



CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 27 • Issue 9

FULFILLING GOD'S PURPOSE

Run and finish your race

Refreshing My Perspective

What matters to Jesus

God's Idea of Perfection

Complete, well rounded, mature

Finding God's Will

Five helpful steps



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

WHY AM I HERE?

Whether you are a teenager, a college student, a parent of a growing family, a successful professional, or an aging senior, you will at some point ask the important question: “Does my life have meaning?”

When I first realized that I was created for a purpose by my loving heavenly Father, my life took a 180-degree turn. I had previously been a pretty reckless young person, who thought, “What does it matter anyway?” Then I found Jesus and realized that I could make a difference in the world. So can you.

Knowing that God loves you and that Jesus died for you, even if you feel that you only have faith the size of a “mustard seed” (Matthew 17:20), puts you on the path to a great start. It can be the difference between white-knuckling your way to carve out your own destiny, and knowing that you are never alone and that God has a plan for you and He will help you fulfill it.

I used to think that each of us had just *one* destiny in life, *one* “calling” that we were to find and fulfill. Now I see that God can help us find purpose and meaning in all stages of our lives and wherever we are—in our homes, at our jobs, with our friends, and in our community. You may be called to be an honest employer, a fair business owner, a dedicated teacher, a loving parent or caregiver, an active volunteer—the possibilities are endless. And your purpose will likely change with time. Just as seasons change in life, so our “mission” will change as well. Many people testify that after a successful professional life or after having raised their family, they find a new way to serve others.

Jesus said that He came so that we may have an abundant life (John 10:10). Biblical truth guides us to align our lives with God’s plan. This month’s issue contains several Bible studies along these lines, as well as personal testimonies of those who have found meaning through faith and service. We trust that these accounts will be a blessing to you in your journey.

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HINENI

BY SAMEER SETHI

LAST YEAR I WENT ICE SKATING WITH MY FRIENDS FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER. I

didn't know what to expect. I started off by holding on to the wall around the ice-skating rink for support. Time passed and I wasn't making much progress. I kept holding on to the wall because I was afraid that I would fall.

My friends were encouraging me to go ahead and skate. I finally let go and launched out. And to my surprise, I could skate! Of course, I fell, but I got right up and started skating again. The freedom I felt when I finally let go of the wall and just started skating was totally worth it. I regretted not having let go sooner.

In thinking about this experience, I saw parallels with the time when God called me to Christian ministry. I was concerned about the unknown. I was afraid of failing. There are many unknown factors that come with following God's will for your life, but my overthinking led me to not progress in my calling. I kept asking God for signs instead of trusting in what He had already shown me.

Finally, I attended a mission conference in Bangkok. Those five days included hearing testimonies of people who had said yes to God without knowing all the details of what lay ahead. Seeing the freedom and joy of those people convinced me that I'd never find true satisfaction if I didn't do what God had called me to do.

One of the sessions that stood out to me was about giving our *hineni* to God. *Hineni* is the Hebrew word for "here I am." The speaker talked about how there will be consequences for giving our *hineni* (our "yes")



to God, but there will be even greater consequences for withholding our *hineni*, one of them being missing out on the joy and satisfaction that comes with serving God and doing what He's called us to do.

Sure, following God is challenging. Sure, there are many details that we don't know. But staying in our comfort zones will not help us reach our goals. And if we stay there too long, we could end up with regrets and "what ifs." There's so much joy and freedom to be found in stepping into what God has called us to do. It's a life of adventure and fulfillment.

SAMEER LIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND IS A MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND. HE ALSO ENJOYS COOKING, GARDENING, AND LEARNING LANGUAGES. ■

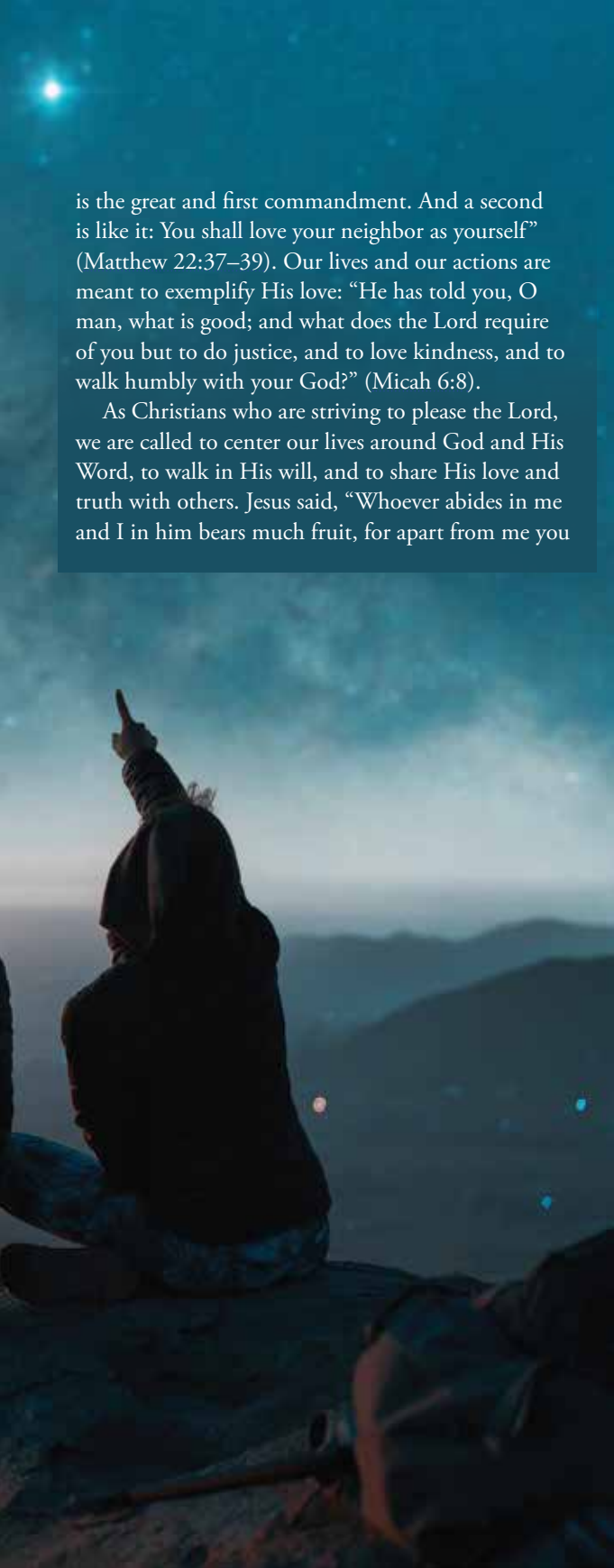
FULFILLING GOD'S PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES

THE BIBLE TEACHES US THAT GOD HAS A PURPOSE AND A PLAN FOR EACH OF OUR LIVES. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Jesus taught us that fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives starts with “seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” and then everything else that we need will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). But how do we go about understanding and finding God’s purpose and will for our lives?

The most important decision we make in life is accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior, as it determines our eternal standing in relationship to God and His kingdom (John 3:16–18). When we give our life to Christ, we begin a new life with a whole new purpose, worldview and priorities. We receive a new identity as a son or daughter of God (John 1:12). And we are faced with numerous decisions on a daily basis as we seek to live out our faith and pattern our lives after the precepts in His Word (Ephesians 4:20–24).

Jesus mapped out the two most important commandments that should guide our lives and decisions: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This





is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–39). Our lives and our actions are meant to exemplify His love: “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

As Christians who are striving to please the Lord, we are called to center our lives around God and His Word, to walk in His will, and to share His love and truth with others. Jesus said, “Whoever abides in me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from me you

can do nothing” (John 15:5). If we have given our heart and life to Jesus, we will seek His help and guidance, and we will worship and thank Him for His presence and His good gifts in our lives.

Our goal in all our decision-making should be to fulfill God’s purposes for our lives and to bring glory to Him. As the apostle Paul wrote, “Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). He is the One we are living for, and He is the One who helps us accomplish His good will and purpose for our lives. “For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13 NIV). So, when we commit our ways to the Lord, we can trust that He will work in and through us to fulfill His purpose for us. He has promised to guide us in our decisions and act on our behalf (Psalm 37:5).

As you are faithful to seek first the kingdom of God and to align your will with His will for your life, you will find that He will not fail to direct your path and bless you (Matthew 6:33). And as you acknowledge Him in all your ways, you will be glorifying Him with your life and through the good things that He accomplishes through you (Proverbs 3:6). Even when things don’t turn out the way we had hoped, or we face times of disappointment, loss, tragedy or challenges, we can trust that God is at work. He will never fail to fulfill His promise to work all things together for good for those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

But to truly accomplish God’s will and purpose, we must first acknowledge where true strength comes from—our dependence on the Lord, who said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). God’s Word says, “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23–24 NKJV).

As Christ followers, we are called to share His love with others and proclaim our faith in Jesus as the only hope of salvation, and the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). We can testify of our faith and share God’s

love with others even when we feel incapable, knowing that as the apostle Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13 NKJV).

If you truly believe in something, you’ll talk about it, you’ll want to share it with others, you’ll glory in it! If you believe in your favorite athletic team or political party, you’ll talk about them. If you enjoy and believe in your work, you’ll talk about it. If you love and believe in Jesus, you’re going to talk about Him. As Jesus said, “where your treasure is, there will your heart be” (Matthew 6:21).

But if you feel somewhat unsure of yourself or incapable of sharing His love and truth with others, take heart from the disciples of the early church. After the religious authorities commanded them to stop proclaiming Jesus, they desperately prayed, “Lord, grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.” They confessed their weakness and fears and cried out to the Lord for help, and He answered: “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:29–31).

You may not be called to be a theologian, pastor, or Christian leader, but each one of us can glorify the Lord

by sharing His love and truth with others and being a living example of our faith in every aspect of our lives. Every time we share our faith or a gospel tract with others, we are fulfilling our calling to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). Even if we only say “God bless you” to others, we are reminding people that God exists and is sovereign. Every time we offer a word of encouragement, help a person in need, show sympathy when someone is stressed or worried, offer a prayer and give of ourself to others, we are fulfilling His command to love our neighbor and to serve others in love (Galatians 5:13–14).

We have each been called to run a race that has been marked out for us by the Lord, and we’re to run with perseverance the race that is set before us, being faithful to follow the Lord however and wherever He has called us. The only way we can have the endurance we need to run and finish this race is by “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” We have to keep our eyes firmly fixed on the Lord and consider all that He endured for our salvation so that we don’t “become weary and discouraged in our souls” (Hebrews 12:2–3 NKJV).

Be faithful to strive to walk according to God’s will and purpose for your life now, and one day you will hear Him say, “Well done, My good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Lord!” (Matthew 25:21 NKJV). May God bless you as you continue to keep the faith, run the race, and fight the good fight of faith, with your eyes firmly fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2).

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ARTICLE IN TREASURES,
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REFRESHING MY PERSPECTIVE

BY MARIE ALVERO

I'M READING THROUGH THE BIBLE, AND SOMETHING THAT ALWAYS STANDS OUT TO ME ARE ALL THE STORIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THAT SHOW THAT GOD HAD A GREAT PLAN—

Joseph, Esther, David, Abraham, Moses, Isaac, Noah, and so many others. As we read, we see the whole story, and the trials, losses and tests all make sense in the story's end.

I don't think my life looks like any of those "Bible greats." Yours probably doesn't either. I don't see a dramatic story in my life. But then again, I also have not been sold into slavery or married a king. Most of my life is basic and ordinary. I'm an ordinary wife and mom raising ordinary kids in an ordinary house with an ordinary income and no results that anyone would write home about.

Sometimes this has caused me to question if I am fulfilling my purpose in life. Am I in God's will? Is this what He wants from me? Am I bearing the right fruit? How do I know I'm in His will when nothing I do seems to culminate in anything obviously great?

It's been helpful for me to look at scriptures that talk about God's will.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

"May the God of Peace ... equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in

his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever" (Hebrews 13:20–21).

What jumps out to me from these verses is really great news!

- It's about my heart, not my accomplishments.
- It's not in my power; it's about me letting God accomplish His will in my heart and life.
- The rest follows out of a faithful heart.

Sometimes I need to refresh my perspective to align with what matters to God. I need to reset my heart to follow after Him. I hope this is helpful for you, too.

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. ■





A “LITTLE” TRIANGLE

BY AMY JOY MIZRANY

I CAN'T HELP BUT SMILE WHEN I HEAR SOMEONE SAY, “OH, THE ONLY MUSICAL INSTRUMENT I PLAY IS THE TRIANGLE!” Usually it's meant to jokingly inform others of how unmusical the person is, but actually, the triangle can be quite difficult to play properly. Of course, it's not a real show-stopping skill and it's definitely less involved than a lot of the other instruments, but it has different tones and is usually critically timed and tied to important rhythms.

I found this out the fun way when one of our ensemble pieces required a triangle to be played at a few very opportune moments throughout. Since all the musicians were already occupied playing their instruments, we recruited someone's brother to fill the role of tapping the little triangle at the right moments. Not considering the triangle to be a “real” instrument, we could not see this going wrong at all—in fact, we never even gave it a second thought.

We practiced without the triangle most of the time, because the brother was busy and we didn't put much stock in his part anyway. Then, a few days

before the concert, we called him in for a practice session or two. This was when we realized that we had made a big mistake.

While willing and good-natured, this guy was not the best listener, and no matter how much we explained, drew diagrams, or demonstrated what he was to do, he never seemed to really remember or follow our instructions. He seemed to be applying the scripture that says, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10 NIV). But since that verse unfortunately does not include “do it with all your accuracy,” he treated timing as a mere suggestion and enthusiastically clanged away on that little metal triangle whenever he felt like it.

After many starts and stops, we took a break. To be honest, we were all quite shocked at this turn of events. And as much as we wanted to believe that we were the stars of the show, we began to realize that this tiny, basic, little percussion instrument could somehow easily (and negatively) overshadow all our parts. Now, instead of being a fun little addition, the triangle was a major focal point, and it became vital that we got those few little dings right.

We resumed rehearsing with this realization front and center in our minds. But the actual player of the triangle still hadn’t understood his role. And regardless of how the conductor, other musicians, or his sister impressed upon him the importance of his role, he remained cheerful but oblivious. Between his refusal to accept the importance of his part and our continued efforts to get it in tempo, the rest of the practice is a blur in my memory.

What I do recall perfectly are those first few attempts and the clear lesson we learned: The triangle, though small, simple, and unimpressive, was important. All the hassle was caused because we had assumed it wasn’t. We thought that, because it didn’t have the most glorious or biggest part, it was of less value.

Thinking that the grandness or the required skill of a task equals the importance of a task is a mistake. It’s always been the little jobs, people, and things that truly make the world go round. The triangle is not a hard instrument to play. It’s not a very impressive one either. It usually doesn’t have incredibly involved and intricate parts. But it *is* important.

So indeed, little things matter, whether that little thing is a triangle or a triangle player, a cheerful janitor or a friendly cashier, a loving preschool teacher or a skilled construction worker, or any manner of inglorious, unseen roles that don’t make headlines or trend on social media but that are appreciated forever by a loving God who sees it all. Those people, jobs, parts, and roles are important to Him! And they should be important to us as well.

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

Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.

—*Vincent van Gogh*

If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way.

—*Napoleon Hill*

Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.

—*Mother Teresa*

Stay faithful in things large and taking on the world, but stay faithful in those things small, because remember it’s the small things, the size of a mustard seed, that ultimately move mountains.

—*Cory Booker*

Little Things

By Julia A. F. Carney

Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean
And the pleasant land.

So the little moments,
Humble though they be,
Make the mighty ages
Of Eternity.

So the little errors
Lead the soul away
From the paths of virtue
Far in sin to stray.

Little deeds of kindness,
Little words of love,
Help to make earth happy
Like the Heaven above.

EMBRACING FAITH IN EVERY SEASON

BY G.L. ELLENS

“FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON, AND A TIME FOR EVERY MATTER UNDER HEAVEN” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). These words remind us that life unfolds in seasons, each one carrying its own joys, challenges, and opportunities to trust God. Whether we are young and full of dreams, navigating the pressures of midlife, or adjusting to a quieter pace in later years, God is at work—reshaping our priorities, callings, and relationships to match His perfect plan.

Years ago, when I was raising five young children between the ages of one and seven, my days were busy from dawn to dusk. I remember praying in hurried moments between loads of laundry and feeding kids. Life felt like a constant balancing act, and yet, in that season I sensed God’s presence in the middle of all the busyness. He strengthened me, guided me, and gave purpose to even the smallest tasks.

After the children grew older, our family moved to Thailand, where I taught English at the Royal Thai Military Academy while the kids completed high school. There were long hours of bus rides when I had time to read and meditate on God’s Word, which I was very thankful for.

Now that I’m in a different season—that of an empty nester with all the children having left home, college grads and married—I’ve found that my calling has changed again. I no longer need to chase toddlers or prepare classes. Instead, God has invited me to delve deeper into my times with Him, which helps me mentor young people and point others to Him. At first, I struggled with this shift. I missed the excitement and

busyness of my earlier roles. But over time, I realized that just as my situation had changed, so had the way God wanted to use me.

While our abilities and circumstances may change, God’s character remains the same. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” When our roles change and our identity feels uncertain, we can always trust in His steadfast love.

Embracing faith in every season of our lives means trusting that God is still at work even when our days look





It's interesting
how nature's cyclic rhythms
seem to constantly remind us of the
fact that there's always HOPE... even during
the coldest and darkest of winters in life... the sun is
ever-present. Bringing forth with it new life, new growth
and a fresh new perspective!—*AshRawArt*

I like winter just as summer. I love autumn and spring. Each season
has its own bliss.—*Anoir Ou-Chad*

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.*

different. He's not
surprised by our
aging bodies, lagging
energy, or altered plans.

He sees the big picture and
lovingly leads us one step at a time.

Sometimes, embracing a new season
means stepping into something unfamiliar. A few
years ago, a dear friend invited me to lead a small Bible
study. I felt unqualified and unsure of myself, but I
sensed the Lord nudging me to say yes. That simple act
of obedience opened doors I never expected to speak
encouragement into others' lives and to grow in my own
faith along the way.

God doesn't waste any season of our lives. What we
have to offer may change, but our "yes" to Him is still
important. Whether we're teaching, praying, being a
listening ear, or serving others, we can be confident that
our obedience is making an eternal difference.

Ultimately, embracing God's plan in every season
means living with open hands. We must be willing to
release what's behind and receive what's ahead. It means
asking daily, "Lord, what are You inviting me to do
today?" and following Him, even when the road ahead
looks unfamiliar.

Each season—whether full of activity or marked by
rest—is a divine invitation to walk closely with Jesus. Our
roles may change, but His love never changes. And as we
trust Him, we find purpose, peace, and joy—no matter
what season of life we are in.

G.L. ELLENS HAS BEEN A MISSIONARY IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA FOR FOUR DECADES. SHE IS ACTIVE IN VOLUN-
TEER WORK FOR CHILDREN IN NEED AND IS PURSUING
HER INTEREST IN WRITING. ■

WHILE TRAVELING

BY JOSEPHINE KIND

I HAVE TRAVELED QUITE A BIT BY TRAIN, BUS, AND OTHER MEANS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. I have always enjoyed it, as it gives me a chance to read, reflect, and write. I also enjoy seeing the beauty of God's creation. All I have to worry about is getting off at the right stop. The rest of the time I've written articles and even chapters of my book, or I've done research, and I've also taken the time to pray for people or write them a note.

Being on public transportation provides a peek at students, tourists, and people traveling for work. It's easy to spot the ones commuting; they know the way by heart so nothing is new to them, and many actually catch up on sleep. The tourists have their cameras in hand. The students, if they are awake, love to talk or they're busy studying. Parents traveling with babies or toddlers are busy making sure they don't disturb people. They are glad when I give a hand entertaining their little ones. One thing for sure, Jesus loves all this colorful and varied picture of humanity journeying through life. And He nudges me to love them as well.

I occasionally have conversations with my fellow travelers, sometimes just small talk, other times very deep exchanges. Once at a bus stop, I talked with a young man who was obviously battling addictions, as he honestly admitted in the course of our conversation. For a moment I felt as if he were my son, needing encouragement and friendship. We exchanged phone numbers, and just a few minutes after he left he called me saying, "I just wanted to know if you were for real or if it was one of my hallucinations. Very few people take the time to listen and show love to a stranger."

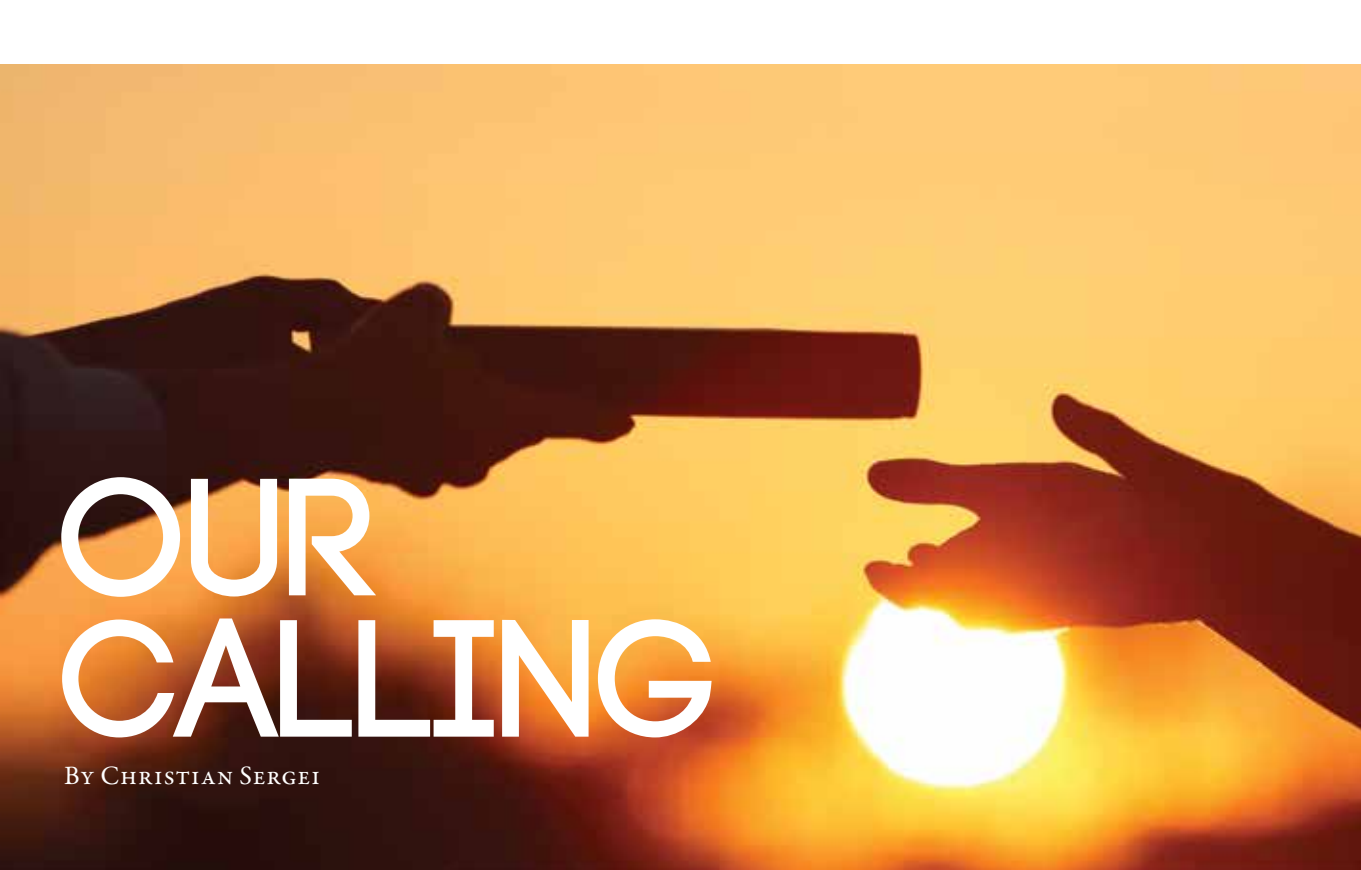
I have many opportunities to help people if they need directions, a hand with their luggage, or simply a smile.

Once I loaned my phone to a lady. She had to work out getting picked up by her daughter, but her phone battery had died, and she panicked, as she was very tired and had traveled a long distance. After things got worked out with her daughter, we ended up having lunch together, and it was as if we had known each other for a long time.

I know some people don't like traveling by public transport, so I hope these thoughts will cheer you up and inspire you the next time you do!

JOSEPHINE KIND HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE FOR THE LAST THREE DECADES. ■





OUR CALLING

BY CHRISTIAN SERGEI

AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS, WE ARE NOT OF THIS WORLD (John 15:19). Our calling is to “be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29), “transformed by the renewing of [our] mind” (Romans 12:2), and to “put on Christ” (Romans 13:14) so the divine nature becomes our nature. “For it is God who works in [us], both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). We’re dead to the old life, reborn to the new. We are God’s born-again children, adopted, heirs of the kingdom. God—the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit—dwells in our hearts!¹

We are also called to help rescue souls from the domain of darkness and to help open their spiritual eyes to the truth, so they too can experience God’s great love, forgiveness, and true spiritual freedom.

Jesus sees each one of us. Each person has been created and is loved by our heavenly Father, who makes His sun rise over the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). He sent His Son for all people; all are loved. We have been born again by grace and share in His purpose, even this: “The

Lord has anointed me... sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Isaiah 61:1).

Who are these captives? Could this include those who are caught in the domain of darkness as well? We are not to condone, overlook, or minimize the evil of those who perpetrate it, but as God’s children, we have been commissioned to reach the lost, regardless of who they are or what they have done, with the gospel of grace. “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” (Titus 2:11). “I did not come to judge the world but to save the world” (John 12:47).

Our King has us here to be His peacemakers. Let’s not become distracted or entangled in the affairs of this world, but let’s “set our affection on things above” (Colossians 3:2). Let us “walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8), as the children of God.

“The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned” (Matthew 4:16).

1. See Romans 6:6; John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:17.

GOD'S IDEA OF PERFECTION

BY SIMON BISHOP

LATELY I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THE GROWTH PROCESS, AND I WANTED TO SHARE A FEW OF MY THOUGHTS WITH YOU.

Jesus said: "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). I have always found this to be quite mind-boggling, as even in my best moments, I've never considered myself even close to

Jesus was saying here that the man He was talking with had to learn to prioritize following Him over his worldly wealth.

While the Bible likens the beginning of our relationship with God to a spiritual rebirth, or being born again, there are many verses that show that once we come to Christ, we then should make it a priority to mature, to become more like Jesus. Paul told his young

protégé Timothy: "Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). Paul also said: "Brothers, do not be children in your thinking ... in your thinking be mature" (1 Corinthians 14:20).



perfect, and I have never observed anyone else who was perfect. The term "perfect" that is used in many Bible translations comes from the Greek word *teleios*, which has these definitions: (a) complete in all its parts, (b) full grown, of full age. So, another way of defining perfect could be complete, well rounded, mature.

Here are a couple of other verses that use "perfect" to describe people:

"We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check" (James 3:2 NIV). James goes on to say that a mature person is one who has learned to watch their words.

"Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me'" (Matthew 19:21 NIV).

When Jesus said we need to be perfect, He had just talked about loving our enemies, not treating people badly based on our opinion of them, but rather, being kind to all. This is also a manifestation of being mature.

To sum all of this up, it seems that God's idea of perfection, when it comes to us as His children, is learning to be loving, patient, understanding, mature in our speech and thoughts, concerned about the needs of others, and most of all, living in a way that manifests the love of Jesus to others.

I pray that each of us will keep following the light of God on our path of life, until the time when we will see Him face to face.

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



FINDING GOD'S WILL

5 Steps to Discover His Plan for Your Life

BY LILIA POTTERS

A RECENT DEVOTIONAL I READ EXPLAINED THAT THE MAIN POINT WE SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN MAKING DECISIONS IS FOR OUR PLANS TO ALIGN WITH GOD'S WILL. But how can we find God's will for our lives? Here are five steps that can help:

1. SUBMIT TO GOD'S WILL. Start by determining that what you want most is God's will for your life. Trust that His plan is best for you and those affected by your decisions. This surrender is the foundation of finding His direction.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Proverbs 3:5–6).

2. TAKE TIME TO PRAY. Prayer helps you quiet your mind and heart before the Lord and admit your need for His guidance. When you humbly seek Him in prayer, it puts you in a position to hear His counsel.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him" (James 1:5).

3. READ THE BIBLE. God's Word will clarify His plan for your life. Ask Him to guide you to passages that will light your way and confirm the direction He wants you to go.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

4. TALK WITH OTHERS. Seek advice from trusted, spiritually mature people. Sharing your situation with them can bring new perspective, and their wisdom may help you discern God's plan.

"Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22).

5. CONSIDER YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES. God often speaks through our circumstances, opening and closing doors to guide us. Pay attention to the opportunities or obstacles around you and how they may point you toward His will.

"We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Making decisions can be challenging, but when we surrender our personal desires and genuinely seek His will, we can trust His guidance and the outcome. God's thoughts toward us are always good, and His plans are for our ultimate good. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Setting Priorities

You will often find that in life that there is more to do than you are realistically able to do. There will always be something you aren't getting to, and there will always be more that you wish you could do. To avoid becoming stressed over the things you can't get to right away, the starting point is to ensure that you have your priorities right, so that you are confident that you are focusing on the most important things—the things that will bear lasting fruit ([John 15:16](#)).

A first step for determining your priorities is to come to Me in prayer; bring all your concerns and questions and worries to Me, and ask Me to lead and guide you ([1 Peter 5:7](#)). I have promised you My peace—a peace that is not like that of the world ([John 14:27](#)), or the peace of simply achieving your goals or checking things off your to-do list. My peace will guide your heart and mind ([Philippians 4:7](#)).

When I walked the earth, there was always the press of the people and their very great needs, and yet I spent time in prayer, sometimes whole nights, seeking My Father's will and guidance. When the pressure of all you need to do seems overwhelming, come to Me with your burdens and lay them down before Me, and I will give you the rest, guidance, and peace you need for each day. Remember, My yoke is easy and My burden is light ([Matthew 11:28–30](#)).