

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

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THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Love God and your neighbor

What You Make Time For

Today, not tomorrow

Focus on the Living Hope

The eternal perspective



PERSONALLY SPEAKING RECOGNIZING GOD'S PRIORITIES

A biblical promise that I quote as a prayer when I need to organize my day is Proverbs 16:3, which says: “Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established” (NKJV). But I often mix up the words and pray to commit my thoughts to the Lord so that my works would be established. Finally, I realized

that both are important as our works begin with thoughts, ideas, and responsibilities that need to be planned, and then those plans need to be executed.

The Lord showed me that I need to focus on the attitude of my heart. Do I seek His guidance? Am I committed to following the precepts in His Word? I can't tell you *exactly* how it works, but I can say that when I pray and ask the Lord to guide my thoughts, the events of the day seem to flow better. I feel more prepared to meet unexpected challenges. In fact, an “unplanned event” can often become the highlight of my day.

The principle of setting priorities is the subject of this February issue of *Activated*. Most of us live fairly structured lives, and those of us who are more organized likely keep agendas that we faithfully check in order to not fail in our responsibilities. Yet sometimes the Lord may want us to step outside the routine to be part of an unplanned adventure. Perhaps He has a mission for us, or maybe we need to spend quality time with Him.

Missionary and author Norman Grubb prayed a novel prayer to begin his day: *Good morning, Lord. I love you! What are you up to today? I want to be a part of it. Thank you, God. Amen.* How wonderful it is to place our day in God's hands! Who knows what adventure He has planned as we allow Him to lead and guide us.

Every day can begin with expectation. What does the Lord have in store for me today? From the mundane to thrilling escapades, God wants to be an active part of our lives. So, as the verse I noted earlier tells me, when I hand over my thoughts and plans to Him, I can trust Him to lead and guide me. “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:6 NKJV).

May the Lord guide you as you establish your priorities this month and throughout the year!

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WHAT YOU MAKE TIME FOR

BY AMY JOY MIZRANY



I WAS RECENTLY REMINDED OF A SONG I USED TO SING WHEN I WAS A CHILD CALLED “TODAY, NOT TOMORROW.” It’s a well-written story of a man with the best intentions. It begins:

He was planning to be all a mortal could be,
Tomorrow.
No one would be kinder or braver than he,
Tomorrow.

The story continues, explaining all the great and amazing acts that he planned to do, tomorrow. A sick friend in need of help, the struggling poor of his town, letters to write, changes to be made, he’d find an excuse each time to do it tomorrow.

It’s too bad, he agreed, but he’s busy today
And hadn’t a minute to stop on his way.
More time he would have to give others, he’d say,
Tomorrow.

Then, after wasting his time, he died, as we all will someday, and all that was left of his life was the mountain of things he intended to do, tomorrow. This man could have made a difference in some way, if he had ever had the inclination to do even just a *few* of the great things he said he would do, tomorrow.

Then the song goes on to say:

1. Lyrics based on the poem “Tomorrow” by Edgar A. Guest (1881–1959)

Tomorrow never comes,
For when it arrives, it’s today.

How true. Those of us who are waiting for a better chance, a clearer opportunity, or a less busy moment to help someone may never get around to doing the meaningful acts we intend to do.

The final lines of the song are beautiful:

Don’t put off the good you can do today
To ease someone’s burden along life’s way.
So many need your sweet love, and hey,
They need it today,
Not tomorrow.¹

If we value only the things of the here and now, we may never take the time to invest in the things of the hereafter. Sadly, the things with eternal value are often the things that we end up putting on that list “for tomorrow.” Life seems so pressing, and work, society, family, and responsibilities all crowd our senses, keeping us occupied with actions that often won’t last.

Through reading the Bible and growing in our relationship with Jesus, we can get a very good grip on what our heavenly priorities are. Once we discover that, it’s up to us to invest our time doing them.—Today, not tomorrow!

AMY JOY MIZRANY IS A FULL-TIME MISSIONARY IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH HELPING HAND. IN HER SPARE TIME, SHE TEACHES THE VIOLIN. ■

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT: LOVE

BY PETER AMSTERDAM



IN THE GOSPELS OF MATTHEW, MARK, AND LUKE, WE READ OF AN ENCOUNTER THAT JESUS HAD WITH A JEWISH EXPERT IN THE LAW, WHO ASKED HIM THE QUESTION: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied by saying to him: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:35–40 NIV).

The commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind that Jesus quotes here is found in Deuteronomy 6:5, which summarizes the concept of total devotion to God. The account of this incident in the

Gospels of Mark and Luke include another dimension: loving the Lord with all our strength. Mark’s Gospel goes on to conclude, “There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30–31).

We see by these accounts that love for God and love for others—the greatest of all commandments—are meant to orient our lives, our priorities, our relationships, our decisions, and our actions. A closer look at each of these two commandments can help us to grow in our understanding of these cornerstones of our faith.

LOVE FOR GOD

As Christians, we are called to love God with all our being—heart, soul, mind, and strength—and to “seek first

the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). We have the privilege of being called into a close personal relationship with God, who is Himself relational. The Bible says that “He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). This is a call for us to respond with a wholehearted love-Him-with-everything-you’ve-got love.

We see God’s desire for relationship with His human creations throughout the Bible, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation. In Genesis, we learn that the beautiful relationship God had with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was damaged because of their choice to disobey Him and sin, which resulted in the Fall (Genesis 3:1–19). God is holy, so after sin came into the world, He could no longer have that same personal relationship with humans.

In His great love for humanity, God had a plan to repair the relationship that sin had ruptured and bring us back into relationship with Himself. So great was His love for every person He ever created that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to sacrificially lay down His life through His death on the cross in order to bridge the gap between Himself and humanity (John 3:16).

To convey His deep love for us, God used language and imagery in the Bible which speaks of us as being married to Him. He said, “Your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name” (Isaiah 54:5), and “as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Isaiah 62:5). These marital metaphors describe the union of

heart, mind, and spirit that He desires to have with each of us. We, in turn, are called to love Him with all our being and to place Him at the center of our lives.

Our love for God and our gratefulness for the sacrifice Jesus made for our eternal salvation should motivate us to draw close to Him (James 4:8) and to focus on strengthening our relationship with Him. Some of the ways we do this is by dedicating time to communicate with Him through prayer, praise, and worship, diligently reading and studying His Word, and striving to pattern our lives according to His will and the principles of His Word. As Christians, we seek to grow in our love for Him—with our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

LOVE FOR YOUR NEIGHBOR

The commandment to *love your neighbor as yourself* originates in the Old Testament in *Leviticus 19:18*. In the Gospel of Luke, we read that after hearing Jesus proclaim love for

our neighbor as one of the greatest commandments, a lawyer challenged Him with the question, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus went on to tell the story of the Good Samaritan to emphatically illustrate that loving our neighbor extends far beyond our friends and local community to strangers and foreigners,





and means showing compassion and care to those in need (Luke 10:25–35).

The foundation for us as Christians for loving our neighbors is the understanding that every person is precious to God, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, nationality, economic status, religious belief, political affiliation, or any other difference. God loves everyone. He is gracious and full of compassion and unfailing love; He is good to all (Psalm 145:8–9 NIV).

We in turn are called to view each person He has created through His eyes of love, which means that we will look at others without bias, prejudice, criticism, or preconceived opinions or stereotypes. God’s unconditional love knows no boundaries of status, race, or creed, and should guide our attitudes toward others. Our commission as His followers is to show the same love to others that Jesus showed to us.

Jesus set the bar for loving others even higher in the Sermon on the Mount when He instructed His followers to love their enemies (Matthew 5:43–45). Jesus went on to say, “If you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same” (Luke 6:33). Jesus makes the point that if our love motivates us to only do good to those who can do good to us in return, then it is no different from the love that most people show.

Jesus is calling us to love in ways that surpass the natural love and kindness that people have for one another. He is calling us to a love that is greater and extraordinary.

The love Jesus proclaimed and demonstrated is the kind of love that we, who have been forgiven for our sins, are meant to live—a love that is kind, generous, merciful, sacrificial, and forgiving. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

No one is excluded from God’s command to us to love others—no matter where they are at in life or how distant they may be from Him. We don’t have to like or agree with every person’s belief system, lifestyle, or choices. They may live without regard to God’s moral standards or live lives of grave sin, but no matter what their current state may be, God loves them, and we are to love them. Scripture teaches that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God, that love is of God, and God is love (1 John 4:7–8).

The commandments to love God and our neighbors are cornerstones of our discipleship. As Christians, we are first called to love God with everything in us and place Him at the center of our lives, decisions, and actions. The study of His Word provides guidance in our decisions and walk with God and helps us to grow in our faith. Our love for Christ—who gave His life for us—compels us to love and worship Him fervently with all our hearts, and to cultivate a close relationship with Him.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to imitate the example He set for us of love, compassion, and mercy for others, which is also central to our witness to those who have not yet come to a saving knowledge of Him. Let’s make a commitment to every day and in every way possible love our neighbors and to be living examples of God’s love to the people He places in our path.

May the love of Christ compel us in everything we do “because we are convinced . . . that He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them” (2 Corinthians 5:14–15 NIV).

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

ROOTS

BY UDAY PAUL



AS AN ENTHUSIASTIC GARDENER, I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT ROOTS ARE TO PLANTS. When I take a plant cutting and put it directly in the soil, it rarely sprouts; it usually withers quickly. But if I put the cutting in water, roots develop on the stem within a few days. When I then plant the cutting in the soil, it is established and grows. Roots make the difference between life and death.

The Bible speaks about roots using various analogies. After receiving Jesus as our Savior, we are to stay rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith (Colossians 2:6–7). Staying rooted in Jesus means staying in His Word because Jesus *is* the Word (John 1:1). A person who delights in the Word of God is likened to a tree growing near streams of water, whose roots are in fertile soil, and which yields fruit in its season (Psalm 1:2–3). Bearing good fruit is both manifesting godly character in our lives (Galatians 5:22–23) and bringing others to Jesus (Proverbs 11:30).

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus talks about seeds which fell on rocky ground and sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun rose, they were scorched and withered away, because they had no roots. Shallow soil symbolizes the hearts of those who do not let the Word of God take root in their lives, and

therefore, they fall away during times of testing. Good soil symbolizes the hearts of believers who receive God's Word and let it take root in their lives. They bring forth abundant fruit for God's glory (Matthew 13:3–8, 18–23).

The best way to completely remove a plant from the soil is to pull it out by its roots. In the Parable of the Weeds, Jesus tells of a farmer who sowed good seed in his field. But an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. Later, as the plants grew, the weeds also appeared. When growing, wheat and weeds look very much alike. So, the farmer decided to let both grow until the harvest when it would be easy to separate them.

Jesus explains the parable by saying that He has planted His children in the field of the world. The devil has also planted *his* children among them. At the time of the harvest—Jesus' return at the end of the age—He will command His angels to root out all evildoers from the world. God's children will then shine brightly in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:24–30, 37–43).

May we each bear fruit in our part of the field of the world where God has planted us.

UDAY PAUL IS A FREELANCE WRITER, VOLUNTEER, AND TEACHER BASED IN UGANDA. ■

GROWING IN OUR WALK WITH GOD

BY G.L. ELLENS

OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS, I'VE REALLY TRIED TO PUT GOD FIRST EVERY MORNING. And it has made all the difference in the world. Taking time with God first thing in the morning is powerful and important. The time we spend with Him prepares us to take on anything that comes our way that day, good or bad.

I've found that trying to manage my day without committing my day to the Lord in prayer first is like trying to drive a car without suspension. Automotive experts tell us that's not a good idea.—Not only will the ride be bumpy, but the car will be unstable and difficult to steer.

Starting our day with the Lord gives us a fresh, gratitude-filled perspective for the entire day. Not only does it change our day, it eventually changes our whole life. It helps us to trust Jesus with everything that comes our way.

Keep in mind, too, that God is not some distant supernatural being advising us from afar off. He wants a relationship with each of us that is personal and intimate. In fact, He's promised that if we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us (James 4:8).

Granted, this is not always easy. Life hits us with tons of distractions and to-dos. So many activities can easily take up all our time—children, work, life responsibilities, the internet and social media, even church activities. At times, it seems that the last thing we could possibly think of is taking time to commune with God.

Maybe it's time to reorder our priorities. If we neglect taking time with God, we'll be taking a car ride without the benefit of suspension, and we'll be less prepared to



When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities.

—Ezra Taft Benson

When we come to Christ, we're no longer the most important person in the world to us; Christ is. Instead of living only for ourselves, we have a higher goal: to live for Jesus.

—Billy Graham

We need to make sure our activities and our attitudes line up with what pleases God first and foremost. Wherever we focus our attention the most will become the driving force in our lives.

—Lysa TerKeurst

If you have not yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can do so by praying the following prayer:

Dear Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died on the cross for me so that, through Your sacrifice, I can live forever with You in heaven. I ask that You forgive my sins. I open the door of my heart to You. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit and help me live in a way that glorifies You. Guide my life and help me to follow You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

deal with the bumps and jolts of life. So, whatever it takes, let's make time to be alone with God. Having a few ideas to start with can be helpful. Instead of starting with my prayer requests, I begin with praising God. Reading the Bible or an entry from a devotional book and singing a song of praise is a great way to start. After that, I write in my gratitude journal at least five things I'm thankful for from the previous day.

Lately, I've started to realize that, just like in any other relationship, there needs to be two-way communication. I can't just say what I want to say without also listening to the other person. The same is true of the Lord. He often has something He wants to say as well if we will listen. So often, if I just get quiet, a Bible verse or some words of comfort and encouragement will come to mind. It may be just a sentence or two or three. But that's enough. It's beautiful and comforting and gives me the perspective I need for the day ahead or guidance for something specific that's troubling me.

Remember, God wants our fellowship. He has done everything He can to make that happen. He has forgiven our sins at the cost of His own Son. He has given us His Word, as well as the priceless privilege of spending time with Him. So, let's make it a priority! Let's put God first!

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AT MIDLIFE, IS THIS AS GOOD AS IT GETS?

Q: I thought that after my children were grown and had moved out of the house, I would finally have time to do some things I've always wanted to do, but now I find that I'm worn out by the end of the day and tired when the weekend comes around. Is it all downhill from here?

A: Midlife requires some adjustments, but no, it's not all downhill.

The decline in physical stamina is natural. God can use these and other challenges of midlife to slow us down and help us to take stock of our lives and our priorities. In the process, His desire is that we will turn to Him as the ever-present help He has promised to be (Psalm 46:1).

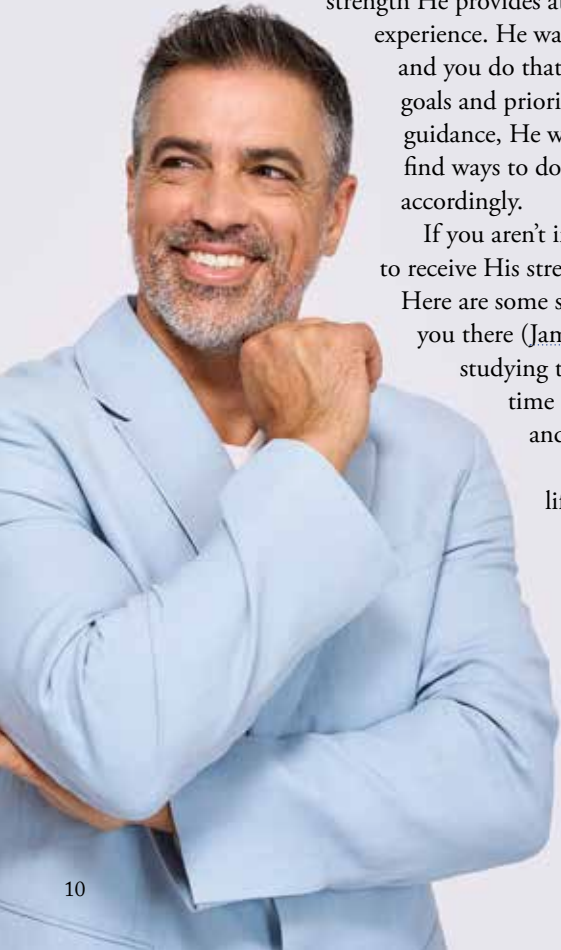
As at every other stage of life, God will help you and equip you to meet these new challenges. He promises, "He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength" (Isaiah 40:29). The strength He provides at midlife is often through the maturity and wisdom gained through experience. He wants you to continue to develop that strength of spirit and character, and you do that by involving Him more in your thoughts and daily activities. As for goals and priorities, He will help you sort those out, too. If you will look to Him for guidance, He will give it to you (Proverbs 3:5–6; James 1:5). He may even help you find ways to do some of those things you've always wanted to do and strengthen you accordingly.

If you aren't in the habit of taking your problems and concerns to Him in prayer to receive His strength and guidance, you may feel like you don't know where to start. Here are some simple steps: Tell God you're making room for Him, and He will meet you there (James 4:8). Talk with Him, as you would talk with a friend. Spend time studying the Bible and consider how to apply the principles of His Word. Take time every day for prayer, communion with God, and to study His Word and you will find that your relationship with Him will grow stronger.

Midlife done that way can be the happiest and most fulfilling stage of life that you have yet experienced!



One bedrock Bible promise that makes a wonderful point of reference during midlife is found in Romans 8:28: "All things work together for good to those who love God" (NKJV). If you love God and know how much He loves you, then you can be sure that He has your best interests at heart and wants to use even the challenges that come with midlife to help you to grow in your faith. You will then be able to see your life through the eyes of faith, looking not at the difficulties, but at the new possibilities you know He will open for you.—*Maria Fontaine* ■



FOCUS

ON THE

LIVING HOPE

BY MARIE ALVERO

“BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3–4).

Peter sure could speak excitedly about his *living hope*. This whole chapter is a big encouragement to look to heavenly things. When I read this, and many other passages, I stop and ponder if that same joy bubbles up in my heart when I speak of heaven. There is so much distraction, so many small wins and losses here on earth that grab my attention, sometimes I forget.

This chapter puts it all in perspective.

Are you suffering? God is perfecting your faith.

Are you worried? Cast your cares on God.

Are you tempted to live like the world? Don't, because God has blessed you and called you.

This life passes away, but you are redeemed to God for eternity.

When I am losing sight of my *living hope* I come back to this chapter. It's hard to miss the joy, urgency,

and value that Peter placed on the eternal perspective. His reward and success are rooted firmly in living for Jesus in this life and being fully with Jesus in the next life.

Peter knew and saw things I have not. He actually walked with Jesus, so maybe it was easier for him to stay focused. I don't know, maybe it was just as hard for him as it is for me. The great thing is that the vision is written out for us in this epistle. This is a chapter I keep coming back to when I lose my way a bit, when my priorities feel conflicted. Peter loved Jesus in a way that he valued Him over everything else, and I want to be like that, too.

“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8–9).

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REALIGNING PRIORITIES

BY SIMON BISHOP

JESUS MADE SOME STRONG STATEMENTS ABOUT MONEY IN THE GOSPELS (Matthew 6:24), not because He preached against it, but because the love of money has a powerful influence and can lead us astray.

There is a story in the Bible showing the overwhelming attraction people often have to wealth. This happened when the children of Israel were starting to conquer the Promised Land. God had helped them win a miraculous battle over the city of Jericho. They had been instructed by God that no one was to keep any gold, silver, or precious possessions found in the city.

However, a man named Achan couldn't control his desire, and when he found a wedge of gold, some silver coins, and some costly materials, he hid them. At first all seemed well, but when they went into their next battle against a much smaller city than Jericho, they suffered a defeat in which 36 of their soldiers were killed. Joshua asked God why this had happened and He told him it was because of someone's disobedience and greed.

Eventually Achan owned up to what he had done, but because his actions—driven by greed and the love of money—had caused the death of 36 people and the defeat of Israel, he was executed. (See Joshua chapter 7.)

This example seems extreme today, when materialism holds such sway in culture, and a desire for material possessions is often considered virtuous. But Hebrews 13:5 says: "Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" God will provide what we need, so we must not get caught up in greed.

This story goes on to show that while wealth and possessions can bring comfort and stability, if gotten in the wrong way, they lead to sorrow and suffering. If we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by all the material possessions available, and we become obsessed, it can lead to unhappiness, debt, and financial ruin.

One thing that has helped me when I've wanted some material possession is to give myself time, rather than being impulsive. Often the desire fades, my priorities become clear, and I realize that I don't need or can't really afford it, or I find something better in the meantime. It is not always a sin to act on a desire, but we should strive to stay free from the powerful hold things can have on us.

SIMON BISHOP DOES FULL-TIME MISSION AND HUMANITARIAN WORK IN THE PHILIPPINES. ■

THINGS



BY MARTIN McTEG

I HAVE THIS THING ABOUT THINGS. You see, I think some of us have way too many of them—like those who can't fit another thing in their garage or their closets, so they rent a storage unit for their extra things.

When I moved houses recently, I had to decide what to do with many of the things I'd accumulated since my last move. Boy, oh boy! That's when I realized I had indeed become a thing collector!

I think a lot of the problem is due to the culture of materialism that is so prevalent these days. Whenever we watch TV or go online, we are bombarded with

advertisements about all the latest and greatest things we need to buy, and those ads are effective. Take electronic equipment, for example. As soon as a new TV or laptop or cell phone comes out, everybody wants it, and a lot of perfectly good ones end up in the garage or closet with everything else.

There are other downsides to this "thing" mentality, too. For one, you can lose appreciation for the value of the things you have if you have too many of them.

Jesus put "things" in perspective when He said, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).

Another thing about things is that just as some people have way too many, there are others who lack even the basic things of life. Sad!

If you happen to recognize the symptoms of this too-many-things malady in your life, as I did, don't worry. There is a cure, at least on a personal level. You can take a serious look at all the things you have, decide which you use and really need, and give the rest to charity or a needy neighbor or friend. As Jesus told one rich young man, "Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Luke 18:22).

You'll be happy with the results. Your home will suddenly seem bigger and more organized, and your life will seem less cluttered.

And remember what Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). As we give away our extra things in a spirit of generosity, we accumulate God's blessings, both in this life and for eternity.

MARTIN McTEG IS A FORMER MISSIONARY VOLUNTEER, NOW RETIRED, AND LIVING IN THE USA. ■



REAL, LASTING TREASURE

BY MARIE KNIGHT

WE LIVE IN A WORLD THAT BOASTS ABOUT INSTANT RESULTS IN PRETTY MUCH EVERY SPHERE OF LIFE, BUT OFTEN THOSE THINGS PASS AWAY JUST AS QUICKLY. With technology at our fingertips, we make instant purchases. People do and say things (often ridiculous and shallow) on social media for an instant and fleeting moment of fame. Relationships have become almost disposable; with the swipe of your finger you can find someone new. People seem to have adopted an attitude of living in the moment without any thought of the future, much less the life to come.

While Jesus did say, “Don’t worry about tomorrow” (Matthew 6:34 NIV), when read in context with the rest of the chapter He was talking about not putting value on the things of this world and instead having faith in God.

In the same chapter Jesus says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19–21).

It is this treasure in heaven that will outlast all the things we work so hard for here on earth.

How do we store up treasure in heaven? By investing in God’s kingdom.

Here are some scriptural ways to do that:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37).

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39).

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:44–45).

Love is a key part of our treasure in heaven because, as the Bible says in 1 John 4:7–11: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 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. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

With God’s love in your heart, you will find real lasting treasure not only in heaven, but in your everyday life!

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



WHAT DOES GOD'S LOVE LOOK LIKE?

BY ROSANE CORDOBA

THE EXAMPLE THAT WE AS PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS SHOW OUR CHILDREN STICKS WITH THEM THEIR WHOLE LIVES.

My parents always helped whoever they could and did it with a cheerful heart. They taught us the importance of family. They helped and cared for their parents and siblings when needed. But there was one time that their willing hearts impressed me especially deeply.

There was a large family on our street. The older children had gone to the same schools as my older sisters. At one point, the oldest daughter, already independent and living away from home, became pregnant. She was single. Her father was elderly by this time, and was taking care of her mom who was ill. So, my sisters asked my mother if this woman could stay with us for one or two months after the baby was born. And my mom, being the kind soul that she was, promptly agreed.

A few days later, this woman and her baby girl arrived from the hospital. She was cared for like a daughter and sister by all of us. She became part of our family during those months she was with us. I, being the youngest of

my family, had never seen such a small baby being cared for, and I was enchanted by it all.

Soon this mother was back on her feet and went back to her work as a designer. A few years later she bought an apartment in front of my mother's home, and every time I went back to visit my mom, I got to see her little girl. I watched as she grew into a wonderful teen and then a young woman.

That was the gospel being lived in front of my eyes—giving a hand to someone in need. I saw the love and consideration in my parents' attitude, and the twinkle in my mother's eyes because she could help that dear young woman.

Isn't this like what Jesus did for us, only on a much larger scale? He saw our need and came down to earth to teach us how to live, and then He died for us on the cross, so we could be free from sin and be part of His glorious family forever! That's what God's love looks like!

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

The Greatest of These Is Love

Love is the greatest of all commandments and is an integral part of My divine nature (1 John 4:8). When My Spirit dwells in you, you begin to be transformed into My image (2 Corinthians 3:18). Love is a fruit of My Spirit's presence in your life (Galatians 5:22–23), which is increasingly manifested as you do your part to cultivate it and put it into action in your everyday life. You do that one step at a time, starting with making your relationship with Me a priority and seeking first My kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

You live out the commandment to love your neighbors through your loving and kind actions throughout your day. Loving others means intentionally seeking for opportunities to share My hope and love with others, both in word and in deed (Colossians 3:16–17). Every time you are concerned for others and translate that concern into loving action, you are reflecting My love and drawing others to Me.

Everything you do to invest in My kingdom through loving and caring for others, through sharing a witness, and through your prayers and acts of love and compassion will bear fruit. I have promised that as you give to Me and others, you will receive abundant blessings in return—in good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over (Luke 6:38). So continue to freely share with others the love you have freely received from Me (Matthew 10:8 NIV).