

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 25 • Issue 7

CHRISTIAN COMPASSION

Following Jesus'
example

The Friendship Book

Be the light
of the world

Your Last Day

A legacy that
endures

Boomerang

Reaping what you
sow





PERSONALLY SPEAKING

TRY A LITTLE KINDNESS

The “me first” mentality that is so prevalent in today’s society leads many to think that good manners and kindness are on the brink of extinction. In hard times, it’s easy to fall into survival mode and focus only on our personal needs. Let’s consider a counter-intuitive thought: It is precisely in such circumstances that we should bring our social skills to the fore. In

tense times, kindness and courtesy are more needed than ever.

Courageous kindness. That is the theme of this *Activated* issue. What do we mean when we talk about *courageous kindness*? It can be a lot of things. Perhaps showing kindness to someone even though they have not treated us well. Maybe it is helping someone in need or doing an anonymous, gracious act, without seeking recognition. Sometimes being kind means risking looking foolish. Kindness always requires some effort and at times some courage as well.

My mother was known to be very generous, even intrepid, in her hospitality. She almost always had someone staying with her in her home. It might have been an exchange student, an immigrant, or someone going through economic hardship. God honored her kind intentions and He never failed to bless and protect her.

During recent sports events in our city, Sally and I had ample opportunities to encourage the athletes—many of whom had disabilities—as well as the volunteers and spectators. We had heard in the news that the stadium guards were working long hours, and their pay was often delayed. Pushing my shyness into the background, I decided to approach the guards at the front gate and thank them for the outstanding job they were doing to help provide a peaceful atmosphere for the games. To my surprise, one of the young guards was visibly touched; he hugged me and thanked me profusely. Little did we know how much he needed that encouragement!

I think everyone has similar stories. We can take advantage of the many opportunities we have to show kindness to those around us if we learn to be observant and then take a step of courage when we see someone in need.

In the following pages, our contributors will examine different aspects of kindness, modeling Jesus as the greatest example of all. Let’s each try a little courageous kindness and see if we can make our part of the world a better place.

Gabriel and Sally García
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Designed by Gentian Suçi.

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A close-up photograph of a person's hand in a dark blue hoodie using a yellow bus fare machine. The person is inserting a coin into a slot on the machine. The machine has a black square with a white downward-pointing triangle on it. The background is blurred, showing blue and green colors.

THE REWARDS OF GIVING

BY ROSANE CORDOBA

I LIVE IN A NICE NEIGHBORHOOD IN RIO DE JANEIRO, far from the city center and close to nature. My house is 1,300 meters from the main road. Since the buses only drive on the main road, I often give lifts to the people who live up my street, and I have had many opportunities to talk to them about Jesus, pray for them, as well as to instruct some on different issues of health or legal paperwork.

One such person was a single mom who had just moved here from a slum. She was trying to transfer her kids to the local public school. While giving her a lift to the main road, I found out she needed to take the enrollment paperwork to the school, but she didn't have the money for the bus fare. I gave her the money she needed, said goodbye, and didn't think more about it.

A few weeks later, my teenage son was coming home and his bus card had a problem and he didn't have any cash on him. The bus driver was going to drop him in the middle of nowhere, but the single mom I had helped happened to be on that same bus, and she paid for his ticket so he could get home safely. The next time we met, with a twinkle in her eyes, she told me what she had done. It meant so much to her to be of help to others, even though she is very poor.

A member of my family was greatly helped by my mother during her youth. After my mother passed away, she was able to help me with paperwork and other urgent needs as I was a widow raising my kids alone. In recent years, my grown sons and I have in turn been able to help her on various occasions, which has made us very happy.

This is the “pay it forward” principle. Sometimes a simple act of kindness or generosity can run across nations and generations. The results may not be seen by us, but every kind act has a ripple effect, like throwing a pebble in a pond.

Kindness is also an expression of gratitude and faith. You show others how grateful you are for God's blessings and that you want them to take part in those blessings, too. And you demonstrate your faith that you believe in His promise to supply your needs.

Even though people might not always appreciate or understand your efforts, there is a great big book in heaven where everything is being recorded, and like a boomerang, our kind deeds will always come back in our direction, either in this life or in the life to come.

ROSANE CORDOBA LIVES IN BRAZIL. SHE IS A FREELANCE WRITER, TRANSLATOR, AND PRODUCER OF FAITH-BASED AND CHARACTER-BUILDING CHILDREN'S MATERIAL. ■

CHRISTIAN COMPASSION

BY PETER AMSTERDAM



WHEN WE READ THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS OF JESUS' LIFE, something that immediately stands out is that Jesus showed compassion and kindness to people from all walks of life and taught that His followers should do the same. We see this in the parables He taught, such as the story of the Good Samaritan who showed compassion to a stranger who had been beaten by nursing his wounds, taking him to an inn to be cared for, and paying the expenses out of his own pocket (Luke 10:30–35).

In the parable of the lost son, a young man demanded his inheritance from his father, which in the context of his day would be the equivalent of saying, “I wish you were dead,” and then he left home only to squander his entire inheritance. Upon his return home, the story tells us that “his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him” (Luke 15:11–32).

Throughout Jesus' ministry, He often saw situations where people were in need, and He was moved

with compassion and took action to help them (Matthew 14:14). The miracle of the loaves and fishes is a prime example of this, as told in the Gospel of Matthew:

“Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ‘I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.’”

When His disciples asked Him, “Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?” Jesus told them to gather up what they had—seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. He then miraculously multiplied them so that over four thousand people ate and were satisfied (Matthew 15:32–38).

In another instance, in the Gospel of Luke, we read of Jesus reaching out to a grief-stricken widow whose only son had just died and was being taken for burial. “And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’” Jesus then proceeded to tell the young man to arise, and He gave him back to his mother (Luke 7:12–15).

During His time on Earth, Jesus was a living example of His Father’s attributes, one of which is compassion. Throughout the Old Testament we read of God’s compassion: “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him” (Psalm 103:13).

“The Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on them in their suffering” (Isaiah 49:13 NLT).

The words compassion and empathy are used a lot these days, but how exactly is compassion defined? Dictionaries define it as “a feeling of deep sympathy

and sorrow for someone who is in some kind of distress, combined with the desire to do something to alleviate it.”

One of the Hebrew words in the Old Testament that is translated as compassion is related to the Hebrew word for “womb” and expresses a parent’s protective compassion for a helpless child—a deep emotion which translates into acts of selfless service. This word is generally used in reference to God’s compassion, such as in the book of Exodus, where we read: “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Exodus 34:6 NASB).

In the New Testament, one of the words used most often for compassion is related to the Greek word for “inward parts,” referring to the seat of human emotions. The term conveys the idea of being moved in the core of one’s inner feelings, leading to acts of kindness and mercy. Another word, *sumpathes*, conveys the meaning of “to suffer with” or “to suffer alongside of.”

Compassion is having a strong feeling about someone else’s situation or state, and doing something to change it. It’s about making things better for someone in need. It’s not compassion if there isn’t some action taken, whether a kind word or deed, a prayer, supporting someone in their grief, and conveying your sorrow or concern.

It can also mean taking action to change the situation or circumstances. It might mean protesting to change unjust laws and bring about social justice. It can mean putting in time and effort to feed the hungry, help orphans, visit the sick and those in mourning, or sharing the gospel with others, or providing assistance of some kind to those in need.

Compassion is closely aligned with empathy—the ability to identify with and share the feelings of another,

and to put yourself in their shoes so that you understand what they are going through from their perspective. In short, compassion is part of love.

The Bible tells us to “put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, [and] kindness” (Colossians 3:12). But how do we cultivate this aspect of love? A good starting place is to reflect on Jesus’ instruction: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). When we learn to walk in others’ shoes, being kind and compassionate comes more easily.

It also helps to ponder Jesus’ ministry. He saw people in need—the blind, the hungry, the mourning, the sick, the social outcasts—and instead of looking the other way and passing by, He noticed, stopped, and took action. It’s easy in our busy lives to not notice others who are struggling and in need, and to be preoccupied with our own problems, needs, and concerns to where we don’t truly see the people around us.

Something else that can help us be more compassionate is increasing our awareness of the Lord’s love for us—remembering that though we are undeserving, full of faults, and sinful, God took action on our behalf, even at a huge cost. God sacrificed His beloved Son so that He could rescue us in our time of need. God has shown us costly compassion, and as we reflect on this and praise and thank Him for doing so, we will be compelled to respond to others with His love and compassion (2 Corinthians 5:14–15 NIV).

Jesus had compassion for the suffering, the outcasts, the poor and needy, and He taught His followers to do the same. He said that every time we feed the hungry, or show a stranger hospitality, or visit the sick or those in prison, we are doing it to Him (Matthew 25:37–40 NLT).

We may find ourselves thinking that our efforts to help others will be feeble in comparison, since Jesus was God and could perform mighty miracles. But showing compassion to others can feel like a miracle to someone in need. A small act of kindness can make a major difference in their lives and give them the courage to keep on.

Receiving Jesus in our hearts and being filled with God’s Spirit is the key to having that kind of compassion for others. Experiencing His love through close communion and fellowship with Him, and reflecting on His grace and goodness to us in our everyday lives, helps us to live in the awareness of His love for us personally. When we experience His mercy, generosity, and unconditional love, we are better able to embody His compassion and kindness, and let His love flow through us to others.

Jesus compassionately served others, and as His followers we are called to do the same.

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



LOVING THOSE IN NEED

BY ANDREW HEART

IN LUKE 14:16–24, Jesus told a parable about a man who “gave a great banquet and invited many” and he sent his servant to “go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame” to attend his feast.

As missionaries, my wife Anna and I would often seek out such persons to whom we could show the love of Jesus. Never did we think that God would call us to *live* among those needy people. But that’s exactly what He did recently. After having lived in a relatively large apartment in a nice neighborhood, the Lord led us to move into a complex of low-rent row houses that used to be a facility for the elderly, but which are now being used by the city to house the “poor, crippled, blind and lame.”

When we went to look at the tiny flat that was for rent, we saw many residents using canes or walkers. Since Anna had also been having difficulty walking, it was easy for her to approach those who would soon be our new neighbors. Having compassion for their affliction opened the door to share the love and truth of Jesus with them.



Our new situation is a gold mine of opportunity to share the gospel, and to “go witnessing” now means simply stepping out the front door! Because these folks mostly lead solitary lives, they are lonely and so thankful for someone to talk with. Many spend time throughout the day sitting outside their door. These conditions have made it exceptionally easy for us to approach people, strike up conversations, and tell them how much Jesus loves them.

Now we understand more clearly why the man in Jesus’ parable sent his servant to call the outcasts to his feast. People who are in more comfortable or successful circumstances might think they don’t *need* Jesus, but not these folks! They readily receive Him!

Throughout our years of service to Jesus, we have, as Paul explained in [1 Corinthians 9:22](#), been willing to “become all things to all people, that by all means [we] might save some.” And we are happy that the Lord has led us to this special opportunity.

ANDREW HEART AND HIS WIFE, ANNA, HAVE BEEN MISSIONARIES FOR NEARLY FIVE DECADES. THEIR CURRENT FOCUS IS ON THE BALTIC COUNTRIES AND POLAND. ■

THE FRIENDSHIP BOOK

BY SALLY GARCÍA



I BOUGHT A LITTLE BOOK AT A SECONDHAND FAIR TITLED *THE FRIENDSHIP BOOK*. The author, H.L. Gee, under the pseudonym of Francis Gay, published one every year beginning in 1939. It's a book about simple deeds of kindness, such as a lady who kept a diary of her adventures so that she would have stories to share when she visited the elderly, an adult who stopped to listen to the story of a child's day at school, a kind shopkeeper, a selfless public servant.

Viktor Frankl, Holocaust survivor and author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, believed that no deed of goodness was ever lost, but rather was stored and treasured in the "granaries of the past" that hold the harvest of our lives.

I believe that not only is kindness never lost, but there are seeds in those "granaries" that when planted result in harvests in the lives of others. For example, suppose you take time to help a little child, and then that child becomes a man who is generous and caring. Maybe he doesn't remember you or the kind deed you did, but could it be that the attention you gave him as a boy impacted him, so that when he became an adult he was kinder and more attentive to the needs of others? Your kindness was not lost. It was planted and then grew and multiplied.

Back to *The Friendship Book*. I found a review online written by a young person who also found an old edition in a used book bin. She wrote of the impact that it had on her, how she marked the book and liked to read portions of it to her friends. Imagine, the accounts of thoughtful deeds of people who most likely are no longer on this earth have made a difference in the lives of a young girl and her friends in another century!

When Jesus spoke of the signs of His return in the last days, He said that "the love of many will grow cold" ([Matthew 24:12](#)). We seem to be living in an age of individualism and indifference. But the Bible also says, in reference to Jesus, that His "light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" ([John 1:5](#)). And Jesus calls *us* as well to also be the "light of the world" ([Matthew 5:14](#)). He is calling each of us to shine His light into the darkness of others' lives. And even the smallest acts of kindness may have more impact than we will ever know.

SALLY GARCÍA IS AN EDUCATOR, WRITER, TRANSLATOR, MISSIONARY, AND MENTOR. SHE LIVES IN CHILE WITH HER HUSBAND, GABRIEL, AND IS AFFILIATED WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

POINTS TO PONDER

The Wonders of Kindness



WITH EVERY DEED YOU ARE SOWING A SEED,
though the harvest you may not see.—*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*



Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the
seeds that you plant.—*William Arthur Ward*



Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to
you without leaving happier.—*Mother Teresa*



Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little
bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.
—*Desmond Tutu*



Sometimes it takes only one act of kindness and caring to
change a person's life.—*Jackie Chan*



Love and kindness are never wasted. They always make a
difference.—*Barbara De Angelis*



Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard
battle.—*Ian MacLaren*



How do we change the world? One random act of
kindness at a time.—*Morgan Freeman*



A warm smile is the universal language of kindness.
—*William Arthur Ward*



Being kind means responding to the needs of others—
and people can be kind, no matter how old or young we
are.—*Fred Rogers*

How beautiful a day can be, when kindness touches
it!—*George Elliston*



One who knows how to show and to accept kindness will
be a friend better than any possession.—*Sophocles*



True beauty is born through our actions and aspirations
and in the kindness we offer to others.—*Alek Wek*



I've learned that people will forget what you said, people
will forget what you did, but people will never forget how
you made them feel.—*Attributed to Maya Angelou*



Kindness can transform someone's dark moment with a
blaze of light. You'll never know how much your caring
matters. Make a difference for another today.—*Amy Leigh
Mercree*



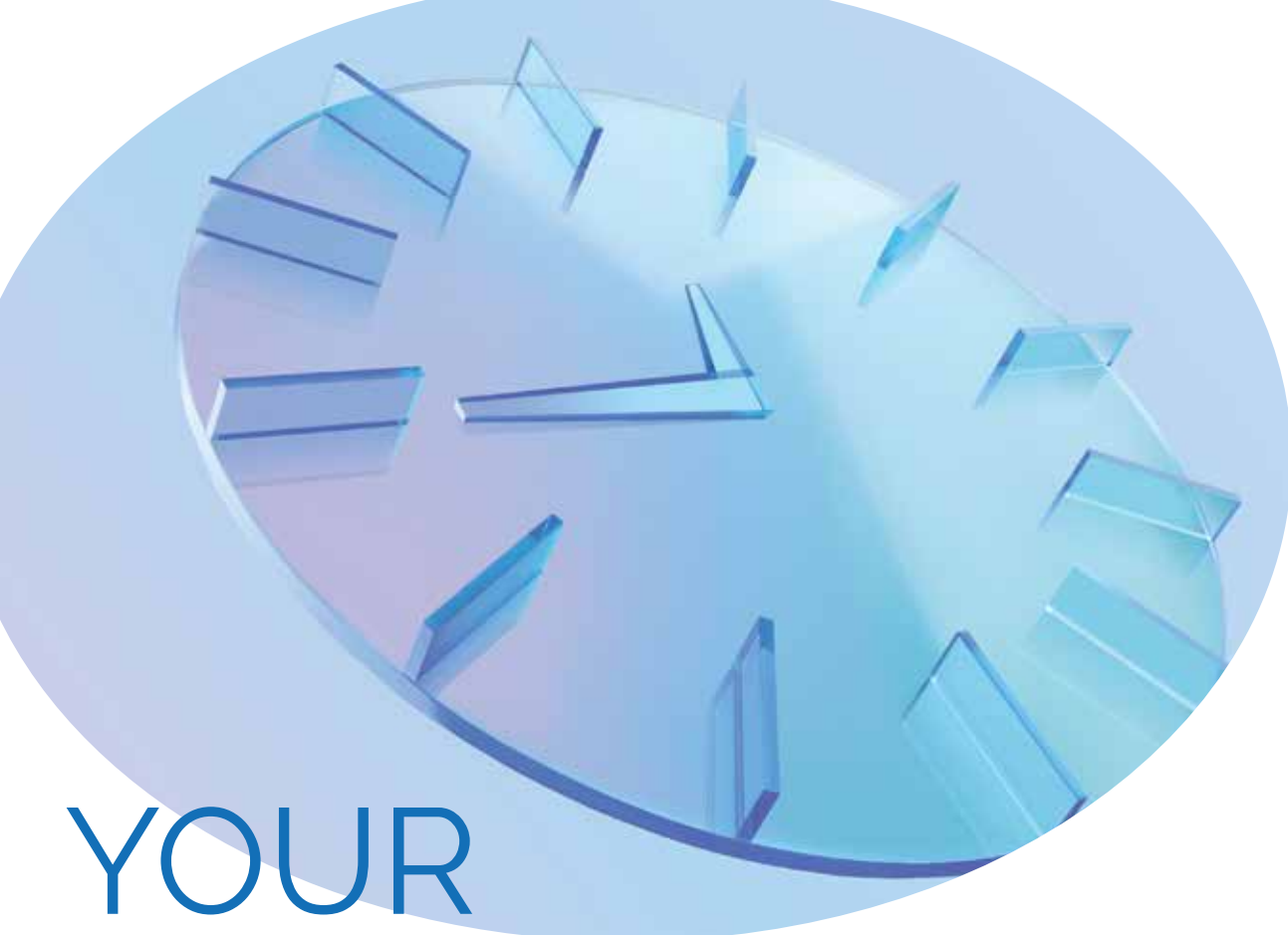
Ask yourself: have you been kind today? Make kindness
your modus operandi and change your world.—*Annie
Lennox*



If we are asking for the world to be kind, we must first
ask what are we doing to add more kindness to the world.
If we are asking for the world to be more loving, we must
first ask what are we doing to add more love to the world.
We are the vessels for the things we seek.—*Joël Leon*



Tenderness and kindness are not signs of weakness and
despair, but manifestations of strength and resolution.
—*Kahlil Gibran* ■



YOUR LAST DAY

BY MARIE STORY

HERE'S A QUESTION FOR YOU: How would you live if you knew this day was your last day on earth?

This question is presented in hundreds of motivational books, seminars, and lectures. Sometimes it's worded differently, but the concept is the same: Live every day as if it were your last. The unfortunate thing about often-repeated phrases is that they can soon lose their meaning.

It's also a difficult question to answer—at least if you're not *really* dying the next day. Most people say that they'd use that last day to do something good. They would reconnect with those who are important to them. They'd do something to help others. They'd right some wrong. They'd forgive and ask for forgiveness. It seems many people see it as a day of redemption—a day to make up for all that they failed to do throughout their lives.

The point is, live your life in such a way that you don't *need* a last day to set everything right. This is easier said than done, though. We can get so caught up in the busyness of life that we fail to think about (much less *do*) the important stuff—the things that will make our lives count.

So how *do* you live each day as if it were your last? We can learn from the life of Jesus, as in all things, about what truly matters in our everyday lives.

Jesus was aware that His time on earth was coming to a close. His mission on earth was nearly complete and He knew that He would soon be betrayed and executed. So how did He live during His last 24 hours?

He was humble. He set aside time with His disciples where He shared a meal with them. First, though, He



Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.—*Ephesians 4:32*

welcomed each of them by washing their feet. Foot washing was a job generally given to the lowest servant. People walked around in sandals on dusty, muddy roads, so most feet were pretty grungy. But Jesus showed His disciples great love and humility by stooping to wash their feet. He made Himself a servant ([John 13:5](#)).

He was yielded and obedient. He faced the prospect of torture and death. It was so difficult and He prayed so desperately that He was sweating drops of blood. But He trusted that His Father knew best, and said, “Not my will, but yours, be done” ([Luke 22:41–44](#)).

He was unconditionally loving. He was betrayed, but He didn’t retaliate. He was mistreated, yet He didn’t lose His temper. Those closest to Him turned their backs on Him, but He didn’t react in anger. He was wrongfully accused and humiliated, but He held His tongue ([Luke 22:45–71](#)).

He was honest. When He was brought before His judges—first the Sanhedrin and then Pilate—they asked Him straight out, “Are you the Son of God?” He could have saved Himself a lot of pain and anguish by simply skirting the truth. But He upheld the truth, no matter what the cost ([Luke 22:66–71](#); [Luke 23:1–3](#)).

He was forgiving. After being whipped, mocked, spit on, and dragged through the streets to hang on a cross, He said, “Father, forgive them.” He could have

called down fire and lightning on His tormentors and cursed them for hurting the Son of God. But instead, He forgave them even as they mocked and insulted Him ([Luke 23:34](#)).

He was unselfish. Despite the agony of hanging on the cross, He took time to make sure His mother would be cared for. He took time to listen to the thief dying beside Him, and to reassure him as he died. Instead of thinking about Himself and the pain He was in, He thought of others and their well-being ([Luke 23:39–43](#); [John 19:25–27](#)).

The way Jesus spent His last day was no different from the way He lived His whole life. That day, like every day, He found opportunities to love, to give, to forgive, and to share His Father’s love with others.

Jesus lived *every day* as if it were His last because honesty, humility, love, forgiveness, and kindness were an integral part of His nature. Living each day as your last is about spending your time and energy on the important things—things that won’t fade with time, but will last through eternity.

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THE KIND DEED THAT BACKFIRED

BY AMY JOY MIZRANY



I DON'T KNOW A TIME WHEN MY HEART HAD FELT QUITE SO HURT. I had done a favor for a friend, and now I heard that he thought I had malicious feelings towards him. For reasons I couldn't understand, he was telling people close to me that I had said things I never said, and he implied that my motives—or what he *assumed* were my motives—were bad.

My first reaction was anger. I had done everything I could to help this friend, and I had done it in good faith and with love as my motivation. I had allowed myself to be inconvenienced and my schedule disrupted because he needed my help, and now it was all turning against me.

When I moved on from the initial feeling of anger, I found I was deeply hurt. There was no way to prove my intentions. No matter what I might say about it, he believed that I meant him ill.

Now I had to make a choice. I could continue to try to convince him of his error. I could stop reining in my anger and explode on him. I could even remove him from my life and carry on without his deliberate misinformation to torment me. Or... I could forgive.

I struggled with this. I knew he wouldn't care if I forgave him or not. He had already written me off,

he was already convinced I wanted to be mean. What good would my forgiving him do? I began to regret doing anything nice for him if this was the reward. At this point the Lord spoke to my heart, *Why did you do that kind deed? Was it to earn your friend's love? Was it to be thought of as good? Or was it because you know that kindness is what I want you to show at all times, to anyone and everyone.*

I then decided to dedicate my attempted kindness to the Lord. I had done it for Him, and whether or not anyone understood that I did it with a heart full of love didn't matter anymore. The Lord knew. And if people revile us, say all manner of evil against us, or misunderstand us and treat us cruelly, we should still love them and show kindness. (See Matthew 5:43–48 NLT.) I determined that is what I would do because I love the Lord and He wants me to be kind.

AMY JOY MIZRANY WAS BORN AND LIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA, WHERE SHE IS A FULL-TIME MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. IN HER SPARE TIME, SHE PLAYS THE VIOLIN. ■



MY ONE

BY MARIE ALVERO

WHAT MAN OF YOU, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.”—*Luke 15:4–6*

There are many examples that come to mind when I think of God’s kindness towards us. Jesus coming to earth and being willing to be separated from God and perfection, live with the brokenness of humanity, and die the death of the sinner springs to mind. But the story of the one lost sheep is one of my favorites because it shows Jesus’ kindness in such a practical way.

Think about a shepherd caring for his sheep out in the fields. He’s alone with his flock. His whole day is spent keeping tabs on the sheep, and his full net worth is that flock. One goes missing, and somehow, the value of one sheep alone is enough to make him leave all the other sheep to find the one that is lost.

And the question it poses to me is who is that sheep in *my* flock?

I’m thinking of this guy at work that takes twice as long to learn things and is struggling to keep up with his

peers. There are days when I need to be willing to spend more time with him than with anyone else. Some days he is “my one.”

My child who pushes back the hardest, sometimes she is “my one.”

My friend whose faith is really hurting, sometimes she is “my one.”

You get it, right? It’s the one who most needs me. Go after that one! That’s what Jesus did. He went after the one who didn’t do what he should have, and got himself lost and needing rescuing. That one lamb was worth it!

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. ■

We have all wandered away at times and gotten lost, but Jesus never tires of rescuing us. Each of us matters that much to Him! If you do not yet know the Good Shepherd, you can receive Him by praying this simple prayer:

Jesus, please forgive me for my sins. I believe that You died for me, and I want You to be my Shepherd. Please come into my heart, fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and help me to follow You closely. Amen.



CONTROLLING A RAGING FIRE

BY CHRIS MIZRANY

I'VE ALWAYS HAD A BUSY MIND AND A QUICK MOUTH. When I was younger, I used it as a self-preservation mechanism to deflect attention from my own lacks or faults. I found myself being the “funny guy” in my group of friends, and that quickly progressed into being the one who poked holes in others’ humor, presentations, or

ideas. I thought it was all in fun because I was “only kidding” or because I felt justified due to a situation that had angered me; yet looking back, I’m sure it frequently did much more harm than I realized.

Then one day I was talking with a friend when the topic turned to the power of words—specifically, how what one says in passing can stick in another’s mind for a long, long time. Suddenly, flashback upon flashback flooded into my mind—unkind remarks made to me over the years that still negatively affect how I look at myself today and that make some areas of my life a struggle to face or to have confidence in. Most were spoken in passing, or by someone who I doubt even remembers what they said—but *I* remember, and it still hurts.

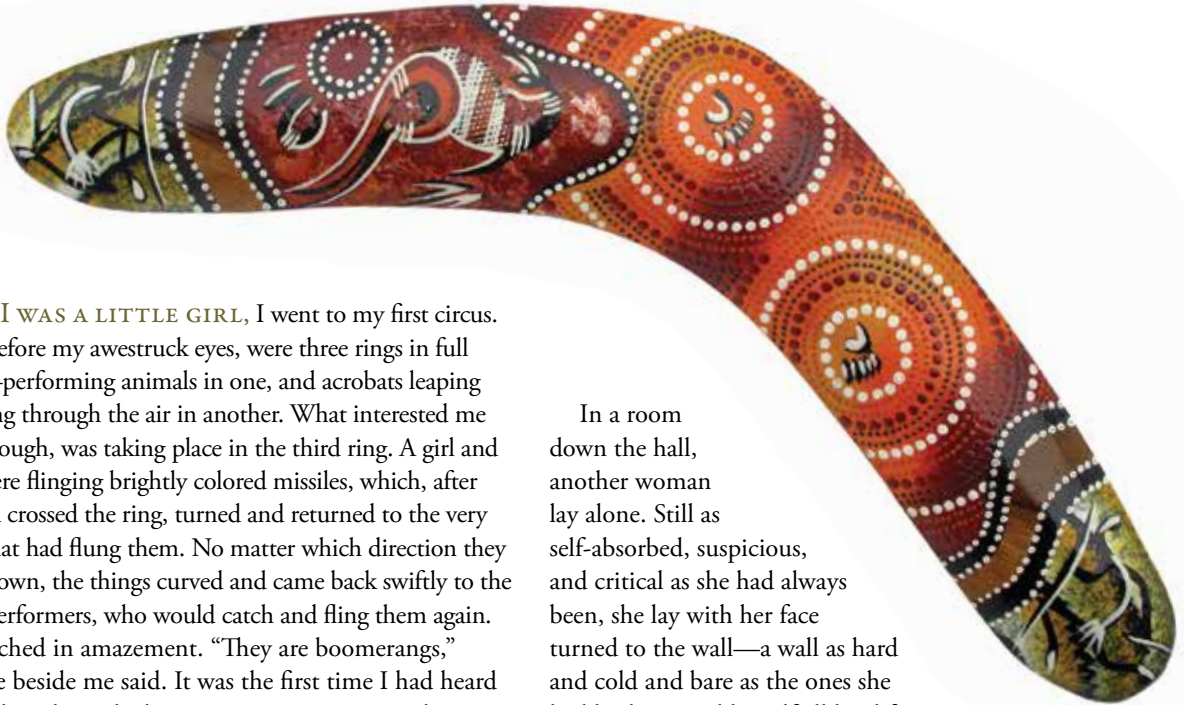
Then I realized anew that words truly are real things; they have power. Whether we’re laughingly “kidding,” quietly nasty, or fiercely angry, the Bible warns us that “the tongue is a fire” and that even though “the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!” (James 3:5–6). I’m ashamed to acknowledge the many times I could have encouraged another person but instead I chose to tear them down through my pride or sarcasm. I know that my words, harmless as they might have seemed to *me*, may have been deeply hurtful to them, and I wish I could take them all back.

So now I take a stand to bring my thoughts more into captivity—and not only my thoughts, but my words as well (2 Corinthians 10:5). I want to be known as a man who is kind, caring, and thoughtful, and who makes people feel better. I want to speak words of life and love. My fire might still rage out of control now and then, but with Jesus and the water of His Word daily by my side, I will be able to warm others, not scorch them.

CHRIS MIZRANY IS A MISSIONARY, PHOTOGRAPHER, AND WEB DESIGNER WITH HELPING HAND IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA. ■

BOOMERANG

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG



WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I went to my first circus. There, before my awestruck eyes, were three rings in full action—performing animals in one, and acrobats leaping and flying through the air in another. What interested me most, though, was taking place in the third ring. A girl and a boy were flinging brightly colored missiles, which, after they had crossed the ring, turned and returned to the very hands that had flung them. No matter which direction they were thrown, the things curved and came back swiftly to the young performers, who would catch and fling them again.

I watched in amazement. “They are boomerangs,” someone beside me said. It was the first time I had heard the word, and I tucked it away in my young mind.

I’ve heard the word many times since then, of course, and I’ve also seen the principle behind it play out in life. In fact, life itself is a boomerang. God’s Word says, “A man reaps what he sows” (Galatians 6:7 NIV). Every word or action we fling out comes back some day. Whether good or bad, it will return to us, and it often gains momentum as it does.

One morning I visited two women in the same hospital. One room was filled with flowers and cards and all sorts of gifts from friends and acquaintances, thoughtful gestures of love, concern, and sympathy. That was a reflection of her life, for she had sown love and thoughtfulness throughout the years, and now it was all coming back to her in her hour of need.

In a room down the hall, another woman lay alone. Still as self-absorbed, suspicious, and critical as she had always been, she lay with her face turned to the wall—a wall as hard and cold and bare as the ones she had built around herself all her life.

What a difference there was in those two rooms! The boomerang had come back to both women, but in very different ways.

“If you give to others, you will be given a full amount in return. It will be packed down, shaken together, and spilling over into your lap. The way you treat others is the way you will be treated” (Luke 6:38 CEV). Anyone who lives unselfishly, caring for and lifting the burdens of others, easing their pain, and helping to supply their needs, will see that boomerang come back in the form of blessings some day!

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS AN AMERICAN EVANGELIST AND PASTOR. ■



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

KINDNESS IN ACTION

I am the God of the universe, the Creator of all things, both great and small, and yet I came to this earth to minister to all people—even the seemingly lowliest of people who had no value or worth in the eyes of the world. Even so have I sent you ([John 20:21](#)).

When you walk through the world in your everyday life, I walk with you and My Spirit works through you to reach the lost, the broken, the forsaken, and the marginalized. When you stop to help an elderly man or woman cross the street, I am with you. When you pause to encourage people who are begging or homeless, you are My messenger of hope.

When you take the time to encourage your neighbors, empathize with their problems and pray for them, your kind words and deeds water the seeds of My love and truth in their hearts. When you reach out to a friend or family member in distress and help to calm their fears and reassure them, they receive a touch of My lovingkindness.

When you are attentive to the needs of others and are moved by compassion to give of your time, strength and resources to help them, you are doing it as unto Me ([Matthew 25:40](#)). And when your time on earth is finished, you will hear Me say, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” and you will enter into My joy forever ([Matthew 25:21](#)).