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activated

Vol 26 • Issue 2

WALKING IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Seeing love in action

An Unexpected Text

The value of small things

Seize the Moment

A surprising act of kindness





PERSONALLY SPEAKING LET'S BUILD BRIDGES

When it comes to relationships, we can choose to build walls or to build bridges. Our biggest challenges in life often come in the form of loving our neighbor as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39). It takes effort to reach out to others. Jesus taught that it is easy enough to care for those who love us, but the real test

begins when we come across someone who we find it more difficult to love (Luke 6:32-34). There is most likely a reason why our neighbor is a grouch, or the cashier is a sourpuss. Yet, a smile, a few encouraging words, or an act of kindness may be all that's needed to help them ditch the grump and get out of their slump.

Many people are hurting inside and their outward harshness serves as a shell of protection. It may take genuine concern, prayer, and patience to break down these walls of resistance and build a bridge of friendship, but with time, we may gain a friend or a brother. Let's take the bridge-building challenge today. The poet, Edwin Markham, penned, "He drew a circle that shut me out—heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win: we drew a circle and took him in!"

In honor of February, when many celebrate love and friendship, the articles in this issue address practical ways to walk in love. There are accounts of being on both the giving and the receiving end of loving kindness. There are stories of people going through difficult times, offering each other support, enjoying the benefits of mentoring, navigating misunderstandings, and helping others without hesitation. Our feature article this month is an in-depth biblical study on love in its many facets, the starting point being that love is the very essence of God (1 John 4:8).

Remember, the love you give is never lost, and the challenges you face in your interactions with others are small when matched against the power of God's love. May love be your guide, your light, and your strength throughout this month and beyond.

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SEIZE THE MOMENT



BY IRIS RICHARD

A DESIRE TO DO GOOD, TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, AND TO FIND PURPOSE IN LIFE SEEMS TO BE AN INBUILT COMPASS FOR MOST OF US.

However, it's easy to minimize the little acts of kindness that have the potential to have a meaningful impact on someone's life. Giving room to feelings of inadequacy can even discourage us from responding to God's call for action, when a moment seized could provide a profound opportunity to do good.

A friend told me about an extraordinary, one-of-a-kind encounter she recently experienced. She had hurried into a shop for a quick errand and when she stepped out moments later, to her horror, her car was gone! She had parked quickly without securing the handbrake, and it was now slowly rolling down the street, heading for a busy intersection! Then an awesome thing happened. A man dressed in rags ran after the car and, throwing all his weight against the side of it, he somehow managed to direct the car towards a curb where it came to a stop. For a moment she stood there speechless, silently thanking God for such an amazing intervention from someone she would least expect.

She said that she realized that anybody can make a difference in a significant way and save the day by seizing

the moment when action is required. Not only had this beggar saved her car from causing a lot of damage, but this incident also highlighted to her that we can all be a blessing to others if we don't hesitate to react when we see a need.

Listening to my friend's story made me want to be more mindful to look for opportunities to seize the moment to make a difference. After all, we all face tough battles at times, and being kind and helpful might lift someone's burden and bring a ray of sunshine into his or her life. It's important to be empathetic and kind to others, especially when there are so many people suffering in this world. Kindness can open doors for others and for you, like the beggar whose kind deed saved the day and fetched him a handsome reward.

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

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

WALKING IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

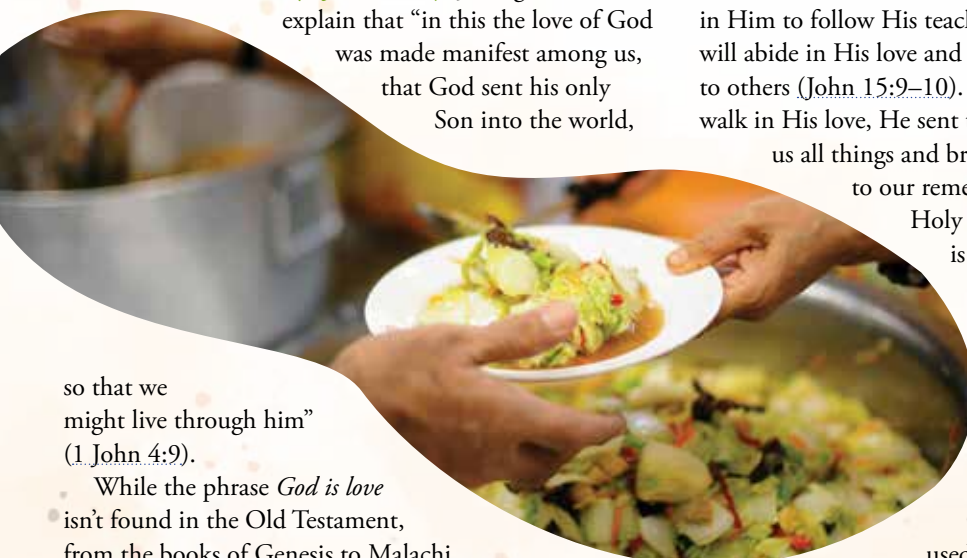
IN THE BOOK OF 1 JOHN WE READ THE SHORT BUT PROFOUND STATEMENT THAT “GOD IS LOVE” (1 JOHN 4:8). John goes on to explain that “in this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world,

so that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9).

While the phrase *God is love* isn't found in the Old Testament, from the books of Genesis to Malachi, God is portrayed as the One who faithfully and eternally loves. Throughout the Old Testament, we read of God's steadfast love “enduring to a thousand generations” and “from everlasting to everlasting” (Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 103:17).

In the New Testament, Jesus is portrayed as being God's love for humanity manifested on earth. He instructed those who believe in Him to follow His teachings so that we will abide in His love and reflect that love to others (John 15:9–10). In order to help us walk in His love, He sent the Holy Spirit to teach us all things and bring all things that He taught to our remembrance (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit's presence in our lives is manifested in love, goodness and kindness toward others (Galatians 5:22).

There are four words in the New Testament that are translated into English as love, which have different meanings in the original Greek. The most commonly used word for love in the New Testament is *agape*. As used in Scripture, it means the love of God. For example, in 1 John 4:8 when it says *God is love*, *agape* is the original Greek word. Everything God does is motivated by and flows from His love.



Agape also refers to the love we have for God and our neighbor, as in the two greatest commandments (Mark 12:30-31), and the Christlike love we are to show others. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (John 13:34). This is the love that Jesus displayed throughout His earth life and that motivated Him to lay down His life for us so that we could live with Him forever.

As Christians, we are called to imitate the sacrificial love that Jesus exemplified, as Paul wrote: “Be imitators of God, as beloved children.

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1-2). When we read the Gospels and Epistles, in every chapter we see this *agape* love that chooses to put the needs of others before self, that accepts being inconvenienced, and voluntarily sacrifices for the benefit of someone else. It is a love that shows kindness, goodwill and commitment to the well-being of others, while not expecting to receive anything in return.

In the King James Version of the Bible, *agape* is often translated as “charity,” which helps us understand that this love is a giving, unselfish love; it is love in action. The call to imitate Jesus’ love is a call to show kindness,

compassion and love—not only to those we are close to and comfortable with, but also to those who think, believe, and act in ways we don’t agree with. After all, Jesus told us to love even our enemies and those who wrong or mistreat us.

The apostle Paul defined what love is and does and how it is manifested in 1 Corinthians 13, which has been referred to as the “love chapter.” He wrote: “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

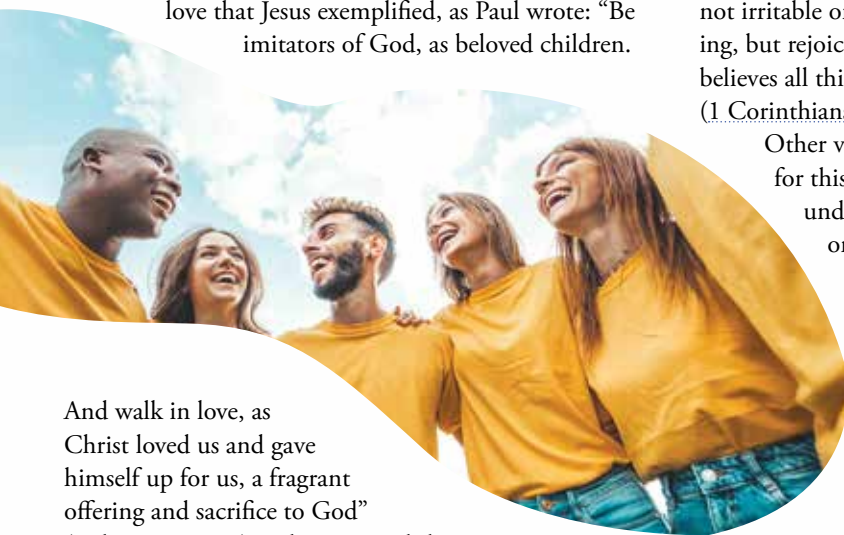
Other versions of the Bible use different wording for this passage, which can help deepen our understanding of its message. For example, one version tells us that love “always

protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Corinthians 13:7 NIV). Another version teaches us that love “does not demand its own way...

It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance” (1 Corinthians 13:5-7 NLT).

This challenging list is a good touchstone for us as we seek to walk in the love of Christ and embody His love, compassion and kindness to others through our lives, our words and our actions. Jesus gave some examples of how to demonstrate this love in our daily lives. He said, “Give to everyone who asks of you. ...



Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them” (Luke 6:30–31 HCSB). He then went on to say: “Do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. ... Give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:35–38).



faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:15–18 NIV).

Manifesting the love of Christ in our everyday lives, actions and interactions with others is vital to living a life that reflects Jesus to others and will draw people to Him. Making the decision to develop Christian character, to put off the old self and put on the new self, as the apostle Paul wrote, is also an expression of love (Ephesians 4:20–24). Christian virtues, such as love, compassion, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and patience, are all rooted in the love of Christ which compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14 NIV).

We love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), and based on His love, we strive to be more like Him, to reflect Him and His love to others—even if that reflection is only a dim glow of who He fully is. But as dim as that glow may seem, our kind words and actions performed in His love shine in this world of darkness and give glory to the one who created, loves, and saved us, and with whom we will spend eternity (Matthew 5:16). May we each grow in Christlikeness so we can better reflect God’s love and kindness to every person our lives touch.

The First Epistle of John expresses the importance of putting love into action in our everyday lives as follows: “My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action” (1 John 3:18 GNT). In his epistle, James gives us some concrete examples of putting our faith in action that reflects Christ’s

love: “Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way,

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SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

A STRAY DOG MOVED INTO THE SMITHS' NEIGHBORHOOD THE SAME DAY THE JONESSES MOVED IN NEXT DOOR, AND THE DOG IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO WREAK HAVOC, SCROUNGING IN TRASH CANS AND TEARING UP FLOWER BEDS IN BOTH YARDS. The Smiths were irked that the Joneses had brought such a nuisance into the neighborhood, and the Joneses found it inexcusable that the Smiths made no attempt to control their dog. For several weeks neither couple said anything to the other, while bad feelings festered on both sides. Finally, Ms. Smith could stand no more and gave Ms. Jones a piece of her mind. "Oh," Ms. Jones replied, "we thought it was *your* dog!"

Often the things that sour relationships are like that dog—more a matter of misunderstandings or small irritations that get blown out of proportion than actual wrongdoing on anyone's part. Often all it takes to set things right is better communication, but someone has to make the first move, and that's not always easy. Both parties, convinced that they're right or unwilling to admit that they're not, lock themselves into their

positions. Barriers go up. Relationships go bad. Everyone suffers.

Where can we find the humility to admit that we've been wrong, or the love and grace to forgive and forget when we've been wronged? Where can we find the wisdom to turn a no-win situation into a win-win situation, the strength to buck our stubborn nature, or the courage to make the first move? The Bible tells us that His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you" (Matthew 7:7). Like all of the other best things in life, the most successful relationships begin with the ultimate relationship—heart to heart communion with "the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17 NKJV).

KEITH PHILLIPS WAS *ACTIVATED'S* EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FROM 1999 TO 2013. HE AND HIS WIFE CARYN NOW WORK WITH THE HOMELESS IN THE USA. ■



If you have not yet experienced the ultimate relationship with the living God, you can do so now by praying this simple prayer:

Dear Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God. Thank You for dying for me so that I can live close to You now and with You forever in heaven. I ask You to come into my heart. Please forgive my sins and fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Thank You!



A DIFFERENT KIND OF LOVE

BY MARIE KNIGHT

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, “LOVE” WAS ONE OF MY FAVORITE WORDS. I REMEMBER ENDING ANY LETTER THAT I WROTE WITH THE WORDS “I LOVE YOU SO SO SO MUCH!” I felt love from my family, my friends, our church. To me, love was the feeling of being safe and cared for.

As I grew older, I discovered a different kind of love, the type described in Proverbs 27:6: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend.” I learned that love is also helping people see their shortcomings.

When I was a teen, I developed a bad habit of swearing. It got to the point where it just flowed off my tongue when I was with my friends and I hardly noticed it. One day a close friend took me aside and told me that he thought I swore way too much. He said it was ugly to hear. I was taken aback and felt defensive, but in my heart, I couldn’t help but acknowledge that he was right. I knew that he told me that because he cared for me as a friend and wanted what was best for me and not because he wanted to make me feel bad. He genuinely wanted to help me be a better person.

So, with his help and encouragement, I studied what the Bible says about our speech. “Death and life are in the

power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21). “For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Luke 6:45 NIV). “Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless” (James 1:26 NIV).

After a while I learned to control my tongue and to express surprise or disappointment in a more positive way. I am so grateful now that my friend didn’t shrink from mentioning this to me, though I’m sure it wasn’t easy for him to do so. There have been many times since then that I have been corrected by my family and friends, and while it doesn’t feel good, I know that they do so because they care about me.

It hurts our pride to be corrected by others, but if we ask the Lord for understanding and we work to change for the better, then it’s for our benefit. “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).

MARIE KNIGHT IS A FULL-TIME MISSIONARY VOLUNTEER IN THE USA. ■

GIVE LOVE BY RECEIVING LOVE

BY SALLY GARCÍA

THE BIBLE SAYS WE ARE TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR AS WE LOVE OURSELVES. But what about letting our neighbor love *us* as he loves *himself*?

This is difficult for many of us. We concentrate on learning to freely give, but how many of us know how to freely receive? Do we realize that recognizing our limitations and being open to receiving an act of kindness can also be a way of loving others? What might make us shy away from accepting others' help? Perhaps it is humbling. We might be inwardly proud of our independence, or we don't want to feel indebted to anyone. Possibly we feel unworthy of the thoughtfulness expressed through the act of kindness.

Once I was learning how to sew patchwork. I made a square design on cloth and wanted to make it into a bag. I asked a seamstress friend if she would make the bag for me. It turned out beautifully. What a sweet touch of love! I kept asking her how much I owed her, and she kept insisting that there was no charge. I must have become annoying because after perhaps her fifth refusal of my money, she seemed frustrated and said, "Can't you let someone do something nice for you?" I realized I had not learned how to let others help me.

It's also nice to receive compliments, but it can be hard to accept a compliment gracefully without protesting, "No, it was nothing!" Then the other person needs to insist on giving you appreciation—and on it goes. How about simply responding with, "Thanks! I'm glad to help" or "Thank you, it's very kind of you to say that." We can make *them* happy that they made *us* happy. It's a win-win situation.

I have found that most people like feeling useful and being appreciated. They really mean it when they say, "What can I do to help you?" Such an offer is a manifestation of the confidence that comes with real friendship and is a part of building community.

My neighbor raises chickens and delights in handing me a few eggs when I pass by his house. He's a bit lonely and most likely the eggs are his way to start up a conversation. His face lights up when I thank him.

Jesus taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive ([Acts 20:35](#)). To be a *giver*, there needs to be a *receiver*. Let's learn how to be both.

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An Unexpected Text

BY JULIE VASQUEZ

SOMETIMES WE FIND OURSELVES IN A PLACE WHERE WE CAN BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS, SERVE THOSE IN NEED, AND SHARE THE GOSPEL. Perhaps you are part of a mission that benefits your community and is well received.

At other times, however, we are in a situation where it feels there is little that we can do in this regard. I was there recently. My life was very busy. A demanding job. Studying for a degree. Family obligations and the rest of life in between. Most of my human interaction centered at my workplace, where I tried to be a listening ear and offer encouragement, counsel, and prayer when possible. Still, it seemed there wasn't much to contribute beyond being a friend and helping to buoy those around me.

Fast-forward a few years. Now in a different country, I was thinking and praying about my next steps and looking for a new job. I wondered if there had been any lasting value from my time at my prior workplace. It had been costly in terms of stress and I wondered if I should have exited sooner. Had there been a purpose beyond

collecting a paycheck? Building relational bonds with coworkers had been my motivation, but now I questioned whether I had made a difference at all.

I woke the next day to a text from one of my former coworkers who I hadn't heard from for months. I'll call her Carla. I had hired Carla at an entry-level position. Her story was heartbreaking. She'd faced challenges in nearly every area: financial, an estranged spouse, child custody issues, educational lacks, and more. Her prospects were not bright.

Over a five-year period, I coached her into a technical career path. She went back to school, achieved required certifications, and eventually moved into a good position with a promising path forward. There were trials and tears along the way, but she persevered, and I tried to support her through the downtimes and encourage her faith in the Lord.

Back to the text I got that morning. It read: "I want to thank you for everything. You helped me to be the person I am today. I appreciate everything you did for me. It's all because of you, thank you."

I was stunned. I had just been questioning whether I had made any difference, and here was my answer. Carla told me that her children are doing well, with broken relationships restored. She loves her job. She is finally in a happy relationship and on a new trajectory.

It was such a joy to be reminded that the small things, the encouragement, the prayer, the care and concern *can* make a difference. Of course, I know Jesus was hugely in the mix. I was able to give encouragement, motivation, and even instruction through His grace. It certainly wasn't "all because of me," but it is deeply rewarding to know that I played a part in even one person's life turning around. It reminds me of how much the Lord loves each of us as individuals and cares about

every aspect of our lives. He is patient and willing to put in the time to help bring us to a good place.

At times we may be called to serve in unlikely places or under challenging conditions. We may feel that we are having little effect. Regardless, we can be sure that wherever the Lord has led us, there is still service we can provide, even if it seems ordinary or of little consequence. No act of love, kindness, or generosity is too small for God to use, and every changed life, every family set on a new path, is a beautiful thing to celebrate and be part of.

JULIE VASQUEZ IS A PROJECT MANAGER AND LIVES IN TEXAS, USA. ■

We may overlook many smaller, but equally eternally valuable opportunities to help someone. Just as "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step," God usually begins his great works in and through an individual with small things. [Matthew 10:42](#) says that even such a small act as giving someone a cold cup of water will be rewarded. [Matthew 25:34–40](#) mentions rewards for visiting people in prison, and providing food, shelter and clothing to those in need. Every kind word, encouragement and small act of kindness can make a huge difference in someone's life, whether it be now, or even years later. —*Guy Crockroft*

Prayer: Almighty God, sometimes we expect someone else to step in and make a difference. Why? Because we think we don't have enough resources. Or our gifts aren't important enough. What is amazing is that when we can release our gifts into your kingdom, you take them and far exceed our expectations. When you bring an opportunity to do a small thing this week to express great love, please help us accept this opportunity. Amen.—*Dianne Vielhuber*



SHE DIDN'T HAVE TO

BY MARIE ALVERO

EVERY YEAR, I GET A LETTER FROM A WOMAN WHO I KNEW FOR ABOUT SIX MONTHS OVER A DECADE AGO. When we met, I felt like my life was on fire. I had four young kids, we had just moved to a new city, we were as broke as broke could be, our marriage was fraying under all the stress, and honestly, my faith was too. We had no friends or community where we were, and the future didn't look hopeful.

This woman and I met on our kids' first day of school. She couldn't have been more different from me! While I felt like a blazing disaster, she was peaceful and predictable. She had the calmness and demeanor of someone who was not fussing over the latest fashion or trend, but had created a simple, meaningful life.

Our kids took to each other. And rather than holding this young flailing mom at bay, this woman opened her home and life to us. We shared many meals with her family, my kids spent hours in their yard, she took us to church with her family and planned activities for the kids. She taught me how to navigate things that were new to me and poured into my life in ways that I don't think she even realized.

Through her I connected with a small group of moms who met each week for prayer and Bible study. It was kind of ironic. I was coming from a life that centered around missionary work and sharing the Bible with others, but my faith was at its weakest and most vulnerable point. These women circled around me and prayed over me those few months when I didn't have the strength to do it for myself.

When I think of examples of love in my life, honestly, I have many. There has always been someone reflecting Christ's love into my life. But this woman stands out to me. I think it's because I needed it so much right then, and because she absolutely didn't *have* to do it. She didn't have to let her life get messy with the extra hoopla I brought, but she did.

We write each other every year with updates and photos, and her kindness and friendship are still with me. She reminds me that some of the biggest opportunities we have to impact someone's life are in our availability and willingness to share a bit of ourselves rather than hold someone at a distance.

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BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS



Q: I WANT TO GET ALONG WELL WITH OTHERS AND ENJOY FRIENDSHIPS AND MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS, BUT OFTEN I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. HOW CAN I BUILD STRONG CONNECTIONS WITH PEOPLE?

A: Here are some tips to help you get started. The point is not to pretend to be something you're not, but to make a conscious effort to cultivate qualities that will help people feel at ease with you and enjoy being around you.

- **Be polite and courteous.** As Saint Basil observed, “He who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love.”
- **Smile.** A sincere smile disarms the guarded, soothes the argumentative, calms the angry, and encourages the downhearted. It sets a positive tone.
- **Be optimistic.** Everyone has enough problems. People are drawn to positive, solution-oriented people.
- **Be sociable.** If you're shy when meeting people, focusing on making the other person feel accepted and at ease can help you feel less self-conscious.
- **Look for the good in others.** Everyone has some admirable qualities. Focus on finding those, not on finding fault.
- **Compliment others' good qualities.** Everyone needs to know that his or her good qualities are noticed and appreciated. Be generous, sincere, and specific with your compliments.
- **Lighten up.** A person with a good sense of humor is fun to be around. Just be sure your humor doesn't come at someone else's expense.
- **Keep an open mind.** Everyone has a right to their opinion. Few arguments are worth winning at the cost of a friendship. Sometimes it's best to agree to disagree.
- **Be humble.** People who are proud and self-centered are difficult to be around. Humility is winsome; pride is woeful.
- **Be a good listener.** One of the best ways to show people you care about them is by taking an interest in what they have to say and making an effort to understand them and empathize.
- **Be gracious when others make mistakes.** Everybody messes up sometimes. Remember the Golden Rule: “Treat others as you want them to treat you” (Matthew 7:12 CEV). You may find the same courtesy coming back to you when you make mistakes. ■

THE HEALING POWER OF LOVE

BY G.L. ELLENS



I MET MARTHA, A RETIRED NURSE, DURING A PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING TIME IN HER LIFE. Martha had reached a point where she was considering suicide. I talked with her about God's unconditional love and invited her to receive Jesus and put her faith and trust in Him, looking to Him for forgiveness and new life. This simple message resonated deeply with her, sparking a transformation of her character and spirit.

Our friendship grew. One day, Martha brought me newborn baby clothes and other baby items. I was

so surprised, because I had only just found out I was pregnant with my second child! I was amazed by her intuition and concern. However, it wasn't until after the birth of my baby that I understood the depth of her love and compassion.

After the delivery, I developed a severe infection that left me bedridden with an unrelenting fever. The joy of welcoming my new baby was overshadowed by the pain and weakness I felt. News of my condition reached Martha, and she soon arrived at our house.

She looked at me, and her eyes were filled with concern. She offered to move in for as long as it took for me to recover. For a whole month, Martha was my constant companion and caregiver. Her nursing skills, honed over the years, were invaluable. But her care extended beyond the physical. Her presence brought a sense of peace and reassurance that was crucial to my healing. Her faith, unwavering and steadfast, reminded me of the strength that we can draw from God's love.

Martha also took care of my newborn, treating my baby as if he were her own grandchild. Her love was a tangible expression of Jesus' teachings, a living testimony of what it means to love one's neighbor as oneself.

By the end of that month, I had fully recovered. I felt such gratitude for Martha's loving care.

Her story is a testament to the power of Jesus' love. Her actions illustrate that even during our own struggles, we can be vessels of God's love for others. Martha's life, once marked by despair, became a conduit of healing and blessing for me and my family. Her example encourages me to look beyond my circumstances to help those in need, and thereby reflect God's boundless love. Acts of love and kindness are not just fleeting moments, they are the essence of living for Jesus.

G. L. ELLENS WAS A MISSIONARY AND SCHOOLTEACHER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR OVER 25 YEARS. ALTHOUGH RETIRED, SHE REMAINS ACTIVE IN VOLUNTEER WORK, AS WELL AS PURSUING HER INTEREST IN WRITING. ■

Being an Instrument of God's Goodness

BY ROSANE CORDOBA



YEARS AGO, MY HUSBAND AND I WERE MISSIONARIES IN FOZ DO IGUAÇU, A CITY IN THE SOUTH OF BRAZIL. We did puppet shows with our children in schools and institutions to raise funds and to take the gospel to kids, teens, and older folks in a creative way.

There were some poor families in our neighborhood. Every week we would help them with fruits and vegetables we got from the market. One Christmas we had a little extra money, so we decided to share it with a poor family, as a holiday surprise. As we prayed about who to offer the gift to, we remembered a large Christian family; the father had just hurt his leg while working. Even though he didn't lose his job, his employer couldn't pay him during the two months of recovery when he couldn't work.

We went to their house and presented the mother with the envelope. She opened it, and started to cry. Then she went quickly into the bedroom. We were puzzled and asked the older daughter what the problem was, but she didn't have a clue.

Soon the mom came back, having wiped away her tears, and said: "Please forgive me and don't leave yet. The children don't know it, but we have received an ultimatum from the light company, and tomorrow is the last

day to pay the late bill, or they will cut off our electricity. The money you brought us is the exact amount we need. These were tears of joy because this morning I prayed for God to do a miracle and supply the money, but I had no idea how He would do it. I want to thank you for being His instrument of mercy for us!"

Later, when we had just had our third child, we were very low on finances, and we needed a baby carriage. While visiting friends, I told them about our need, and the woman said, "Wait a minute!" Then she went and got a baby carriage that had belonged to her young daughter; it was exactly the kind I had prayed for. She handed it to me with a smile and proclaimed, "Now I understand how God answers prayers. He touches the heart of someone who has something to share and that person gives it to those who need it!"

So true, isn't it? If everyone would answer God's call and share what they can with others in need, becoming instruments of God's generosity, how much better this world would be!

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Loving Others as I Have Loved You

Behold what manner of love I have for you, that while you were yet sinners, I died for you ([Romans 5:8](#)). So great is My love for you that I looked beyond your sin and brokenness to see the beauty of My creation. My commandment to all who love Me is that you likewise love one another, just as I have loved you ([John 13:34](#)).

I love every single person and I gave My life to redeem them, just as I love you and died on the cross for you. To love others with My love means seeing beyond people's shortcomings, failings and brokenness so that you can reach out with My kindness and compassion, and share My love and redemption with them.

Be mindful of opportunities each day to reflect My love to others through deeds of kindness and caring, through thoughtfulness and words of encouragement. Take the time to listen and empathize, help to carry the load, and show love and consideration. As you go through your day, pause and ask yourself: "Who am I passing by that needs encouragement, a prayer, a hug, someone to talk to, or a friend?"

As you reach out to others with kindness and compassion, you will experience the joy of sharing My love with others and helping to transform their lives. By this everyone will know you are My disciples, if you have love ([John 13:35](#)).