

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 22 • Issue 7



TREASURE

Here or there?

Make Me A Cake

How giving saved
three lives

The Cheerful Giver

Win-win situation



activated

VOL 22, ISSUE 7

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

A DIFFERENT KIND OF WEALTH

The very first person to reach the status of billionaire was business magnate John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937). He first became a millionaire when he was only 23, and he was a billionaire by the time he was 50. In fact, with a net worth estimated at \$418 billion in today's dollars, he is widely considered the wealthiest American of all time, and the richest person in modern history.

But at the age of 53, he became ill. His entire body became racked with pain and he lost all the hair on his face, head, and body. He could literally buy anything he wanted, but he was in such agony that he could only digest milk and crackers. An associate wrote, "He could not sleep, would not smile, and nothing in life meant anything to him." His physicians predicted he would die within a year.

One night, he lay awake thinking about his life and accomplishments and pondering the fact that he would not be able to take any of his successes with him into the next world. He had always donated a portion of his income to good causes, but he now decided to focus the time he had left on giving away the bulk of his wealth to hospitals, schools, and mission work. In the medical field, this work eventually led to a vaccine for cerebrospinal meningitis, the development of penicillin, and cures for strains of malaria, tuberculosis, and diphtheria.

But perhaps the most amazing part of Rockefeller's story is that as he gave back, his health was astonishingly altered. While it had looked as if he would die at 53, he actually lived to be 97. He was a man who knew how to set goals and reach them, but it was when he committed his life to kindness and generosity that he found happiness in his true calling.

While you and I may not have billions or millions to donate to causes or to share with those in need, we can learn from Rockefeller's lessons and find peace and joy in doing our part to be generous with our resources and time to make a difference.

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DON'T WAIT

BY SALLY GARCÍA

I WISH YOU COULD MEET MY FRIEND VANESSA! She's the perfect example of the gospel bound in tennis shoes. When she began attending our Bible study, she was a single mom to three teenagers and, believe me, she'd had her share of "makings and breakings." Maybe that's why she had that special *something*, a contagious happiness, sparkly eyes, and a quick laugh—especially about jokes on herself.

Many of us have the idea that we will be more generous once we get "set up" and stable economically. We wait until we have *extra*, but when does that happen? Sometimes, I like to dream about what noble causes I would support if I won the lottery. "Dream" is all it will ever be—because I never even buy lottery tickets!

1. Luke 6:38 TLB

So I watch and learn from Vanessa. She isn't waiting for "someday"—she has a friendly type of generosity that presses a folded bill into someone's hand with a little cheery pat. She has an open heart for the needs of others and tries to see where she can be a blessing—whether it's money, food, time, a helping hand, or encouragement. She often appears with a special gift or treat that's her way of saying, "I value you. I notice the things you like. Here, enjoy."

A few years ago, Vanessa began dreaming of moving to a place where her children would have more opportunities to study and get established. I remember her first tiny apartment furnished with donated furniture, and although she was working toward her personal family's goals, she was still generously helping others at every opportunity. At that moment, this "dream" of hers seemed fantastically

out of reach, yet one by one, each of her children has been able to study and get a good start in their adult lives.

When I was wondering about Vanessa and hunting for a logical explanation of how someone could reach their own personal and financial goals and at the same time always be so ready to lend a supportive hand to others, I came upon a biblical formula: "If you give, you will get! Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use to give—large or small—will be used to measure what is given back to you."¹

SALLY GARCÍA IS AN EDUCATOR, MISSIONARY, AND MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN CHILE. ■



BY PETER AMSTERDAM

TREASURE

IN THE SECOND HALF OF MATTHEW CHAPTER 6, Jesus focuses on our relationship to material things. He begins by teaching the right priorities and attitudes about material possessions:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.¹

In Palestine in Jesus' time, people generally kept their valuables (goods or hard currency) in a storage place or a strongbox in their home,² or buried either beneath their floor or elsewhere.³ The wealthy also had fine clothing, which was a form of wealth. But precious metals could corrode or

be stolen, moths could damage fine garments, and grain stored in barns could be eaten by rodents, the point being that earthly possessions are temporary and fleeting; they don't last or follow us into the life beyond.

This point was also made in the Old Testament:

Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.⁴ Riches do not last forever.⁵

It's important to understand what Jesus is censuring when He tells us

1. Matthew 6:19–21

2. See Matthew 13:52.

3. See Matthew 13:44.

4. Proverbs 23:4–5 ESV

5. Proverbs 27:24 ESV

6. See Proverbs 6:6–8.

7. See 1 Timothy 5:8.

8. See Ecclesiastes 3:13; 1 Timothy 4:4.

9. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 155.

10. 1 Timothy 6:10

11. Colossians 3:1–2 ESV

12. 1 Timothy 6:17–19 ESV

13. Matthew 6:24 ESV



(do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth); extravagant and luxurious living; the hardheartedness which does not feel the colossal need of the world's under-privileged people; the foolish fantasy that a person's life consists in the abundance of his possessions; and the materialism which tethers our hearts to the earth. ... In a word, to "lay up treasures on earth" does not mean being provident (making sensible provision for the future), but being covetous (like misers who hoard and materialists who always want more). This is the real snare of which Jesus warns here.⁹

Jesus is speaking against the *love* of possessions and making the accumulation of them your focus or the source of your joy. Money isn't evil, but "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."¹⁰

There are many things that are perfectly fine to pursue, but if pursued for the wrong reason, are out of alignment with Jesus' teachings. If they draw us away from the values of the kingdom of God, then they are the wrong treasures. That's why it's important that our treasure is heavenly and that we diligently align our hearts and minds with God's values. As George Müller once said, "Laying up treasures in heaven will draw the heart heavenward."

The apostle Paul wrote along similar lines:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right

hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.¹¹ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.¹²

Later, Jesus moved on to speak about not serving two masters: **No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.**¹³

The Greek word translated as money is *mamōnas*, which is variously translated as *mammon*, *money*, or *wealth*. Jesus is saying that our love, loyalty, and devotion needs to be toward God above our material things. We are to put our trust in God; not in our finances, possessions, or anything material. There's nothing wrong with money itself, but it's wrong to put ourselves under its power and to serve it.

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

not to lay up treasure on earth. Let's start by looking at what He's *not* disapproving of. He isn't speaking against having possessions. Scripture praises the ants for setting aside food for the winter,⁶ and chastises those who don't provide for their family.⁷ We're also told to enjoy the things God has created.⁸ So having possessions, making provision for the future, and enjoying the gifts God has given us are not what Jesus is speaking against.

So what is Jesus taking aim at here? John Stott expresses it this way:

What Jesus forbids His followers is the selfish accumulation of goods



BY AMY JOY

Jesus' type of joy

ON A VERY COLD AND GLOOMY MORNING, I woke up to find that I had overslept. With an angry groan, I rolled out of bed and began to groggily get dressed. Then I remembered! We had a Women's Day project early this morning that I was supposed to go to! Our mission had worked out a few different celebrations of women in South Africa, and today we were supposed to go to a center for mothers in crisis and have a morning tea with them, bringing them all sorts of little goodies, including a carrot cake, charming little Swiss rolls, and a gift bag with an assortment of grooming and personal beauty items.

My fingers moved with frozen slowness as I fumbled with my hair, too cold to think about doing any fancy hair-dos. As I pulled it up, I

looked around for a hair elastic but couldn't find one. Glowering at my reflection, I made do with the only stretchy thing I could get my hand on, an oversized, funny-colored hair band.

Grinding my teeth in general frustration at how the day was going, I walked into the mission's main area and found much to my dismay that things were in hurried confusion there too. Michaela had to heat up some of the little pies we were going to serve, and the oven was not heating up fast enough. Stefanie was piling things into the car, and both had been waiting for me, only serving to remind me of my late and exasperating morning even more.

We finally made it into the car and began to drive off. We were all

in a stressed mood and we stayed in annoyed silence for most of the drive, with the exception of one or two snappish remarks from me. I began wondering if I really needed to go, since I figured Stefanie and Michaela could have handled it themselves.

As we walked in and began to set up the table, the women came in and sat down. One was wearing only a T-shirt and had a small thin blanket pulled over her legs and shoulders. *She must be colder than me*, I realized.

Michaela began by asking questions and tried to break the ice and draw them out of their shells. I made a joke, and they all laughed. My partners looked at me in relief and surprise, as I had been the grumpy one on the way there.

"Happiness is like jam; if you spread a lot of it around, you can't help getting some on your fingers."

As we talked, I forgot more about how freezing it was in that room or how tired I was. I liked seeing that what I was doing was bringing joy. One of the quiet girls began to talk about football and the recent news of a certain player's transfer. Because I have a very football-clued-in brother, I knew what she was talking about, and she was very happy to discuss it with someone else, as the other ladies at the center weren't that interested in football.

By the time we left, we were all smiling and in an all-around cheerful mood. So, what changed? It was the exact same drive as we had taken there, we were just as cold (if not colder), and now the sun was even in our eyes. But we were happy. It was a bubbly, can't-help-feeling-this-way sort of vibe. We had gone

somewhere, made people feel loved and happy, and we came back the more blessed ones.

There's a saying that says "Happiness is like jam; if you spread a lot of it around, you can't help getting some on your fingers." I think that's what happened that day. We went somewhere, overcame how we were feeling, and decided that spreading some love and joy to those less fortunate than us was what Jesus wanted us to do, so we did it. And honestly, it seems we were the ones who benefited the most.

Jesus' type of joy is not the kind that you spread when you feel like it, because that's what you *want* to do at that moment. It's what you do when you see that someone is in need, even when it's not what you want to do or what you feel comfortable with. His

joy is contagious, and giving it feels almost the same as receiving it.

The beauty of spreading Jesus' type of joy is that we can spread it everywhere to anyone; in fact, that's what we're *supposed* to do. There's a line in a song that says, "If you give love, you will receive love, and everyone will have enough." That's the way it is with joy, too. As we pour out, God pours in, and there is no way that we can outpour Him.

So let's give a little of Jesus' type of joy today and watch it change our world.

AMY JOY MIZRANY WAS BORN AND LIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA. SHE IS A FULL-TIME MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, AND IN HER SPARE TIME, SHE PLAYS THE VIOLIN. ■



BY IRIS RICHARD

WILLIE AND THE FIVE-MINUTE FAVOR

WE WERE JUST FINISHING UP THE DISTRIBUTION OF 50 TEN-KILO CARE PACKAGES TO POOR PEOPLE—most of them widowed or disabled—in a hall at the edge of one of the largest slums in East Africa.

Happy to have completed the project, I turned to leave when my colleague Sally held up the last package, saying, “Before we close, let’s quickly deliver this one to Willie up the hill. He isn’t able to walk down here.”

I was tired and sweaty, and my back ached. “Up the hill” sounded easy, but after the rain, the path into the slum was muddy and we had to climb over rocks and garbage to reach his hut.

I was about to postpone this task for another time when I remembered my new resolution of “five-minute favors,” which was inspired by something I read online:

Want to make the world a better place? ... Enter the five-minute favor concept that is no more complicated than its name alludes: take five minutes out of your day to do something

1. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/five-minute-favor-adam-rifkin_n_3805090
2. See <https://www.thecut.com/2015/08/just-take-5-minutes-to-do-someone-a-favor.html>.
3. Luke 6:38 ESV



that’ll benefit another person. ... It doesn’t cost you much, but it can make a big difference in somebody’s life.¹

Adam Grant, of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, is another proponent of five-minute favors. He practices a refreshingly nice approach to life and success, one that you might not typically associate with a business-school professor. His work focuses on how being a “giver”—that is, offering help to

Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you.—*Mother Teresa (1910–1997)*

The way you treat people who are in no position to help you, further you, or benefit you, reveals the true state of your heart.—*Mandy Hale*

Majority of folks out there are trying to make a difference. Don't just make a difference; become the difference.—*Ogwo David Emenike*

The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)*

No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.—*Charles Dickens (1812–1870)*

your colleagues—will ultimately bring you more success and respect than being a “taker.” He even wrote an entire book on the subject. In his research on high-performing salespeople, for example, he’s found that they tend to score “unusually high ... on the desire to benefit others.”

Generosity in the workplace is a very nice idea, but one hang-up many people have about this philosophy is—just who has the time for that? Grant makes the point that not every act of giving must be especially time-consuming.²

Giving it some thought, I figured that besides spreading happiness, being generous also comes with the benefit of improving the way we feel about ourselves and life in general. Some even say that it has ties to longevity. After all, in giving rests the well-known truth: “Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”³

Back to Willie. Well, we did climb that hill, and upon entering his tiny hut, I knew that the effort had been worthwhile. There he was, sitting on a rickety bed, the only piece of furniture he had left after his belongings had been washed away by a recent flash flood, when the dirty river that leads through the slum burst its banks. He was rescued and brought up the hill to a tiny room.

We learned that Willie had been a caddy at a local golf club, and while walking to work he had been hit by a car. The accident cost him his leg. The driver fled, but when caught later, it turned out that he wasn’t insured, nor could he compensate Willie for the accident.

Due to his disability, Willie lost his job. He hasn’t been able to pay the rent and fears eviction. He dreams of starting a small roadside business in front of his hut, selling cleaning supplies to folks from his community or passersby, but he lacks funds for the initial investment.

Willie received our care package with a big smile. “God sent you!” he said, and a tear ran down his cheek.

This favor took us a bit more than five minutes, but it made a huge difference in this man’s life, as it not only met an immediate need, it also opened up an opportunity for Willie. As a result of this visit, we were able to contact other people who were interested in helping him. So far, three months of rent have been raised, and monthly food packages are being delivered to his doorstep.

“I found new hope and purpose because of you,” Willie said, when donated items for his little roadside business were delivered by well-wishers!

One can never tell what great things a five-minute favor can set in motion in the course of a normal day, in the workplace, or just as we go along our way.

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

THE CHEERFUL GIVER

BY MARA HODLER

IT WAS A TYPICAL MORNING IN OUR HOME. We were all rushing to get ready for the day—kids getting ready for school, breakfast to be made, spaces to be tidied, and me trying to get dinner in the crock pot, makeup on, and so on. My youngest was trying to get herself a glass of milk and not quite mastering it, so I asked her older sister to help her. For some reason helping did not come easy for her that morning. She rolled her eyes, grabbed the cup, hastily poured the milk, and harshly put it down. This set off a grouchy reaction from the younger sister, which

1. 2 Corinthians 9:7 ESV
2. Matthew 25:40 NIV
3. <http://www.just1thing.com/>
4. Revelation 3:20



“

Some believe it is only great power that can hold evil in check. But that is not what I have found. I've found it is the small things, everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keeps the darkness at bay. Simple acts of kindness and love.—Gandalf, in *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (Warner Bros., 2012)

In coming to earth as a human being and living and dying for us, Jesus made it possible for us to receive the greatest treasure of all: eternal

life. He freely offers this treasure to all who will invite Him into their life. He says, “Behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in.”⁴ You can receive Him right now by praying the following:

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for the wrong things I've done, come into my heart, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Teach me more about Your love, and fill me with Your joy and Holy Spirit. Amen.

progressed into an argument between the two of them. Not cool.

And so I was tempted to lose *my* cool ... again. Instead, I decided to turn this into a learning moment. “Honey,” I said. “Do you know that there’s a difference between giving and giving cheerfully? Or serving and serving cheerfully?” It turned out the idea was kind of novel to her.

This brings to mind a story I once heard about a wealthy—but stingy—man. He didn’t like to hear about any of the monetary needs in the village, and whenever he gave, it was entirely out of duty. One Sunday morning he went to church, and when the offering plate was passed around, he reached into his coin purse, fished around for the smallest coin he could feel, and then tossed the coin in the plate. But, as he watched it fall from his fingers, he was horrified to see that it was actually a gold coin.

He reached his hand to grab that coin back, but the usher put his hand over the plate and said, “Once in, forever in!”

The rich man comforted himself out loud: “At least I’ll get credit for it in heaven.”

“Oh no, you won’t,” the quick-witted usher replied. “You’ll only get credit for what you *intended* to give!”

The Bible says that “God loves a cheerful giver.”¹ I think He values us helping one another with love and goodwill, because that’s how *He* treats us. But why would we actually be *happy* to give something or serve someone? Isn’t it kind of hard to give, even just to pour a cup of milk? What would make you do that cheerfully?

Jesus explained it when He said, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”² In serving others, we are being channels for the love that God cannot give in person, and it’s as if we’re doing such good deeds to Jesus Himself. It’s not always easy to remember that when I’m going through my day. Sometimes I don’t even *want* to remember it!

I don’t like to be interrupted when I’m busy. I guess my daughter didn’t like to be interrupted to pour milk for her little sister either. But she did it anyway, so why not do it cheerfully? That way, you not only bless others, but you also bless yourself.

As you and I practice responding cheerfully to the needs of others, we might begin to notice a change in ourselves. It might not bother us as much when we have to stop what we’re doing to help someone else. We might even like this cheerier, more generous version of ourselves. I have to say that when I’m a cheerful giver, my whole world opens up. My kids respond better to me and to each other. My friends are happier to visit us. My husband is more fun to be around. It’s all better because of cheerfulness.

MARA HODLER IS A FREELANCE WRITER. THIS ARTICLE WAS ADAPTED FROM A PODCAST ON JUST 1 THING³, A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. ■

MAKE ME A CAKE



OUR STORY TAKES PLACE IN ISRAEL, around 850 BC.¹ It was a sad and difficult time for a nation that was suffering under the worst king it had ever had. Ahab had adopted his wife Jezebel's pagan god, Baal, and under their rule, the prophets of the true God were systematically executed.

God sent His prophet Elijah to King Ahab with an ominous message: "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

After delivering this warning, Elijah fled into the wilderness. God directed him to an isolated canyon, where there was a small stream for him to drink from and commanded

ravens to bring pieces of bread and meat to him every day.

And just as Elijah had prophesied, not a drop of rain fell. As the sweltering months slowly passed, the scorching sun took its toll on the parched earth of Israel. Crops failed, water supplies dried up, and severe famine set in. Eventually Elijah's own water source, the Brook Cherith, also dried up completely. But God was faithful, and on the very day that the brook ran dry, He told Elijah, "Arise, go to Zarephath, and dwell there. I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."

Zarephath was over 100 miles north of the Brook Cherith, and Elijah had to make this dangerous journey by foot. After days of trudging through desert wastes, over rocky hillsides and steep mountain trails, he

finally arrived at Zarephath, a coastal city of what is now Lebanon. Weary, hot, and caked in dust, he spotted a woman gathering sticks near the city gate. "Water!" he cried out to her. "Please bring me a little water!"

Taking pity on the weary stranger, the woman rose to bring him some water when he called out to her again, "And please bring me something to eat also!"

Turning to him, she exclaimed, "As the Lord lives, I don't even have a piece of bread, but only a handful of flour in a jar and a few drops of oil in a jug! I'm out here gathering a few twigs to take home and make a final meal for myself and my son, that we may eat and then die."

Elijah realized that this woman was the widow that God had promised would care for him, and he

1. A retelling of 1 Kings 17



boldly told her, “Do not fear. Go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son.” He then prophesied, “For thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.’”

How puzzled this woman must have been at this extraordinary proclamation! She must have thought, *I told him how poor I am and how I'm gathering firewood to cook a final tiny meal for my son and myself, and that afterwards we expect to starve to death—yet he's asking me to bake a piece of bread for him first!*

But because Elijah spoke to her in the name of the Lord, she knew that he was a man of God, and she

believed him. She hurried home and scraped together the last tiny handful of flour from the bottom of the clay jar that it was kept in. Then she took her oil jug, tipped it, and drained out the last few drops of oil. When the bread was ready, she brought it to Elijah.

Picture this widow tidying things up, and as she goes to put the empty oil jug in its place, she notices that it's much heavier than it was a moment ago. Barely tipping it, she can hardly believe her eyes when fresh oil flows out. It's full!

Setting the jug down, she rushes over to the bin where she keeps her flour and gasps aloud in astonishment when she lifts its lid. Instead of the empty, dusty jar she knows it was just a few minutes earlier, it is now filled to the brim with fresh flour. A

miracle has taken place! Her heart overflows with thankfulness to God for such a wonderful manifestation of His blessing. And just as Elijah had prophesied, the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry for the duration of the drought and famine. She had given what she could, and God repaid her beyond her wildest expectations! This is the way God works: He will *never* let you outgive Him! He will always give you much more back than you give to Him. The more you give, the more He will give you back. Most people think, *When I've got more than I need, when I'm rich, then maybe I'll start giving to others and helping the poor and supporting God's work.* But God says, “Start giving what you've got *now*, then trust Me to give you more.” ■

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

FILLING A NEED



TED AND DOROTHY WERE A YOUNG COUPLE WHO BOUGHT WALL DRUG, a drugstore in a small town in the western United States, in 1931. In those days, a drugstore was like a convenience store and sold a wide range of beverages and products, so there was a lot of potential. Unfortunately, the town had only 326 people, all of them poor. Business was bad, and they barely made enough to keep afloat. But they believed that they had a calling: they were making friendships, providing medical care, and feeling that they were becoming a part of community life.

They decided that they would give it five years, and if the store didn't succeed by then, they would try something else. Finally, one afternoon toward the end of the five-year timeframe they had set, Dorothy was trying to get her daughter to take a nap, which was nearly impossible

with all the noisy traffic passing by. That was the moment she had the idea: *What do those travelers need? They must be hot and thirsty, so why don't we put up some signs and offer them free ice water?*

They followed through with her idea, and to their surprise, it worked! People came for the ice water, but they also bought what they needed while stopping by. Ted commented, "Since then, we've never been lonely for customers. The next summer we had to hire eight girls to help us, and a few years later, up to 20,000 customers would visit on a hot summer day."

From its humble origins, the business has grown into a tourist attraction, with a hotel, traveler's chapel, art gallery, live performances, an 80-foot dinosaur, and a whole lot more. In recent years, Wall Drug took in more than \$10 million and drew about two million visitors to a

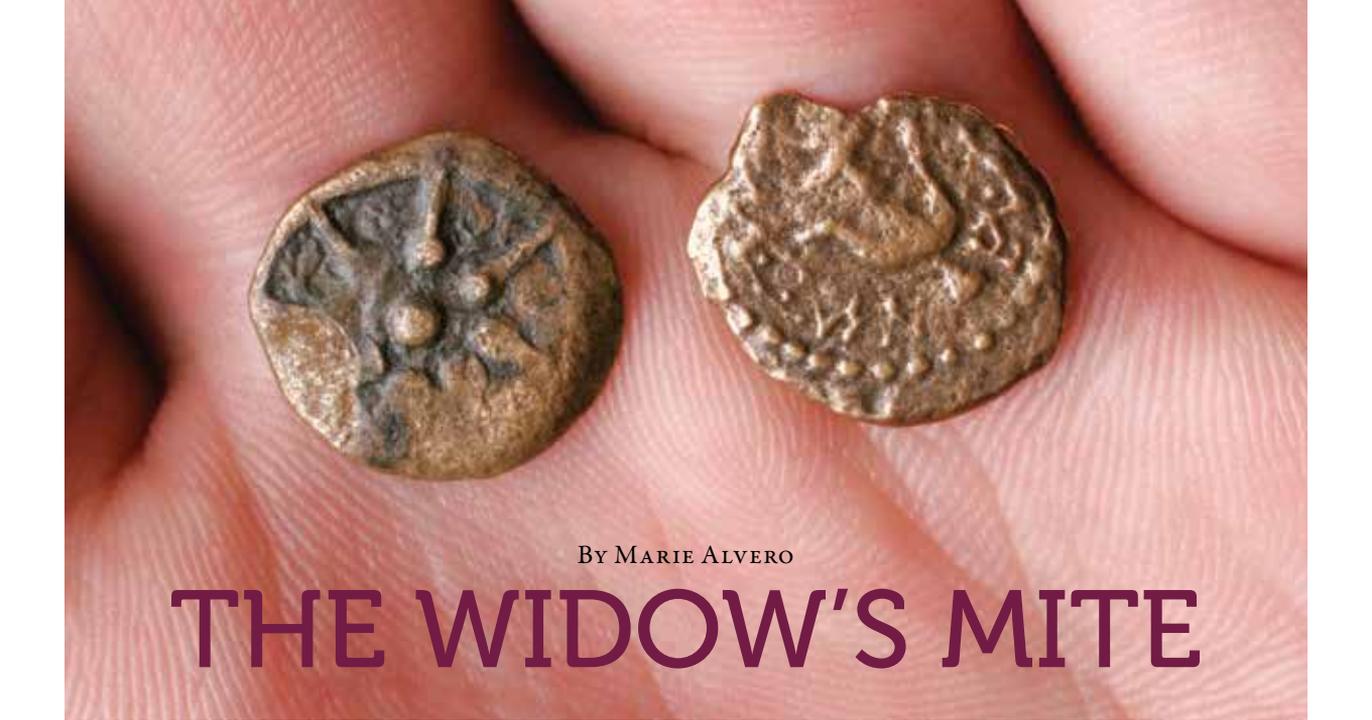
remote town whose population has never exceeded 800 people.

The state governor commented the following about Ted's success: "He's a guy that figured out that free ice water could turn you into a phenomenal success in the middle of a semi-arid desert way out in the middle of someplace."

Their son has taken over the business, and over the years, the store has faced many challenges, but they have met each one with the same spirit of creativity and hospitality that made them a success in the first place.

And yes, they still give free ice water, because people still get thirsty.

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A SCRIPTWRITER AND MIME ARTIST WHO SPENT 47 YEARS DOING MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN 10 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. HE AND HIS WIFE PAULINE CURRENTLY LIVE IN GERMANY. ■

A close-up photograph of two ancient, worn coins held between the fingers of a hand. The coins are dark and textured, with some embossed designs visible. The background is a soft-focus view of the hand's skin.

BY MARIE ALVERO

THE WIDOW'S MITE

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WERE IN THE TEMPLE OBSERVING PEOPLE GIVING THEIR OFFERINGS. A wealthy man approached the coffer, drawing as much attention as he could to the fact that he was giving a hefty sum. Following him was a widow. As quickly as she could she dropped in two mites, the smallest denomination of coin she could have given. The disciples muttered amongst themselves about how pitiful her offering was, but to their astonishment, Jesus told them she had given more than anyone else, for she had given all that she had.¹

Putting myself in the widow's shoes, I don't think she felt all that proud of her offering. She knew what one could or couldn't buy with a couple of mites, but she didn't tell herself it was "too little" to make a difference. The Bible doesn't tell us anything else about this widow, but my guess is that if she ever had

more money, she would be generous with it.

That's the thing with living a generous life—you can *always* ask "What can I give or share? What do I have that someone around me needs?"

When I look around, I find the needs overwhelming. There are so many good people and organizations and causes that are in urgent need of help and money to carry out their missions. How do I know who is worthy and honest and effective and who isn't? Honestly, sometimes it's enough to make me want to ignore all the pleas and not give to anyone.

Instead of making excuses for myself, I find it helpful to have a plan in place to ensure we are giving on a regular basis. Here's what we do:

- **Automation:** Every month, we have a few places we give to without having to think about it.
- **Giving time:** This can be volunteering for a project, school,

or church, but can also look like hosting a dinner, making a coffee date with a friend, helping someone file their taxes or fill their prescriptions, or anything that keeps you reaching out to others.

- **Spontaneous opportunities:** If you're accustomed to giving on a regular basis, you'll be able to spot opportunities as they present themselves. Sometimes it's good to stretch yourself, even when it's a little inconvenient or impractical, like it was for the widow.

Whether you're giving of your abundance or of your scarcity, you can nearly always give *something*. It will do good for yourself, and it will do good for others.

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1. See Luke 21:1–4.

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

GIVING TO OTHERS



Embrace new opportunities to give. Try to find something to give every day—whether a smile, a compliment, your time, a listening ear, a good meal, an item you don't need, or a kind word. There is always something you can share or give to others.

Never be content with what you gave from your heart yesterday. Imagine each day as a fresh new opportunity to give as much as you can.

Even simple acts of kindness and care will go a long way in helping to bring My love and blessings into the lives of others. Reach out and drop a little sunshine into the lives of those you come in contact with today. The love you give is not wasted. It's not unnoticed. Each small deed and kind action make a difference, so let Me work through you to share My love with those in need.

Pour out My love; give it freely to those around you. Give it in encouragement, in praise, in a helping hand wherever you can. Be My love to others. Take someone's hand today and tell them how much you appreciate them. Let them know how special they are. Everyone is special to Me, and you can help them experience My love.