

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

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Two lost people find their way

The Peacemaker

Looking for a better way

The Recycling Business

From trash to treasure



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

LET'S MAKE HISTORY

Have you ever wished you could do something that would change the world? But did you ever feel that your obscure little life would leave no mark? You have no idea how wrong you are.

We can all make a difference, every single one of us. That doesn't mean that any of us can stop all wars, find a cure for cancer, and end all famine and poverty. But each of us can play the role God has given us to the best of our ability.

As I was working on this issue of *Activated*, I came across two quotes by outstanding women that serve to illustrate this. The first is sometimes attributed to Gandhi, but it seems to have actually been coined by the high school educator Arleen Lorraine: "Be the change that you want to see happen." The second is by St. Catherine of Siena: "Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire."

There is no such thing as an unimportant, meaningless life. Instead of putting our head in the sand and thinking there is nothing we can do, we can have courage to speak up against things that aren't right, we can take time to practice empathy and compassion, we can create peace around us, starting by creating peace within ourselves, we can be kind to those we come across, as well as care for ourselves. We can create change by taking responsibility for our impact on the world we live in.

Of course, we can't do it alone. But God will work in us and with us to make a difference: "The Lord is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy."¹

1. Psalm 28:7 NLT

For more information on *Activated*, visit our website or write to us.

Website: activated.org

Email: [activated@activated.org](mailto:sales@bigthought.org)

Local contacts:

South Africa:

Tel: (082) 491 2583

Email: sales@bigthought.co.za

India:

Email: activatedindia@activated.org

Nigeria:

Cell: +234 (0) 7036963333

Email: activatednigeria@activated.org

Philippines:

Cell: (0922) 8125326

Email: activatedph@gmail.com

EDITOR Ronan Keane

DESIGN Gentian Suçi

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WE DON'T RUN ALONE



BY CHRIS MIZRANY

WE OFTEN HEAR OUR LIFE OF FAITH COMPARED TO RUNNING A RACE OR BEING ON A JOURNEY. Countless songs, books, and sermons are based on those concepts. As a runner, I find inspiration in the verse “run with endurance the race that is set before us ... looking unto Jesus.”¹ But recently it came alive to me from a whole new perspective.

I heard a story about a young boy who was paralyzed and unable to

move, except for his head. Clearly, it was hopeless for him to try to do anything “sporty.” But he didn’t resign himself. When he heard of a 5 km run being hosted as a fundraiser for a friend who also had become paralyzed through a tragic accident, he had a bold idea. With the assistance of technology that enables him to type messages using his eyes and head, he told his father, “I want to run in that race.”

Instead of pointing out the impossibility of the plan, his father made a cart that his son could lie in and

pulled it the entire 5 km. At the end of the race, his son typed another message: “This is the first time I don’t feel handicapped.” And so they did it again. And again. And again!

To date, this father has competed with his son in over 300 races—including marathons and triathlons. He runs, swims, and cycles, pulling, pushing, and carrying his son every single step of the way. Why? Simply because he loves his son and wants him to be happy. The son didn’t do anything particular to deserve such love. He’s the son, and that’s all that matters.

We’re the sons and daughters of our heavenly Father, which means we don’t have to push on alone when we’re weary. We can fall into His arms, and He will carry us. That’s what “I will never leave you nor forsake you”² means.

No matter the mess we’re in, or the troubles we face, His love towards us never wavers. He is always there, ready to help us reach each goal, and one day, we’ll cross the ultimate finish line together.

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

1. Hebrews 12:1–2

2. Hebrews 13:5

THE SUPERHERO WITHIN

BY MARIA FONTAINE

HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED SOME PARTICULAR PROBLEM OR PAIN THAT SURPRISED YOU BY HOW DEBILITATING IT WAS? Perhaps it was a sore toe or an earache that outwardly seemed small, but it made your day a major struggle. Then along comes someone who says, “I get infections in my ear all the time, and it’s uncomfortable but I don’t let it bother me. You just need to stay positive and keep going.” Well, though we do need to strive to “give thanks in all circumstances,”¹ trying to keep your head above water may be difficult for you at these times.

There you are, feeling as if you’re unable to even think straight. How do you communicate the agony you feel to someone who has never had to face this exact same problem? Are you just being a big baby? Or is it that pain and suffering affect each person in different ways?

1. See 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

2. Proverbs 18:14 KJV

3. See Matthew 27:46 KJV.

4. See 1 Samuel 16:7; John 7:24.

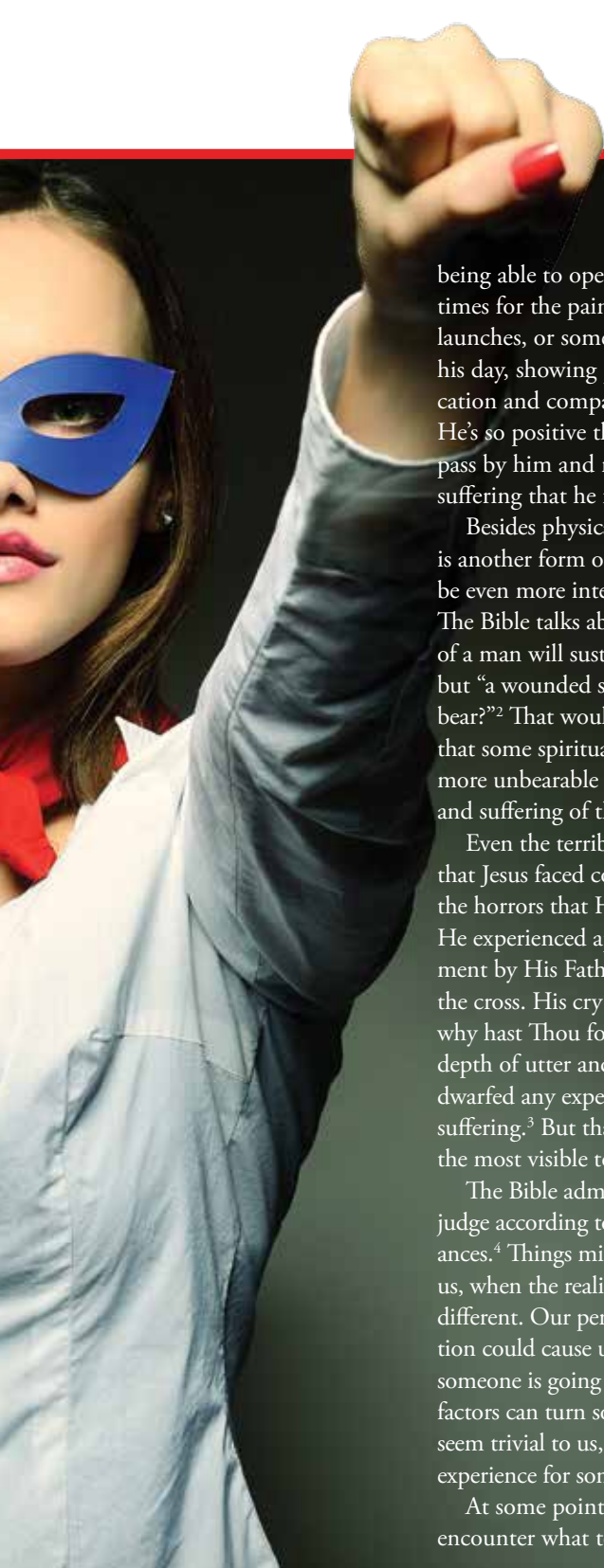
5. See 2 Corinthians 1:4.

We can’t see what is going on inside of others. They may actually be making a superhero-like effort, considering what they’re enduring, but we tend to see things very differently. We see the human being buckling under what to us might look like something trivial. From *our* perspective, what a person appears to be struggling with might not seem like such a big deal, but are we really able to ascertain whether that is true?

It seems obvious that those experiencing famine, war, violence, or torture are facing levels of suffering and loss that are far greater than what most people go through. But many times there are cases of suffering that are severe and debilitating, yet they are borne internally, invisibly. Often, the depths and magnitude of what people are going through aren’t outwardly apparent.

I know someone who I consider a true saint of God who has faced pain and suffering for much of his life on a scale that I’m certain I could never have endured. Yet, in spite of barely





being able to open his eyes sometimes for the pain, he gets up and launches, or sometimes limps, into his day, showing patience and dedication and compassion on others. He's so positive that you could easily pass by him and not even realize the suffering that he faces daily.

Besides physical suffering, there is another form of suffering that can be even more intense, yet less visible. The Bible talks about how the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but "a wounded spirit who can bear?"² That would seem to indicate that some spiritual suffering is even more unbearable than the infirmities and suffering of the body and mind.

Even the terrible *physical* agony that Jesus faced couldn't compare to the horrors that He went through as He experienced apparent abandonment by His Father as He hung on the cross. His cry "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" had a depth of utter and total anguish that dwarfed any experience of physical suffering.³ But that suffering was not the most visible to onlookers.

The Bible admonishes us not to judge according to outward appearances.⁴ Things might look fine to us, when the reality is actually very different. Our perception of the situation could cause us to minimize what someone is going through. So many factors can turn something that might seem trivial to us, into a life-shattering experience for someone else.

At some point we'll all probably encounter what to us may seem to be

someone's overreaction to, or difficulties with, something that we see as minor. We may feel tempted to take a "just get over it" attitude. But I hope we can always remember that we may have no idea what another person is facing and experiencing or how difficult some *seemingly* minor affliction, setback, or inconvenience may be for them.

God sees what we're incapable of seeing. We don't have to determine to what degree someone is suffering or make a call as to whether someone is worthy of His love and compassion poured through us as His representatives here. His commission to us is to follow Him and demonstrate His unconditional love to this world that's so in need of it. So let's avoid judging or sizing things up according to our own understanding when it comes to the challenges and afflictions others face.

Compassion is so essential to helping those we encounter. Showing understanding and mercy can demonstrate God's unconditional love, even when we don't know what to do or say. His compassion through us can comfort others in their tribulation with the comfort that we ourselves have been comforted with.⁵

Let's strive to be the best example of God's love we can be.

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

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

THE UNSELFISH LIFE



UNSELFISHNESS ISN'T JUST ABOUT GIVING MONEY.

Sometimes it's easier to give money than to give of ourselves. To give our time, attention, sympathy, understanding, and prayers to someone else, we have to be the "real deal." We have to reach out, to understand, to feel compassion, and to do something about it. Often it's those sacrifices of time that really count—such as when we give up our day off to participate in a local charity's work or to visit someone who is sick.

It's not just about money. It's about what we give from our hearts, out of love.

There's a great story about a missionary who was teaching in Africa. Before Christmas he had been telling his native students how Christians, as an expression of their

joy, gave each other presents on Christ's birthday.

On Christmas morning one of the natives brought the missionary a seashell of lustrous beauty. When asked where he had discovered such an extraordinary shell, the native said he had walked many miles to a bay, the only spot where such shells could be found.

"I think it was wonderful of you to travel so far to get this lovely gift for me," the teacher exclaimed.

His eyes brightening, the native answered, "Long walk, part of gift."

We each have many opportunities to help others. The Bible says: "Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."¹ Let's look for ways to give to those around us. Let's make it a habit. Let's make giving unselfishly of our time, service, and finances part of our

personal code of ethics, and we'll find we will not lack, as God will give back to us in abundance, and our life of unselfishness will be a blessed life. You'll never regret giving, both in this life and in the life to come.

When your Christian love moves from just being a sermon to being a living example of Jesus' generosity, care, and sympathy, it's like you've just dressed your love in work clothes and set about to build something beautiful. That's the kind of practical everyday love that makes people stand up and take notice, as it's a living example of the unconditional love of Jesus.

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

1. 2 Corinthians 9:7





BY KEVIN SOSA

SOMEONE IS WATCHING

WHILE RUSHING TO AN APPOINTMENT, I passed a scruffy beggar with a baby in her arms. It's a common sight in Caracas, Venezuela, where this took place.

Give her something. I recognized that inner voice as Jesus'.

But she looks like she would spend it on drugs, I protested as I kept walking.

Well then, buy her some food.

Just then I came to a hot dog stand. *Okay, I'll do it for You.*

I hurriedly ordered a hot dog and took it back to her. As I handed it to her, I told her that Jesus loved her and offered to pray for her. She accepted, and we bowed our heads and prayed right there on the street.

Several days later I stopped for a hot dog for myself at the same stand, but the vendor wouldn't let me pay for it. "I saw what you did the other day," he said. "You not only bought a hot dog for that homeless woman, but you also prayed with her. I've been on this spot for 15 years. Thousands of people pass my stand every day, but I had never seen that! You never have to pay to eat here again."

Like that hot dog vendor, God is always watching, and "your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."¹

KEVIN SOSA IS A FULL-TIME MISSIONARY IN SOUTH AFRICA. ■

1. Matthew 6:4

"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." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

—Jesus, *Matthew 22:37–40 NIV*

Show love in everything you do.

—1 *Corinthians 16:14 CEV*

A Christian reveals true humility by showing the gentleness of Christ, by being always ready to help others, by speaking kind words and performing unselfish acts, which elevate and ennoble the most sacred message that has come to our world.

—Ellen G. White (1827–1915)

THE NEW YORK

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

CABBY MIR

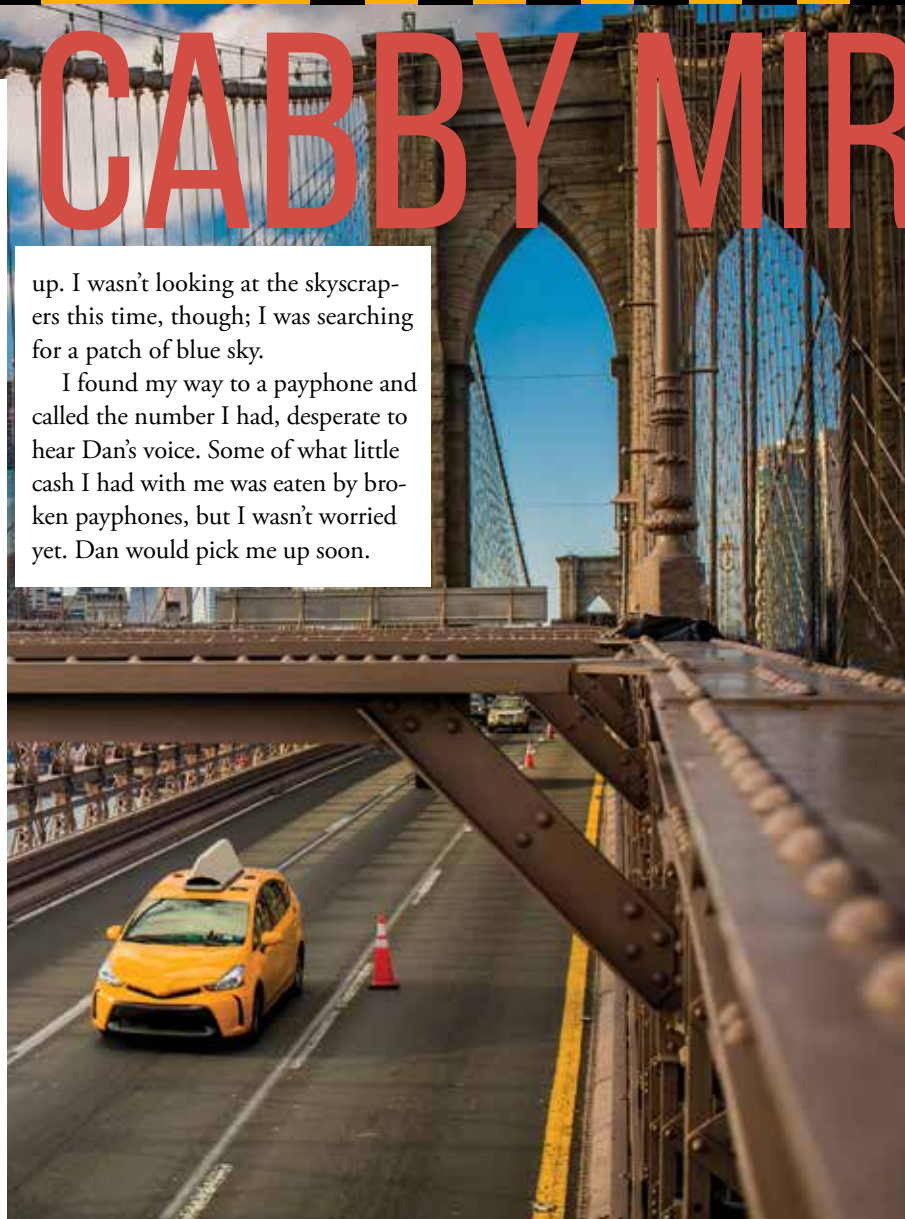
IT HAD BEEN A ROUGH FEW MONTHS IN THE SPRING OF 1972. I desperately wanted a baby, a little one to hold in my arms, to call my own. Twice I had miscarried, and I held these disappointments up before God, shaking them in His face and saying, *See what You did when I trusted You to answer my prayer?* I just couldn't move on.

But this day I *was* moving on, at least physically. My husband Dan and I were moving to New York to work at a mission on the Lower East Side. I needed the change. Dan had gone ahead, while I had made a detour through Boston. During the long bus ride, I curled against the window and wept. As the hours went by, I doubted everything I had believed and encouraged others to believe. What business did I have doing missionary work? How could I tell others to trust in God when my own faith was at an all-time low? My life was spinning out of control.

After what seemed like forever, the bus pulled in to the bus terminal in New York City. I had been to New York a few times and always felt overwhelmed. The city was too big, too busy, too impersonal. I usually walked around like a tourist, looking

up. I wasn't looking at the skyscrapers this time, though; I was searching for a patch of blue sky.

I found my way to a payphone and called the number I had, desperate to hear Dan's voice. Some of what little cash I had with me was eaten by broken payphones, but I wasn't worried yet. Dan would pick me up soon.





RACLE

When I finally found a phone that worked and got through, there was no answer. I bought a cup of coffee and tried again. Still no answer.

I stepped out on the street by a taxi stand, and realized it was getting dark. City lights blurred the tears that once more filled my eyes.

I went back inside and tried again. Still no answer. I realized I hadn't been clear with Dan about my arrival time, and all I had was the address of the mission on the Lower East Side where we would be working, near an area known as Hell's Kitchen.

Fear began to set in as I stepped outside once more and hailed a taxi. When I gave the cabby the address of the mission, he asked gruffly, "Really?" He flicked on his meter and pulled away from the curb.

The analog meter seemed to spin faster than the tires as we inched our way through traffic. I pulled out my wallet and counted the bills again. The amount displayed was rapidly approaching the amount of cash I had with me. I had thought when I

jumped into the taxi that if I didn't have enough money, I could run into the mission when we arrived and get the rest, but now I was having misgivings.

I leaned over to get a better look at the driver in the glow of passing street lights. His face had the hard, deep lines of an ex-con or a gang member. I recalled his gruff tone when he questioned the address I had given him. Then a very large scar caught my attention. It went halfway around his neck. This wasn't a man I could easily relate to or make small talk with.

As I leaned back in the seat, the total on the meter raced past the amount in my purse. *I should have been more patient. I should have waited at the bus station and kept calling.* I flashed back to every creepy headline I'd ever read about cab drivers. *I've made a horrible mistake!*

Then I did something I should have done earlier. I forgot my grievances against God and prayed silently: *God, I'm in a predicament! Please protect me, and show me if there's anything I can do to help You get me safely to my destination.*

The answer came forcefully to my mind: *Tell this man about Me.* Before

I could reason my way out of it, I took a deep breath and began:

"I need to make a confession. This taxi ride is costing more than I expected, and I don't have enough money with me to pay for it. I'm on my way to a mission, where my husband and I will be working. I'm not very familiar with New York, and I didn't realize how long it would take. When we get there, I'll have to run inside and get some more money. My husband and I try to live like Jesus did, preaching the gospel to everyone we meet, and we trust Him to supply our needs day by day."

As I continued, Jesus gave me the words to say, "You know, so many people need to feel Jesus' loving, healing touch. He has the answers to whatever their need is. He can heal every hurt, every heartache. His answers are just a prayer away. Have you ever asked Jesus into your heart?"

There was a long, heavy silence, then a cough, then a sniff. I leaned forward and saw a tear roll down the cabby's cheek.

"My grandma used to take me to church when I was a little kid," he began in a voice filled with emotion. "She would talk to me about Jesus.



I even prayed with her. But then she died, and nobody has talked to me about Jesus since. You're right. There are so many people who need to be healed. I need to be healed. I have led a horrible life. My grandma would be so ashamed of me for all the bad things I have done. I don't think Jesus would forgive me now."

It was my turn to choke back tears. "Jesus hung on the cross between two criminals. One of them asked for His forgiveness, and Jesus said, 'This day you will be with Me in Paradise.' Jesus said that He didn't come to preach to the good people or the people who thought they didn't need His help. He preached to everyone—including the outcasts, the drunks and the prostitutes, the people who knew they needed Him. He will be there for you, too. All you have to do is ask Him to forgive you, and He will. He will forgive *anything*."

My own recent past flashed through my mind—my doubts and failure to keep trusting God when things seemed to go so terribly wrong. "He can even forgive us for doubting Him," I said, my voice breaking. "When we trust Him with our lives and accept that He knows exactly what we need and will answer our prayers in His perfect time, that's when He's able to do His greatest miracles."

"Don't worry about the money," the cabby said. "I'll take you wherever you need to go, and pay for it myself. What you're doing is really important. Hell's Kitchen is full of people who need to hear about heaven. I'll pray more now, and I'll try to be a better person. God sent you to me."

We arrived at the mission, and he got out and helped me with my bags. I hugged him and told him Jesus would never fail him. He waited

until someone came out to greet me, then he smiled and waved as he drove off.

The folks I told about the cabby were shocked. New York cabbies are notoriously some of the hardest people in the world, they said. They never give free rides to anybody.

But I knew that the real wonder of this encounter had not been the free taxi ride. It had been that two people who both needed to be closer to God had felt His loving touch. It took the tears running down the face of this seemingly hardhearted cabby to make me see that. The words God gave me for him were just what *I* needed to hear. God had sent *him* to me.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A RETIRED TEACHER AND WRITER AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, USA. CHECK OUT HER BLOG AT [HTTPS://JOY4DAILYDEVOTIONALS.BLOGSPOT.COM/](https://joy4dailydevotionals.blogspot.com/). ■

BY STEVE HEARTS

TURNING THE PAGE

ONE FACT OF LIFE THAT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT IS THAT IN ORDER FOR US TO FULLY EMBRACE THE

FUTURE, we must leave behind not only the distant past, but even the recent past. This can be especially hard in times of major

transition, such as moving on from a relationship, or changing from one job or house to another.

For me, it's helpful to remember that life is like a book with pages to be turned. It's impossible to read an entire book without turning its pages, which naturally means that every chapter must close in order for a new one to begin.

Since I'm blind, I read printed books with an app that takes a picture of each page as I hold the camera over it and reads it with a digital voice. Just like a sighted reader, whenever I reach the end of a page, I have to turn to the next one in order to continue with the story.

Throughout my life, I've experienced many page-turning changes. Having been active in missions for most of my 36 years, I moved around a lot with my



family. Many of these moves involved leaving behind a ministry I was personally vested in, as well as deep friendships, to start over in a new, unknown territory.

I always felt hesitant at the beginning, and there were always mixed feelings. But each time, I managed to turn the

page and move on with my life's story. In the end, I was always glad to have made new friends and reached new goals, which wouldn't have come about if I'd not been willing to turn the page.

The Bible is full of people who had to do some major page-turning in order to fulfill God's calling for them, from Abraham right on to Jesus.

Do you find yourself at the close of a page or chapter in your life? I hope this encourages you to turn the page in faith and start the new chapter with confidence, knowing that the One who authors the book of your life has been with you up to this point, and will remain with you till the end.¹

STEVE HEARTS HAS BEEN BLIND SINCE BIRTH. HE IS A WRITER, MUSICIAN, AND MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN NORTH AMERICA. ■

1. See Matthew 28:20.

The Recycling Business

BY KOOS STENGER



I WAS AMAZED WHEN I SAW THE COLORFUL, intricate constructions on a YouTube video. Tiny houses, barely bigger than a doghouse, with doors, round little windows, and slanted roofs, so the rainwater would flow off. And all of them on wheels, so they could be moved. They actually looked cozy.

The truth is that they were not doghouses, but shelters for the homeless in Oakland, entirely made of trash. Garbage, after all, can be recycled.

These homes are part of a project set up by an artist, Gregory Kloehn, who wants to supply the homeless with places of their own. Mr. Kloehn searches the streets for illegally dumped garbage, furniture, and other materials and uses them to make homes for the homeless. Some

1. Matthew 5:16

of his contraptions are real works of art. It may not be much, but it means the world for a homeless person, and it brings hope and light. And in this case, garbage is being used to bring that hope.

That night, I pondered the project. This man is willing to put his talents to use in a creative way and to make a difference. God has given all of us special talents, and when we yield them to God, no matter how small they may seem, He uses them. To Him, everybody has value and everybody is important.

I was also reminded of how one man's garbage is another man's treasure. One time, when I was living in Brazil, I put my old leather boots outside the gate. There was a big hole in one of the soles—but those boots were gone in less than a minute.

Recycling garbage can be an interesting subject, especially considering

what Jesus told me next in my ponderings: *People once thought you were garbage, but I recycled you too.* That's the truth. I thought back to when I was lost myself—confused, groping in darkness, with nowhere to go. That time when I had no faith and no light. People had no hope for me. I could almost hear them think, *Poor boy. He's only good for the trash.* But Jesus said, *I can recycle you. I can make something beautiful out of you.* And He did.

What's my point?

Everything we do should be for the recycling business. We need to recycle this old world and bring about God's kingdom on earth. Jesus said: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."¹

KOOS STENGER IS A FREELANCE WRITER IN THE NETHERLANDS. ■



AN ECOLOGICAL GRAIN OF SAND

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA V.

WHEN IT COMES TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE, it's easy to mentally block out the topic entirely and decide that there's nothing we can do about it—or foist the responsibility on someone else, relieving ourselves of the obligation. But God gave us the responsibility to take care of His creation, not just out of duty, but out of love for Him and His creatures. “The Lord God took the man, and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it.”¹ That's the main factor that has motivated me to be more ecologically mindful.

Looking at our world and the damage the environment has sustained can lead to feelings of sadness, discouragement, and even fear. It's also human nature to say: “Send my brother” or “Let the government or big corporations do it. They have

the means and the money. It's their responsibility.”

But there are many ways to make a difference. Consider Olivia Bouler. When she was 11, she started drawing birds and auctioning some of her drawings to help recovery efforts after an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Positive action is potent, and contagious. Neighbors can band together to clean a park, kids can organize a cleaning crew to pick up trash from a beach. All of us can join tree-planting groups. Even small actions like turning off lights, not letting the faucet run, or taking shorter showers can make a difference and a better world for us and our children and future generations.

Actions speak louder than words, and change begins at home. Environmental sermons can make people uncomfortable and defensive, but environmental-friendly action can encourage others to make

positive changes of their own. In Chile, like in many other countries, there are no colored bins for each kind of trash. But that doesn't stop Hans, my German neighbor, from collecting all the cans and bottles from the nearby houses and taking them to a recycling plant himself.

And let's not forget that taking care of the environment is also being kind to the people around us. An encouraging word to the man that tends to the municipal green areas and flowerbeds, a hearty thank-you to the lady that has to graciously handle the difficult personalities in a public hospital line, a kind greeting to the man cleaning the public bathroom of a mall.

Let's be the change we want to see.

GABRIEL GARCÍA V. IS THE EDITOR OF THE SPANISH EDITION OF *ACTIVATED* AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN CHILE. ■

1. Genesis 2:15 KJV



THE PEACEMAKER

BY MARIE ALVERO

WHEN JESUS PREACHED THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT,¹

one of the most quoted orations of all time, He said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

So what is a *peacemaker*? A peacemaker is someone who comes into a situation that is stressful, angry, or disturbed and creates peace. This is hard and requires courage.

In Jesus’ day, the Jewish people were suffering under Roman rule, and peace was superficial and tenuous at best. It took very little to create an uprising or a disturbance. That’s much like today, where it seems each news cycle hails a social

media war fought by angry people with ever-polarizing opinions.

I used to think of “peacemaker” as a negotiator, with the objective being to convince both sides to compromise and come to an agreement. As a parent, I know what this kind of “peace” looks like. It’s a situation where one is only giving to get, and good will isn’t part of the equation. It’s the kind of peace that’s held together by rules and enforcers, and disintegrates as soon as it appears one side has failed to comply.

As peacemakers, our most important job isn’t to change someone’s mind. Jesus didn’t say “Blessed are the mind-changers or argument-winners.” Gregory Boyle, a Catholic priest who has dedicated his life to the gang community in Los

You can be a peacemaker by inviting the Prince of Peace into your heart today:

Dear Jesus, thank You for coming to earth to show me who God is and for dying to forgive me for my sins and to give me eternal life. Please come into my life and give me Your peace, love, and joy, now and in the world to come. Amen.

Angeles, said something that I think is quite fitting: “Moral outrage is the opposite of God; it only divides and separates what God wants for us, which is to be united in kinship. Moral outrage doesn’t lead us to solutions—it keeps us from them. It keeps us from moving forward toward a fuller, more compassionate response to members of our community who belong to us, no matter what they’ve done.”²

Spoken like a true peacemaker, one who has stepped out of the boundaries of merely keeping peace and into the hard work of crafting peace, and has inspired me to see, within my own world, opportunities to create peace by loving others into good will.

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. ■

1. See Matthew 5–7.

2. Gregory Boyle, *Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship*

THE MAN IN THE GRAY SUIT

BY LI LIAN



JOHN SIGHED AS HE PUSHED HIS CART FORWARD IN THE QUEUE AND GLANCED AT HIS PHONE'S CLOCK FOR THE THIRD TIME. *40 minutes already! How long can this take? A technical issue had developed in several of the supermarket's tills, and the store's customers were directed to queue in front of the only one that still worked. And I only have a few items, he thought, I don't know if I can still make it to the appointment in time. The afternoon traffic will get worse—*

His thoughts were interrupted by a commotion behind him, and he instinctively moved to the side as a burly, frazzled woman clutching an overloaded armful of groceries barged past. Complaining loudly about how long she'd already waited, she barreled her way toward the front of the line. No one attempted to stop her.

But as she nearly reached the cash register, a tall man in a gray suit

held out his arm, blocking her path. The woman stopped, and by now, everyone in line was watching to see what would happen.

"Madam," the man began calmly, "all of us here are tired of waiting. Some of us have appointments to meet, some of us have children waiting to be picked up from school, and some of us even have flights to catch." He paused. "There's nothing any of us can do at this point. All we can do is wait patiently. Please return to your place in the queue."

The woman looked around at the row of tired-looking customers silently awaiting their turn, then she bit her lip, turned, and slowly made her way back to her former position. Everyone breathed a silent sigh of relief that the situation was resolved.

The queue continued to inch forward. When it was the man's turn, however, he turned around and

called the woman forward to take his place.

The woman nearly dropped her items. Customers shifted out of the way to let her pass. She stumbled her way to the front of the line, profusely apologizing and thanking the gentleman, who remained silent. She paid for her items and left, and the queue flowed smoothly forward from then on.

As John reflected on the situation that had just unfolded, he was reminded of a quote he'd read that morning in his devotional: "Treat everyone with politeness, even those who are rude to you—not because they're nice, but because you are." He had just seen a practical example of it.

LI LIAN IS A COMPTIA CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL AND WORKS AS AN OFFICE AND SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR FOR A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION IN AFRICA. ■

THE MOUNTAINS AND THE VALLEYS

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

You have encountered both high mountains and deep valleys throughout your life of faith. You have at times found yourself in what seemed like a deep pit and have had to climb out and start over. At times you have wondered why you have to face the low points and the times when you fail or fall. The falls can be painful, and it requires effort to crawl out of the low places and to once again continue on your journey.

When all is dark and you cannot see, when all around you seems to be defeat, or when there are problems that you are facing that you do not see the answers to, seek Me and trust Me for solutions. I promise you this: If you call out to Me, I will answer, and I will never leave or forsake you. I am with

you in the low points and in the high points of your life journey! There is no time or part of your life that I will not be with you.

So do not look at setbacks, tests, or difficulties as defeats; look at them as stepping stones to growth and progress. If you didn't have some of these challenges and trials, you would be tempted to become complacent, and to not strive to move forward. You wouldn't work so hard to solve the problems and desperately seek Me for the solutions.

Don't be fearful or worried, but rather be challenged, and know beyond the shadow of a doubt that I am with you, and that as you seek Me, I will help you to move forward into a cycle of progress and victory.