

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 15 • Issue 9



MY HEROES, WARTS AND ALL

Ordinary people,
extraordinary stories

Salt of the Earth

Don't lose your flavor

The Winner

Thoughts on a soccer game



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION FINDING HEROES

I love to hear about heroes, and I don't think I'm alone in this. Ever since an unknown Mesopotamian author thought up Gilgamesh's quests, or Homer sang of Achilles' war exploits and Ulysses' odyssey to get home, people have been inspired and thrilled by the adventures, bravery, and wisdom of great champions. Others, such as composers, writers, philosophers, and so on, may have lived less adventurous lives, but their accomplishments set them apart as well.

It may seem as though heroes are hopelessly above our level, and that most of us don't have a shot at emulating them. And yet, there are many people in our everyday lives who demonstrate heroism or perform selfless acts; for instance, firefighters, paramedics, advocates for the poor and needy, but also teachers, reporters, volunteers, and so on.

Each of us in our own way is capable of heroic deeds. Even though we don't possess Superman's powers or Batman's cache of gadgets or James Bond's perfect poise ... and even though the problems we face can be much more complex than the clear-cut situations found in fiction, the real world has never ceased needing heroic people who are willing to stand up for what is right and come to the aid of those in need.

It's been said that the opposite of a hero isn't a villain, it's a bystander. The thread that ties together the articles in this issue of *Activated* is that the people featured didn't stand by when help was needed. They took action, whether in small or large ways, and left their mark in the lives of those around them.

And what does that mean for you and me? Well, luckily for us, heroism might be easier to attain than we imagine.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

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Activated Ministries

P.O. Box 462805
Escondido, CA 92046-2805, USA
Toll-free: 1-877-862-3228
Email: info@actmin.org
www.activatedonline.com

Activated Europe

Bramingham Pk. Business Ctr.
Enterprise Way
Luton, Beds. LU3 4BU, United Kingdom
+44 (0) 845 838 1384
Email: activatedEurope@activated.org

Activated Africa

P.O. Box 2509, Faerie Glen
Pretoria 0043, South Africa
Tel: 0861 888 918
Email: activatedAfrica@activated.org

Activated Nigeria

P.O. Box 9009, Aggrey Road P.O.
Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Cell: +234 (0) 7036963333
Email: activatednigeria@activated.org

Activated Philippines

P.O. Box 8225, Paranaque Central P.O.
1700 Paranaque City, Philippines
Cell: (0922) 8125326
Email: activatedphil@gmail.com

EDITOR Samuel Keating

DESIGN Gentian Suçi

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3 CUPS OF TEA

BY ALEXANDER SICHROVSKY

RIGHT AFTER GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL, two friends and I decided to travel around the western Mediterranean. It was 1969, and the streets of Europe were filled with young people roaming and searching for meaning in their lives. We took a train to Naples in southern Italy, then an overnight ferry to Tunis. Next, we traveled along the North African coast, hitching rides with local trucks and cars.

On one occasion, we were stranded in the middle of nowhere with no town or village in sight. When night fell, we decided to go to the beach and roll out our sleeping bags on the warm sand for the night.

Early the next morning, as we were packing up our stuff, an elderly man walked slowly toward us. Looking over, I saw a tiny straw

hut a little further up the beach; we must have missed it in the darkness of the previous night. The shabbily dressed man was carrying a tray in his hand. *He must have something for sale*, I thought. However, once he got closer, I saw that he was bringing us three steaming hot cups of peppermint tea.

I was just an eighteen-year-old, fresh out of high school, immature and inexperienced, yet I was deeply moved. *Why would this old man, who probably barely survived out there, make tea to offer to strangers?* He had no idea who we were and had never met us, but he considered it his duty to show hospitality.

We gratefully drank the sweet, fragrant tea and tried to think of a way to repay the man's kindness. To offer money would have been an

insult, but digging around in our backpacks, we found some cans of food which we presented to him as a return gift. We couldn't talk much, as his French was poor and ours was even worse, so after thanking him, we took our leave and headed back to the road. The three of us were largely silent for the rest of the morning, as our thoughts were still on the kind man and the deep impression he had made on us.

He had much less than we did, but he had willingly shared the little he had. We were from different countries and spoke different languages, but concern and a giving heart had bridged it all.

ALEXANDER SICHROVSKY IS A FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER LIVING IN TAIWAN. ■

MY HEROES, WARTS AND ALL

BY PHILLIP LYNCH

ONE THING THAT SEEMS TO BE UNIQUE TO THE BIBLE is how the “heroes of faith”—with the exception of Jesus, of course—were far from perfect men and women. As the saying goes, they were portrayed “warts and all.” I love history, and if you read a lot of ancient histories or literature, you get used to heroes being lionized. Their faults, if they had any, seem to have been redacted. But not so with the heroes of the Bible. Personally, I think the warts-and-all approach gives so much more credibility to the Bible.

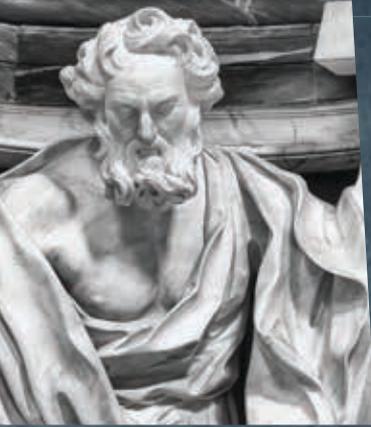
1. See Mark 3:13–19.
2. Mark 14:71 NASB
3. John 21:20
4. Matthew 20:20–24 ESV
5. Mark 9:33–34 ESV
6. See Luke 8:2.
7. Galatians 1:13

I get particular encouragement from reading about Jesus’ closest disciples while He was on earth.¹ Let’s start with Peter. Traditionally regarded as the chief of the apostles, Peter has the dubious distinction of having denied that he even knew Jesus on the very night that He needed him most. And not just once but three times. “But he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know this man you are talking about!’”² Cursing and swearing too? That doesn’t sound very saintly.

John called himself in his Gospel “the disciple Jesus loved,”³ but Matthew records an incident that doesn’t put John and his brother, James, in a very good light: “Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to [Jesus] with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. And he said to her, ‘What do you want?’ She said to

him, ‘Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.’ Jesus answered, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?’ They said to him, ‘We are able.’ He said to them, ‘You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.’ And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers.”⁴

This wasn’t even the first time the disciples had argued about who would be at the top of the heap. “And they came to Capernaum. And when [Jesus] was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you discussing on the way?’ But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.”⁵



And then there was Matthew the publican. Publicans were tax collectors and were universally regarded as scoundrels. The Romans had installed the publican system as a way to raise taxes from conquered territories. They auctioned off the tax rights of a region to the highest bidder, who then promised to turn in that amount of money to the imperial treasury on an annual basis. In reality, these tax farmers were free to collect however much they could and keep the surplus for themselves. They could essentially decide on a whim how much they wanted as taxes. It was a ruthless and thoroughly unfair system that ground the poor into poverty. Some of the biggest names in Rome, such as Brutus and Cassius, co-conspirators in the plot to murder Caesar, were reportedly owners of such companies—although they ran them through third parties, because technically, Romans were not allowed to engage in such a sordid business.

So Matthew was part of this racket, probably working as a subcontractor. He even seems to have had a choice spot at one of the city's gates where he could collect duties on all goods going in and out. To pious Jews, his financial dealings with Gentiles even rendered him ritually impure. Not an upstanding member of Jewish society by any stretch of the imagination.

And the rest of the disciples? Andrew, Thaddeus, Philip, and Nathaniel (aka Bartholomew) barely show up in the four gospels, but we do know that another—Simon—was formerly a member of the zealot party of violent revolutionaries pledged to overthrow the Roman occupiers and their puppet rulers. And of course, Thomas' claim to fame is that he doubted Jesus' resurrection. Not to mention Mary Magdalene, who is reputed to have



been a prostitute before Jesus cast seven devils out of her⁶—yet she was the one to whom He first appeared after His resurrection.

And what about the hero of the book of Acts? Paul was a converted Pharisee who, in his own words, had previously “persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.”⁷

But these disciples—ordinary people made extraordinary by their faith and loyalty to Jesus—are some of my heroes and heroines. They are an inspiration to me, because despite their human weaknesses and lacks, they were faithful to God's calling and did wonderful things for God and their fellow men.

PHILLIP LYNCH IS A NOVELIST AND COMMENTATOR ON SPIRITUAL AND ESCHATOLOGICAL ISSUES, LIVING IN ATLANTIC CANADA. ■

AVALANCHE!

BY MICHAEL SHARP

VICTOR WAS A CARABINERO, or police officer, stationed at the remote Chilean customs compound known as Los Libertadores, high in the Andes on the border with Argentina. Since Victor had received special training in mountain rescue work, he was usually assigned to dangerous areas like this one. He enjoyed the mountains, but missed his family.

It was July 3—the heart of winter in the southern hemisphere—and a snowstorm raged outside. With winds of 100 kilometers (over 60 miles) per hour and the temperature at -15°C (5°F) before the windchill factor, Victor and the 57 other people in the camp were bunkered in for the night.

Suddenly, Victor heard a deep rumbling and instinctively looked at his watch. It was 8:38 PM. Since small tremors are common in that part of Chile, Victor didn't think much of it at first, but the shaking grew stronger. Then the lights went out.

Seconds later, the roof collapsed and Victor found himself trapped between a wall and a large piece of

furniture. The temperature around him dropped quickly, and Victor wondered how he would ever come out of this alive.

As Victor would find out later, the high winds had caused an avalanche at the top of a nearby peak and sent a mountain of snow down on the customs complex.

Victor managed to pry himself free from the rubble and dig his way out of the snow. Once outside, he realized that the other buildings around had also collapsed.

Then Victor heard a child's cry and he dug through the wreckage until he found a baby girl. The child was

wearing only a diaper and a T-shirt, but was otherwise unharmed. Victor quickly put her inside his warm police coat, where she could receive warmth from his chest.

With no heat and almost no shelter, unless help came soon, the survivors would all freeze to death. Before the avalanche, the camp's only means of communication with the rest of the world had been a two-way radio, and now it was damaged beyond repair. Victor quickly realized that it might be days before anyone would even know of their predicament. Their only hope was for someone to walk to the nearest





neighbor, a ski lodge about two kilometers away, and organize a rescue.

Walking two kilometers through snow is normally about as difficult for Victor as walking across the room, but under these circumstances—through a storm and huge snowdrifts, in the dark, and carrying a baby—it meant almost certain death. Victor asked for volunteers to go with him. No one came forward, so he set off alone, carrying the baby under his coat.

He managed to find some snowshoes, which helped him stay on top of the deep snowbanks, but the high winds whipped up the fallen

snow until it seemed like a blizzard. Most of the time, Victor couldn't see more than one step ahead. He knew the general direction of the lodge when he set out, but in the dark and with near-zero visibility, he also knew there was a very good chance that he could walk right past it without even knowing.

Eight hours later, Victor stumbled into the lodge, exhausted.

After turning the child over to others and then getting a hot shower and a quick meal, he was ready to lead one of the three rescue teams. As a result of his actions, 31 people were saved.

As I listened to Victor tell his story some months later, one important detail was missing. I asked about it, but Victor kept evading the question.

The next day Victor's wife showed me her scrapbook of newspaper clippings about the avalanche and how Victor received a hero's commendation from the president of Chile. I combed the articles, but not one explained how Victor had managed to find the lodge in a blizzard and near total darkness.

At last I persuaded Victor's wife to reveal his secret. "He doesn't talk about this," she explained, "because he thinks people will say he's crazy." She paused for a moment—probably wondering if I would say the same—then continued.

"As Victor was walking through the blizzard, a bright light appeared off to one side, almost like a streetlight. But as Victor trudged through the deep snow, it moved with him and it lit the way, more like a spotlight than a streetlight. The light led Victor straight to the lodge. Many times along the way, Victor sank so deep into snowdrifts that he couldn't free himself, but each time he felt someone grab him from behind, pull him up, and set him on his way again.

"And there's one more thing. The light that guided him was no ordinary light. When Victor looked directly into it, instead of radiating from some sort of bulb, the light was coming from Jesus' face."

MICHAEL SHARP IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER IN COLOMBIA AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■



Achieving GREATNESS

YOU MAY NOT FEEL GREAT OR AS IF YOU HAVE HERO-LIKE QUALITIES OF YOUR OWN; EVEN THE APOSTLE PAUL LAMENTED, “I HAVE THE DESIRE TO DO WHAT IS GOOD, BUT I CANNOT CARRY IT OUT.”¹ YET GOD CAN MAKE MORE OF US THAN WE ARE, IF WE AVAIL OURSELVES OF THE HELP OF HIS SON, JESUS. “THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”²

[A hero is] someone admired for their achievements and noble qualities; I propose to you without hesitation that heroes are all around us. They face challenges each and every day, and they do so with integrity and humility.
—William D. Holland

True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others, at whatever cost.—Arthur Ashe (1943–1993), *African American World No. 1 professional tennis player and winner of three Grand Slam titles*

1. Romans 7:18 NIV
2. 1 Corinthians 15:57
3. <http://www.charlotteviewpoint.org/article/2709/Celebrating-the-every-day-heroes-in-our-midst>
4. <http://blog.richmond.edu/heroes/>
5. See Matthew 18:4.

Who decided ... that heroes have to wear capes or have superpowers?

—Josh Putnam, writing about a community project to take photographs “celebrating the everyday heroes in our midst.”³

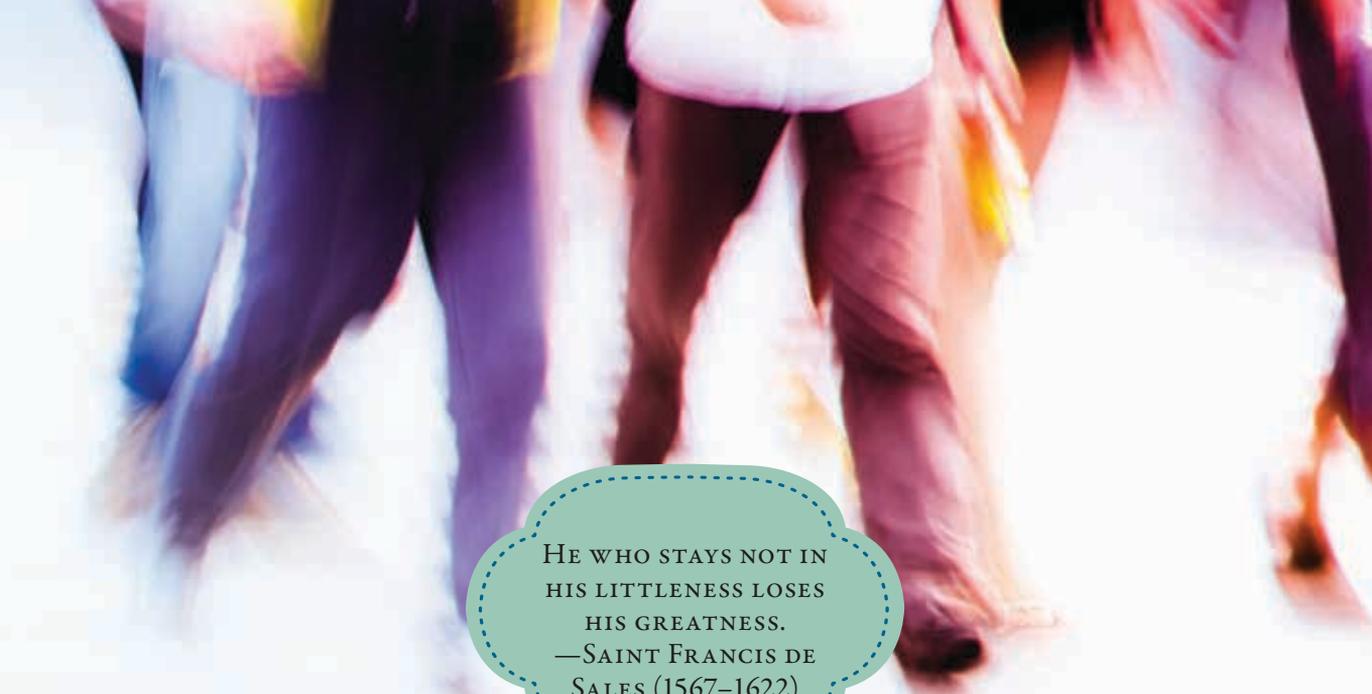
My own heroes are the dreamers, those men and women who tried to make the world a better place than when they found it, whether in small ways or great ones. Some succeeded, some failed, most had mixed results ... but it is the effort that’s heroic, as I see it. Win or lose, I admire those who fight the good fight.
—George R. R. Martin (b. 1948), *American author of the A Song of Fire and Ice series of epic fantasy novels*

True greatness, true leadership, is achieved not by reducing men to one’s service, but by giving oneself in selfless service to them.
—Author unknown

Invisible heroes may never make it into our school textbooks, garner their own Wikipedia entries, or have their own YouTube video that goes viral. But they are all indispensable members of our society. These hidden heroes are also our most essential heroes.—Scott T. Allison⁴

The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way.—Psalm 25:9

The longer I live the more I am convinced that each of us has some hero-like qualities. We all face challenges. We all face hardships. We all encounter, during our lifetime, moments when we can rise above our basest of animal instincts and become angels of a higher calling. It is at that time, when we answer that calling, that we become a hero in the truest sense of the word.
—William D. Holland



HE WHO STAYS NOT IN
HIS LITTLENESS LOSES
HIS GREATNESS.
—SAINT FRANCIS DE
SALES (1567–1622)

And if a lowly singer dries one tear,
Or soothes one humble human heart
in pain,
Be sure his homely verse to God is
dear,
And not one stanza has been sung in
vain.

—Walter Malone (1866–1915),
American lawyer and poet

No one is useless in this world who
lightens the burden of it for anyone
else.—Charles Dickens (1812–1870),
English writer and social critic

By humility and the fear
of the Lord are riches and
honor and life.—Proverbs
22:4

I long to accomplish great and noble
tasks, but it is my chief duty to
accomplish humble tasks as though
they were great and noble. The world

is moved along, not only by the
mighty shoves of its heroes, but also
by the aggregate of the tiny pushes
of each honest worker.—Helen Keller
(1880–1968), *deafblind American
author, political activist, and lecturer*

The world measures greatness by
money, or eloquence, or intellectual
skill, or even by prowess on the
field of battle. But here is the Lord's
standard: "Whosoever shall humble
himself as this little child, the same
is the greatest in the kingdom
of heaven."⁵—John Henry Jowett
(1864–1923), *English pastor and author*

Man's greatest actions are performed in
minor struggles. Life, misfortune, isola-
tion, abandonment, and poverty are
battlefields which have their heroes—
obscure heroes who are at times greater
than illustrious heroes.—Victor Hugo
(1802–1885), *French poet, novelist, and
dramatist of the Romantic Movement*

Be clothed with humility, for
"God resists the proud, but
gives grace to the humble."
—1 Peter 5:5

Do not confuse notoriety and fame
with greatness. Many of the titled in
today's world obtained their fame and
fortune outside their own merit. On
the other hand, I have met great people
in the most obscure roles. Greatness is
a measure of one's spirit, not a result of
one's rank in human affairs. Nobody,
least of all mere human beings, confers
greatness upon another, for it is not a
prize but an achievement. Greatness
can crown the head of a janitor just
as readily as it can come to someone
of high rank.—Sherman G. Finesilver
(1927–2006), *United States federal judge*

Now abide faith, hope, love,
these three; but the great-
est of these is love.
—1 Corinthians 13:13 ■



SALT OF THE EARTH

BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED

“YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH.”—*Matthew 5:13*

As Christians, one of the things we strive for is to be agents of change in the lives of others and ultimately in society. That can mean making waves or going against the flow. Not everything Christians do and value will always be in harmony with the status quo.

Over a decade ago, then-Pope John Paul II was speaking to university students about overcoming the temptation of mediocrity and conformity. He said, “Following

Christ, the crucified King, believers learn that to reign is to serve, seeking the good of others, and they discover that the real meaning of love is expressed in the sincere gift of self.” He stated that when life is lived with this spirit, the Christian becomes the “salt of the earth.”¹

As Christians, we are called to spice things up with the seasoning of faith we bring. In Colossians, Paul said, “Live wisely among those who are not believers and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive, seasoned with salt, so that you will have the right response for everyone.”²

This seems to present a good balance of “making the most of every opportunity” in our witness to those who are unbelievers while ensuring that our speech is both gracious and

attractive, and seasoned with the salt of our faith and Christian example. That is what Paul concludes will enable us to have the right response to everyone, or as Peter said, to “always be ready to give an answer when someone asks you about your hope.”³

PRESERVING THE SALTINESS

Pliny the Elder, the first-century Roman naturalist and historian, wrote in one of his encyclopedias, “Nothing is more useful than salt and sunshine.” Jesus said, “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?” His answer: “Have salt in yourselves.”⁴

It’s up to each of us to carry those qualities of salt within us, so that we can season the world around us with His flavoring. The goal of having an alive, deep, and meaningful relationship with Jesus, of manifesting a

1. Address to UNIV 2002 Congress in Rome, as reported by Zenit news service, March 25, 2002.
2. Colossians 4:5–6 NLT
3. 1 Peter 3:15 CEV
4. Mark 9:50 NIV and NKJV
5. See Matthew 5:13–14.



Salt is a necessity of life and is a mineral that was used since ancient times in many cultures as a seasoning, a preservative, a disinfectant, a component of ceremonial offerings, and as a unit of exchange. The Bible contains numerous references to salt. In various contexts, it is used metaphorically to signify permanence, loyalty, durability, fidelity, usefulness, value, and purification.—*John L. McKenzie (1910–1991), American Catholic theologian*



In the ancient biblical world, salt was a precious commodity. It gave flavor and zest to food; it served as an important preservative; salt also made people thirst for something more. Jesus wanted His disciples to give flavor and zest to the world through His teaching; to preserve the truth as He proclaimed it to the world; to make the world thirst for more. . . . If we do this as His disciples, we, too, will also be “light of the world.” Being the light of the world means, for Christians, spreading everywhere the light that comes from on high. It means fighting darkness due to evil and sin and often caused by ignorance, prejudice, and selfishness. The more we look on the face of Jesus, like an impressionist painting, the more light we see and the more we are transfigured by it. By their deeds the disciples are to influence the world for good.

—*Thomas Rosica (b. 1959), CEO of Canada’s Salt + Light Television network*



As salt seasons food by being lightly scattered upon it, so too Christians season the earth by being scattered throughout the various nations of the earth. By living in accordance with God’s way of life, Christians also preserve the earth by slowing the decay of morals in the society around them.—*Taken from the Wiki Answers website* ■

Christian example and following Jesus’ teachings, of working in unity with others, has always been to be able to be “the salt of the earth,” part of “the light of the world, a city set on a hill” that attracts others to God, so that they too can come to know and love Him, and go on themselves to help others to do the same.⁵

As we strive to live and hold true to our Christian values, we can fulfill His commission to be the spice of life in this world, to give its full flavor and meaning to others, to be preservers of the good, and to share our faith—the true currency of the world—with others.

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

A young boy with brown hair, wearing a yellow soccer jersey and a bright green safety vest, is sitting on a grassy field. He is looking down and to the left. In the background, a red soccer goal net is visible. The scene is outdoors on a sunny day.

The Winner

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

I WAS WATCHING SOME SMALL CHILDREN PLAY SOCCER (FOOTBALL). They were only

five or six years old, but they were playing a real and serious game.

There were two uniformed teams, coaches, and a small crowd of parents watching from the sidelines. The teams seemed quite evenly matched, and as a casual acquaintance of one of the families, I was able to enjoy the game without too many anxieties about who won or lost. I only wished the parents and coaches could have done the same!

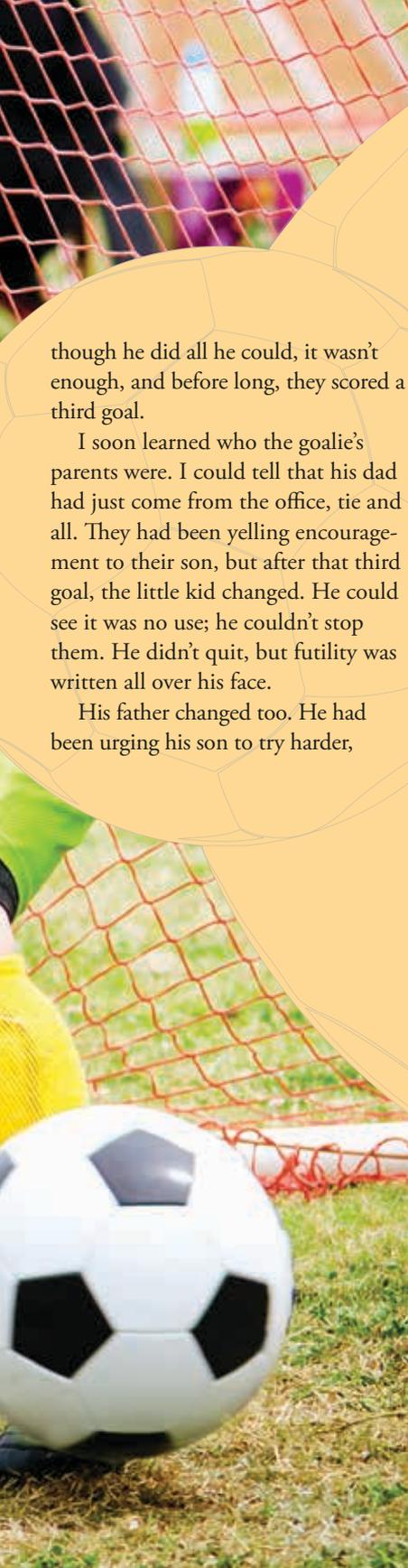
Nobody scored in the first period. The young players were hilarious. They were clumsy and earnest as only children can be. They fell over their own feet, stumbled over the ball, and kicked into the air, but they didn't seem to care.—They were having fun!

In the second period, the Team One coach pulled out what must have been his A-team players and put

in the substitutes, with the exception of his best player, whom he left as goalie. The game took a dramatic turn. I guess winning is important even when you are five years old, because the Team Two coach left his best players in, and the Team One subs were just no match for them.

Team Two swarmed around the little fellow at the goal. He was a great footballer for the age of five, but no match for three or four who were equally as good. Team Two began to score.

The little goalie gave it his all, recklessly throwing his body in front of incoming balls, trying valiantly to stop them. Team Two scored two quick goals. This infuriated the young goalie. He shouted, ran, dove. Even



though he did all he could, it wasn't enough, and before long, they scored a third goal.

I soon learned who the goalie's parents were. I could tell that his dad had just come from the office, tie and all. They had been yelling encouragement to their son, but after that third goal, the little kid changed. He could see it was no use; he couldn't stop them. He didn't quit, but futility was written all over his face.

His father changed too. He had been urging his son to try harder,

yelling advice and encouragement. But then he became anxious. He tried to say that it was okay, and to hang in there.

After the fourth goal, I had an idea what was going to happen. The little boy needed help so badly and there was no help to be had. He retrieved the ball from the net, handed it to the referee, and burst into tears. He just stood there while huge tears rolled down both cheeks. Then he went to his knees.

As the father rose to his feet, his wife clutched his wrist and said, "Don't, Jim. You'll embarrass him."

But the boy's father tore loose and ran onto the field, suit, tie, dress shoes, and all. He charged onto the field and picked up his son and hugged him and kissed him and cried with him. I have never been so proud of any man in my life.

He carried him off the field, and when they got close to the sidelines, I heard him say, "Son, I'm so proud of you. You were great out there. I want everybody to know that you are my son."

"Daddy," the boy sobbed, "I couldn't stop them. I tried and tried, and they kept scoring on me."

"Scotty, it doesn't matter how many times they score on you. I'm proud of you. I want you to go back out there and finish the game. I know you want to quit, but you can't. And son, you're going to get scored on again, but it doesn't matter. Go on, now."

I could tell it made a difference. When you're all alone, you're getting scored on, and you can't stop them, it means a lot to know that it doesn't matter to those who love you.

The little guy ran back on to the field. Team Two scored two more times, but it was okay.

I get scored on every day. I try so hard. I recklessly throw my body in every direction. I fume and rage. I struggle with every ounce of my being. The tears come, and I go to my knees, helpless. And my heavenly Father rushes out on the field, right in front of the crowd—the whole jeering, laughing world—and He picks me up. He hugs me and says, "I am so proud of you! You were great out there. I want everybody to know that you are My child, and I declare you the winner!" ■

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!—*1 John 3:1 NLT*

God is love. He didn't need us. But he wanted us. And that is the most amazing thing.—*Rick Warren (b. 1954), American pastor and author*



Tribute to a Butterfly

BY ANNA PERLINI

ANDJA WAS BORN IN 1962 IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIAN REPUBLIC OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA. When war broke out in the 1990s, Andja's family fled as refugees to Vojnic, a small town in Croatia. Her husband was mentally scarred from the atrocities of ethnic cleansing and had to be permanently hospitalized, and she found herself struggling to raise their three sons alone while struggling with diabetes and psoriasis. She survived by working the land around her hut and through the aid of humanitarian organizations. And that's how we first met in May 2000.

We became friends and continued to visit for years. In spite of all her difficulties, Andja always received us with a smile. Her enthusiasm for life was so contagious that we eventually started bringing others suffering from depression to her home as therapy.

As soon as they'd meet her, they'd feel much better!

In time, Andja decided there must be a way she could help in return, so although we were bringing her aid, she would gather a bag of zucchinis, potatoes, and other vegetables from her garden to "give back to the community."

In 2005, the government gave her family a house and new plot of land; although unfinished, it was a big step up from the shack they'd lived in for years. She was enthusiastic about what seemed like the beginning of a better life, but her disease progressed until she lost her sight in one eye. The next year, she also lost sight in the other.

Andja was taken to a hospital on a number of occasions between 2005 and 2012. Her prospects of survival were slim, but joy and zest for life won the battle, and although she eventually lost both legs, she would still eagerly

join in songs and discussions. As one 17-year-old boy put it, "She has the ability to see her cup half-full, even when it's practically empty!"

A few months ago, Andja passed on quietly in her sleep, "like a butterfly" we were told. It was impressive to see the number of people who gathered for her funeral. After all, she was "only" a simple refugee woman who had lived in that town for a few years, yet obviously she had touched many people's lives.

Anyone who had the privilege of meeting Andja cries upon remembering her, but smiles at the same time, because Andja has now become a legend.

ANNA PERLINI IS A COFOUNDER OF PER UN MONDO MIGLIORE ([HTTP://WWW.PERUNMONDOMIGLIORE.ORG/](http://www.perunmondomigliore.org/)), A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION ACTIVE IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA SINCE 1995. ■

COURAGE UNDER FIRE

QUIET MOMENTS

BY ABI MAY

IT COULD BE SAID THAT THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF HEROISM. First, the everyday heroic acts that are performed by unsung heroes that step in to save the day in ways that we infrequently hear of. Second, the famous heroes we admire—pioneers in medicine, defenders of peace and justice, rescuers of the lost, champions of faith. And then, in a league of His own, is the Superhero of all time: Jesus, who conquered death for Himself and all who believe.¹

Unlike most fictional superheroes, Jesus doesn't keep His powers solely for His own use, but also shares them

with His followers. "He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also."²

This thought brings us full circle to our everyday lives. Where can we find courage under fire? Whether the fire comes in the form of sickness, financial difficulties, relationship breakdown, disability, loss of employment, bereavement, or any of the other myriad challenges on life's pathway, it takes heroism to keep going in these circumstances, keeping faith, continuing our work, helping others despite the turmoil in our own lives.

We may admire famous heroes from history and be inspired by their example. But to find strength for this type of everyday heroism, we need the assistance of our Superhero who promises, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect

in weakness,"³ or as the apostle Paul expressed it, "How very great is his power at work in us who believe."⁴

Dear Jesus,
May Your peace enable me to endure my challenges;
May Your compassion empower me to care for those around me;
May Your joy encourage me;
May Your example inspire me to serve;
May Your kindness energize me to be considerate of others;
May Your determination embolden me to make the most of my life.
Give me Your courage under the fire of difficulty,
And may Your saving grace bring me to peace with God.

ABI MAY IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND EDUCATOR IN GREAT BRITAIN. ■

1. See 1 Corinthians 15:25–26; John 5:25; 11:25–26.
2. John 14:12
3. 2 Corinthians 12:9
4. Ephesians 1:19 GNT



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

My special creation

I remember when I formed you. With great care and special attention I handpicked each talent, each gift, each characteristic, each fiber of your being, until the combination and proportions were exactly right and each was perfectly in sync to accomplish My purpose.

I also remember the moment when I breathed into you the breath of life. Love welled up so intensely inside Me that I could not contain it, for I knew the joy you would bring Me and those whose lives you would touch while on the great journey of life.

My eye has been on you from the very beginning. I have been with you every step of the way. I have watched you, loved you, cared for you. You have never been out of My sight.

I love you from everlasting to everlasting. Listen to My voice in your heart, and I will show you My great, great love for you—a love that is greater than the ocean, that stretches further than the horizon, that the whole universe with all its stars and galaxies cannot contain, love that stretches beyond understanding into infinity and eternity!