthur was a “drunken, good-for-nothing derelict,” as described by his biographer. All of that changed the day he heard a sermon on Isaiah 57:15: “The high and lofty one who

lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: ‘I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble.’”²

Arthur later said, “Suddenly I began crying and felt a powerful call to write the word ‘Eternity.’”

He put his hands in his pockets and felt a piece of chalk. Though he was illiterate and could hardly write his own name, he said when he first wrote it, “the word ‘Eternity’ came out smoothly, in a beautiful copperplate script. I couldn’t understand it, and I still can’t.”

For the next 28 years, several times a week, he would leave his house at 5 A.M. to write it in public places, to remind people who saw it of what really matters in life. He wrote “Eternity” in chalk and crayon at least 50 times a day. In the end, he had written this magical and thought-provoking word half a million times all over the city. He called himself a “missioner.”

Arthur’s story inspires us to use what we have, no matter how little it may seem—even a piece of

chalk—to be a force for good in the world.

The Bible says that our life is like the grass, flowers, or smoke—that we’re here a little while and then we’re gone.³ When I was younger, my life looked like a long, long highway with no end in sight, but now that I’m 66, I have a deeper understanding.

During a speaking engagement, Francis Chan illustrated eternity with a very long rope that he brought on to the stage.⁴ “Imagine,” he said, “that this rope goes on forever and illustrates your life in eternity.” Then he pointed to a few centimeters of the rope that were colored red: “This would represent your time on earth.” Some people live only for the earthly part of their entire existence, while disregarding the rest, their eternal life. But what we do during the here and now will echo on in the then and there. That’s what really matters.

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


1. See a short documentary on Arthur Stace here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bF7X9aiRH7s>.

2. NLT

3. See Psalm 103:15; James 4:14.

4. See here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86dsfBbZfWs>.

5. <http://elixirmime.com>



If you're down and discouraged, or you know someone who is and you want to be there for them, Jesus can help. Start by asking Him into your life now:

Dear Jesus, I feel You knocking on the door of my heart, and I ask You now to come in and give me Your free gift of eternal life with You. Help me do what I can to show Your love and concern for others so that they too can come to know You.
Amen.

THE MUSIC OF OUR LIFE

BY CHRIS MIZRANY

IF YOU ASKED ME HOW I FEEL ABOUT MUSIC, I'd say I'm an enthusiast. My friends might say a fanatic, but I just tune them out.

There's something inexplicable about music that moves our hearts and stirs our souls. Powerful lyrics can be just the right thing to lift our mood and cheer us up, and I personally owe many happy moments to inspired songwriters.

Even without lyrics, though, the melody, harmony, and expressive flow of a musical piece speak volumes. When I listen to a classical piece, I feel my emotions sway with the notes. Slow, moody tremors give way to skipping joyous lilts, rising tempests, and sunset skies. The music effortlessly carries my soul without a word, and I understand the meaning clearly.

I've found this concept holds true in my life. I'm blessed with solid, faith-filled friends who take time to encourage me and pick me up when I'm wallowing in negative emotions. They often remind me of a scripture,

testimony, quote, or even a funny story. Like the lyrics of a good song, they give me hope and positivity, and I am so grateful for their support.

Sometimes, though, they don't say a word. They might not even know my inner struggles. They just live their lives, filled with their own ups and downs, but the music of their soul resonates in mine. I feel the tempests, the clear skies, the happy moments, and troubled times. And through it all, I see their unwavering commitment to trust in Jesus. And honestly, their song of life echoes louder than any words of wisdom, any clever line, any verbal expression.

I know that both are needed. There is a time to give answers to weary, searching souls. But even if sometimes our words are few, the music of our life—how we live, and how much we love—is always heard.

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

HAPPY PEOPLE

I would love it if the world were filled with joyous and godly laughter: jolly, infectious, festive, holy laughter, the kind that spreads joy to the world! “Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!”¹ I love to hear My people filled with joy, and that joy being manifested in laughter. It reaches up to Me like praise does. It is very like praise and is often mingled with praise. It is joy to the world, and a joy for Me to hear.

I am talking about the laughter that lifts spirits and transcends the confines of the physical world and fills the halls of heaven with joyous celebration! Laughter can lift the spirits of humanity, and you all know how desperate that need is.

So go into the highways and byways and bring others into My kingdom and cause them to burst forth in joy! Go into the places where people are lonely and spread laughter and sunshine. Go forth and make people laugh, and you will make My day! Let the earth be filled with laughter!

1. Psalm 144:15