

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 14 • Issue 6

BE A GIVER OF KINDNESS

Living with meaning

My Moment of Glory

The encouragement boost

Boomerang

It all comes back to us





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION HELPING OURSELVES

In one story Jesus told, a young man left home hoping to make his fortune, but ended up wasting his share of the family's wealth on wild living. Finally, penniless and humbled, he returned to his father's house, probably expecting and psyched up for an angry—or at least condescending—attitude and a

stern lecture. His father, however, welcomed him back with open arms and tears of joy.

In another story, a man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when thieves robbed him, beat him, and left him for dead. After a priest and a Levite had passed without helping, a Samaritan (a race despised by the Jews of Jesus' time) had compassion on the poor man and brought him to an inn in the next town, even arranging to pay all of his expenses until he had made a full recovery.

The parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan are some of the better-known that Jesus told, and they both focus on kindness. In the first, which pictures a loving, forgiving father, Jesus was describing God's kindness toward us, an unconditional kindness that is at the very root of His nature. In the second, He was enjoining us to be kind to others, even those we don't like or who don't like us.

It can often take effort to be kind. It doesn't come naturally to us, the way it does to God, but the rewards are real. As the saying goes, "If you'll be kind to others, they'll be kind to you." That's also what King Solomon observed 3,000 years ago: "Those who are kind benefit themselves."¹ I'd say that's pretty promising.

Samuel Keating

PS: This is my first issue as *Activated's* Executive Editor. I'm honored to be stepping into the position that Keith has held since Issue #1 (back in 1999!), and look forward to working in the days ahead to keep *Activated* the inspiring and faith-building magazine it has been for the last 14 years. God bless you!

1. Proverbs 11:17 NIV

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my moment OF GLORY

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

DURING THE SPRING OF MY JUNIOR YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL, some girls suggested we practice for the junior-senior basketball game, and I thought it might be fun, so I tagged along. I did poorly in practice, more focused on my friends than on the game; but despite getting on the nerves of some of the more competitive players, I decided that I would go through with what was going to be my one and only basketball game.

Throughout the match, the seniors consistently held the lead, while my teammates were struggling. I had passed the ball a couple of times like a hot potato, happy to get it out of my hands as quickly as possible. Until...

We were two points behind with seconds left in the game when one of

my friends managed to intercept the ball. She tossed it as far as she could, and I realized with dismay that it was coming straight at me. I caught it easily, but now what? None of my teammates were near the basket.

I must have appeared frozen in time, uncertain of what to do, when I saw the face of Stan, one of the athletic boys in my class, sitting in the front row in the crowd. He called out, "Just shoot the ball! You can do it!"

I remember looking at the basket from my place at half court, taking aim, and shooting with all my might. What happened next is somewhat hazy. Somehow the ball miraculously swooshed into the basket at the last second, and we won the game!

As everyone crowded around me during my moment of glory, my

eyes searched the crowd for Stan. He finally came up to congratulate me, and I said, "Thanks, Stan, for showing confidence in me when I needed it. You were the one who thought I could do it, and I did."

We all need someone who spurs us on when the faces in the crowd are a blur, when the voices seem unintelligible, and our steps falter—someone like Stan to tell us to go for it when we are hesitant and unsure, to boost our confidence to try the impossible, to say "I know you can do it!" Though we might get a pat on the back in our moment of glory, we know deep down that they are the ones who really deserve the credit.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A TEACHER AND WRITER, AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, USA. ■



BE A GIVER OF KINDNESS

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

ON A FLIGHT I TOOK SOME MONTHS AGO, there was a little girl sitting in the catty-cornered seat from me. She had a beautiful new coloring book that her mother had obviously brought especially for the flight. Occupying the same row was another girl about the same age whose father was seated behind her. This girl had no coloring book, and in fact, didn't seem to have anything to occupy her.

The girl with the coloring book was soon busily coloring with her crayons spread out on the tray table, and the other girl was looking longingly at them. I felt bad for the girl who had none, so I prayed that the first child would feel moved to tear out a page from her nice coloring book and share it. Sure enough, after a while I saw that she had indeed torn a page out and had given it to her seatmate and was sharing her crayons with her.

I leaned forward across the aisle and told the girl that sharing her coloring book was such a nice thing to do. She brightened up and was obviously pleased that

1. Proverbs 25:11

someone had noticed. I don't know how far that little exchange will go, but I would like to think that the next time she has to make a choice whether to share something or not, she will be reminded of the woman who was proud of her because she made the right decision.

Everyone craves encouragement. I believe that God wants to encourage people, but a lot of times He needs *us* to do it. If you feel like you have no time, no energy, no expertise, no money, or too little, to give, don't worry; that's common to many of us. But we can all give through our words of encouragement, and we can spread God's love wherever we go. In just a few minutes, we can make a difference at a bus stop, on the metro, crossing the street, at the shop, at work, at school, online, on a walk, and the list goes on. Our words don't need to be profound or eloquent—just simple words that meet a person's need for love, hope, significance, or comfort.

Here's a question we can ask ourselves: What can I say to people that will help them in some way?—Lift their spirits, brighten their day, and make them feel good about

themselves, appreciated, valued, worthwhile, and that what they're doing counts?

Everyone appreciates knowing that they count, that they're valuable, and that they're doing something worthwhile. Perhaps our words of encouragement will just be one step in a person's journey. Sometimes we might see the results of our encouragement; at other times, we will never get to see the results. But the important thing is that we are givers. Love never fails, so even if our words don't result in someone getting the point right away, it doesn't really matter. What does matter is that people feel loved, appreciated, and valued. It's a privilege to be a giver of kindness.

Even brief encounters with people lend themselves to "a word fitly spoken,"¹ something that will give people faith in themselves and faith that there are people in the world who are good and kind and concerned. This in turn may cause them to think about the Man of Love who inspires these qualities. If not, it may be a seed planted or watered that will be reaped at some future time.

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



Have you ever noticed how much of Christ's life was spent in doing kind things—in *merely* doing kind things? Run over it with that in view, and you will find that He spent a great proportion of His time simply in making people happy, in doing good turns to people.

What God *has* put in our power is the happiness of those about us, and that is largely to be secured by our being kind to them.

"The greatest thing," says someone, "a man can do for his Heavenly Father is to be kind to some of His other children." I wonder why it is that we are not all kinder than we are? How much the world needs it! How easily it is done! How instantaneously it acts! How infallibly it is remembered! How superabundantly it pays itself back—for there is no debtor in the world so honorable, so superbly honorable, as Love.

—Henry Drummond (1851–1897) ■

The glory of life
Is to love, not to be loved;
To serve, not to be served;
To be a strong hand in the dark
To another in the time of need;
To be a cup of strength to any soul
In a crisis of weakness.
That is to know the glory of life.

—Author unknown ■





THE COURAGE TO BE KIND

BY OLIVIA BAUER

ONE SUNNY AFTERNOON ROUGHLY SEVENTY YEARS AGO, a young girl and her friends were watching through the mesh of a barbed wire fence as a group of men played football [soccer], enjoying the excitement of the game and the skill of the players. Suddenly, a kick sent the ball in an arc over the fence, and it landed near the children.

“It’d be great to have a ball to play with,” one of the boys remarked. “Let’s keep it.”

But a girl disagreed. “It’s not right for us to keep it,” she insisted, throwing the ball back over the fence.

This simple gesture of kindness and integrity took place in the heart of Germany in the early 1940s, during World War II. The players were British prisoners of war, interned in a camp on the outskirts of town. Some of the girl’s friends grumbled. After all, the players were *prisoners*—why should *they* have a ball when the children didn’t?

Kindness takes thoughtfulness, effort, and time. It also takes courage.

Courage to stand alone on an issue. Courage to give, especially when one doesn’t have much. Courage to say no to indifference. Courage to act according to what one knows is right—especially when the right choice seems so obvious that “*surely* someone else with more time and resources will notice and do something about it.”

There is strength of character in kindness—the moral and mental strength to step out, to give, to believe, to persevere, to be true to one’s convictions, even when it means enduring challenges or paying a price. These are the kindnesses that leave a lasting impression.

It’s been nearly three quarters of a century, but there may yet be survivors of that summer scene—and if so, I imagine they might remember my grandmother, the village girl who returned a football.

OLIVIA BAUER WORKS WITH A NOT-FOR-PROFIT COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION IN WINNIPEG, CANADA. ■

Iron is strong, but fire melts it. Fire is strong, but water quenches it. Water is strong, but the clouds evaporate it. Clouds are strong, but wind drives them away. The wind is strong, but man withstands it. Man is strong, but fear weakens him. Fear is strong, but wine removes it. Wine is strong, but sleep overcomes it. Sleep is strong, yet death is stronger. But loving kindness survives death.

—*Rabbi Judah bar Ilai, second century*

Being considerate of others will take your children further in life than any college degree.—*Marian Wright Edelman (b. 1939)*



kindness —the irresistible fruit

BY RAFAEL HOLDING

KINDNESS IS LOVE IN ACTION, love translated into simple everyday terms. It’s being considerate of others. It’s living the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”¹ It’s turning a blind eye to the flubs and foibles of others. It’s being as tenderhearted and forgiving toward others as God is with you.²

Kindness generates goodwill. Your kind words and kind deeds tell others that their happiness and well-being are important to you, and that makes them want to respond in like manner. Kindness is one of the hardest things to give away, because it’s nearly always returned. Kindness costs nothing, but can accomplish so much. A kind smile or a kind word can make all the difference in the world to someone who’s having a hard day. A little bit of love goes such a long way!

Kindness is a language that everyone understands. As Christians, we are ambassadors of God’s love to others; the kindness we show conveys God’s love and care, and helps draw and win them to Him.

RAFAEL HOLDING IS A WRITER IN AUSTRALIA. “KINDNESS—THE IRRESISTIBLE FRUIT” IS ADAPTED FROM THE *GET ACTIVATED* BOOK *GOD’S GIFTS*, AVAILABLE FROM AURORA’S ONLINE STORE ([HTTP://SHOP.AURORAPRODUCTION.COM/](http://shop.auroraproduction.com/)). ■

1. Matthew 7:12
2. See Ephesians 4:32.



THE NORTH WIND AND THE SUN —From Aesop’s Fables

The sun and the wind once had a conversation, in which the boisterous and argumentative wind contended that he was the stronger of the two.

“I’ll prove it!” said the wind. “Do you see the old man down there? I bet I can get his coat off him quicker than you can!”

So the sun sighed and hid behind a cloud, and the wind blew and blew until it was almost a tornado. But the harder it blew, the tighter the old man clutched his coat to him. Finally the wind gave up and calmed down.

Then the sun came out from behind the cloud and smiled kindly on the old man. After only a short while the man mopped his brow and pulled off his coat.

The sun had shown the wind that warmth and kindness were stronger than fury and force. ■

A SMILE

It needs so little sympathy
To cheer a weary way,
Sometimes a little kindness
Lights up a dreary day;
A very simple, friendly word
May hope and strength impart,
Or just an understanding smile
Revive some fainting heart;
And, like a sudden sunlit ray,
Lighting a darkened room,
A sunny spirit may beguile
The deepest depths of gloom.
—*Author unknown* ■

POINTS TO PONDER

Opportunities for Kindness

Resolve to make at least one person happy every day, and then in ten years you may have made three thousand, six hundred and fifty persons happy, or brightened a small town by your contribution to the fund of general enjoyment.

—*Sydney Smith (1771–1845)*

The sun makes ice melt; kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate.

—*Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965)*

Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.

—*Laozi (sixth century BC)*

Kindness is worth more than beauty.

—*Jean d'Arras (fifteenth century)*

Kindness gives birth to kindness.

—*Sophocles (496–406 BC)*

The best portion of a good man's life is the little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.

—*William Wordsworth (1770–1850)*

A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees. The greatest work that kindness does to others is that it makes them kind themselves.

—*Amelia Earhart (1897–1937)*

Help thy brother's boat across, and lo! Thine own has reached the shore.

—*Indian proverb*

I would go to the deeps a hundred times to cheer a downcast spirit. It is good for me to have been afflicted, that I might know how to speak a word in season to one that is weary.

—*Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892)*

Wise sayings often fall on barren ground; but a kind word is never thrown away.

—*Sir Arthur Helps (1813–1875)*

Be kind. Remember that everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.

—*Harry Thompson (1960–2005)*

Wherever there is a human being there is a chance for kindness.

—*Seneca (4 BC–AD 65)*

We cannot be just unless we are kindhearted.

—*Luc de Clapiers Vauvenargues (1715–1747)*

The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.

—*William James (1842–1910)*

Kind words do not cost much ... yet they accomplish much.

—*Blaise Pascal (1623–1662)*

A good deed is never lost.—He who sows courtesy, reaps friendship; he who plants kindness, gathers love.

—*Basil of Caesarea (c. 329–379)*

Kind words are the music of the world. They have a power which seems to be beyond natural causes, as though they were some angel's sons which had lost their way and come to earth.

—*Frederick Faber (1814–1863)*

Treat a man as he appears to be, and you make him worse. But treat a man as if he already were what he potentially could be, and you make him what he should be.

—*Johann von Goethe (1749–1832)* ■

THE GIFT OF LISTENING

BY DINA ELLENS

I HAD JUST MOVED TO A NEW COUNTRY WITH MY HUSBAND AND FAMILY. That meant new schools for the children and a new job for my husband. It was a difficult time of adjustment for all of us, but I was especially feeling the strain. My marriage was feeling it, too. There was a growing list of subjects that my husband and I stopped talking about, because we knew they would lead to arguments.

But then I got to know Toni.

Toni was my next-door neighbor. She had a family of small children, and her husband only worked sporadically. She was the glue holding their family together. And that was a full-time job.

Somehow, though, she always had time for me. Whenever things got to

be too much at home, I knew I could always go to Toni.

I would knock on her door, and she would usher me in with a welcoming smile. She would stop whatever she was in the middle of doing and sit down with me, letting me pour out all my troubles and woes. Then she'd do the best thing a friend can. Simply but with all her heart, she would pray for everything I'd just burdened her with and commit it all into God's hands.

That's how I learned the secret of how Toni could always stay so calm, and where she found the patience to always hear me out. Instead of trying to carry the weight of my troubles along with her own, Toni had learned how to cast her cares on the Lord and let Him sustain her.¹

The Lord and His Word were a very real part of her life. They were

what helped her through the difficult times, as well as what gave her the capacity to reach out to others in their need, like me.

Since then, Toni and I have parted ways. Our children have grown up, and my husband and I have since reconnected. But I'll never forget her kindness in always having time for me. Looking back, I can see that she was instrumental in helping me make the right decisions at a turning point in my life. I was like the man left by the wayside, emotionally beaten up and robbed, and Toni was like the Good Samaritan who rescued me.

DINA ELLENS TAUGHT SCHOOL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR OVER 25 YEARS. ALTHOUGH RETIRED, SHE REMAINS ACTIVE IN VOLUNTEER WORK AS WELL AS PURSUING HER INTEREST IN WRITING. ■





PAUSING TO CARE

BY CHALSEY DOOLEY



I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE DID IT, but the cashier's eyes peered right into mine. I'd been discovered. I had tried to avoid eye contact as I was finishing the grocery shopping. More embarrassing than being seen in public coping with a rare meltdown would be someone discovering the "nothing to cry about" interaction that had triggered it.

I was holding it together—as long as I didn't have to talk. My husband tried to phone me, but I couldn't respond. It would have been messy (and noisy) if I attempted to communicate anything at all.

Then it was my turn at the checkout. I knew from past experience that in this store the cashiers work like automatons, processing items in a jiffy. That was fine by me. I was ready for the speedy processing and looked forward to getting out of

there as soon as possible—before I let it all out.

Then she *had* to ask me, "How's it going?" And it wasn't a casual don't-care-what-you-say greeting. She actually wanted an answer.

"It's nothing, nothing..." I tried to say, wanting to just get on with it. But for the first time ever—I mean ever, in that store—the kind woman cashier wouldn't touch a single item of my shopping waiting to be scanned until I told her what that problem was.

Yes, there were people in line waiting, and her skill at her job was no doubt being monitored. But I was made to feel more important than everything else. I was shocked. Somehow it cushioned the embarrassment I would have felt blubbing about it.

If I could have said something like, "I found out I have breast

cancer" or "My best friend died," I would have felt justified in raking in as much sympathy as possible. But I knew that sharing what had actually happened just wouldn't have the same pathos. Yet I got the impression that this woman who cared enough to sincerely ask how I was doing was going to treat me with compassion, no matter what in the world I was sniveling about—just because *I* was important to her.

Seeing I wasn't going to get out of it, I responded briefly, "I kept someone waiting in line at another store, and she made a big deal of it!"

My day had started at 3 AM, when my baby woke and couldn't fall back asleep, and the tiredness and stress had coalesced at the wrong time and place!

First, it turned out that I shouldn't have been in the express line, because I had miscalculated the number of

items in my basket and ended up with several more than the limit. Then when it was time to pay, I went blank and couldn't remember my PIN number! The next lady in line wouldn't let up and began verbally harassing me. Meanwhile, the cashier continued her patient reminders that, "You just need to enter your PIN, Ma'am."

I found out that there is something more stressful than being late and having a customer in front of you hold up the line—that is *being* that customer! I finally stepped aside for a moment to pray, and thankfully, the number came back to me. After apologizing to the lady behind me—whose response was cold and unforgiving—I quietly left, tearing up.

The contrast between what happened in that checkout lane and in the second shop was stark. After

I had experienced being misunderstood, unforgiven, pressured, put under stress, treated as though I was the root of the world's problems, this woman made me feel important and cared for, worth more than time or money. The kind lady even ran off to get me a handful of tissues. All embarrassment was covered in a warm blanket of care.

The world doesn't usually pause because I have a tear to shed, and it felt good when it did! I was reminded how important love is, and how painful and hurtful it can be when we are so focused on what we have to do that we neglect to make those around us feel important.

CHALSEY DOOLEY IS A WRITER OF INSPIRATIONAL MATERIAL FOR CHILDREN AND CARETAKERS AND IS A FULL-TIME EDU-MOM LIVING IN AUSTRALIA. ■

During my second year of nursing school our professor gave us a quiz. I breezed through the questions until I read the last one: "What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?" Surely this was a joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank.

Before the class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our grade. "Absolutely," the professor said. "In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello." I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned our cleaner's name was Dorothy. —Joann C. Jones ■



BOOMERANG

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG, ADAPTED

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I went to my first circus. There, before my awestruck eyes, were three rings in full action—performing animals in one, and acrobats leaping and flying through the air in another. What interested me most, though, was taking place in the third ring. A girl and a boy were flinging brightly colored missiles, which, after they had crossed the ring, turned and returned to the very hands that had flung them. No matter which direction they were thrown, the things curved and came back swiftly to the young performers, who would catch and fling them again.

I watched in amazement. “They are boomerangs,” someone beside me said. It was the first time I had heard

the word, and I tucked it away in my young mind.

I’ve heard the word many times since, of course, and I’ve also seen the principle behind it play out in life. In fact, life itself is a boomerang. God’s Word says, “A man reaps what he sows.”¹ Every word or action we fling out comes back some day. Whether good or bad, it will return to us, and it often gains momentum as it does.

One morning I visited two women in the same hospital. One room was filled with flowers and cards and all sorts of gifts from friends and acquaintances, thoughtful gestures of love, concern, and sympathy. That was a reflection of her life, for she had sown love and thoughtfulness throughout the years, and now it was all coming back to her in her hour of need.

In a room down the hall, another woman lay alone. Still as

self-absorbed, suspicious, and critical as she had always been, she lay with her face turned to the wall—a wall as hard and cold and bare as the ones she had built around herself all her life.

What a difference there was in those two rooms! The boomerang had come back to both women, but in very different ways.

“If you give to others, you will be given a full amount in return. It will be packed down, shaken together, and spilling over into your lap. The way you treat others is the way you will be treated.”² Anyone who lives unselfishly, caring for and lifting the burdens of others, easing their pain, and helping to supply their needs, will see that boomerang come back in the form of blessings some day!

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS AN AMERICAN EVANGELIST AND PASTOR. ■



Net Worth and Breeding Patterns of the Common Hug

BY JOE JOHNSTON

THE SIGNS WERE NOTHING BUT RECTANGLES OF WHITE-PAINTED PLYWOOD ADORNED WITH BRIGHT RED WORDS PROCLAIMING, “ABRAZOS GRATIS” (“FREE HUGS”), along with flowers, hearts, and other cheerful splotches of eye-catching color. We drove to our rendezvous point at a nearby university campus to meet up with the rest of our crew, and then struck out around downtown Guadalajara, Mexico, to search for strangers upon whom to shower random acts of kindness.

Signs held high, we fanned out, an advancing army of affection. “Would you like a free hug?” was our battle cry.

Our first real challenge was at the rolling concrete waves of a

skateboarder hangout. Sweaty youths were taking turns trying to impress their peers with various amateur stunts, to the tune of cheers and jeers from their grungy audience. There is a sort of fearlessness that comes with free-hugging, so we swarmed into their midst and conquered. With every hug also came a free tract, and if they stopped for long enough, a prayer.

Next, we flocked to the park across the street, another teen hotbed, with all the favorite youth demographics present and accounted for. A group of Goth girls shyly motioned us over and we invaded their auras of black shades with our pastels and neons, spreading smiles all around.

We sang a few simple songs to small groups of people, music with a message of love and appreciation.

The last chorus was of course always punctuated with our trademark embraces.

As we crisscrossed the center of town, a man in a restaurant paused in his meal as the waitresses and hostesses rushed by him to receive their hug helpings, along with seconds, thirds, and refills. He called us in and quizzed us about why we were doing such a thing. We were simply aware of the importance of showing love and kindness, we told him, and in a world starving for love, a little more of that couldn’t hurt.

And our agenda?—Jesus loves people. We wanted to make sure they knew it.

JOE JOHNSTON IS AN ADVICE COLUMNIST AND LIVES IN MEXICO. ■

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

CHANGE THE WORLD



Q: *I'd like to do more to improve things around me, but I don't feel there's a lot I can do. Changing the world seems like such a huge task—how to know where to start?*

A: The good news is you don't need to be someone powerful or famous to make a difference. Each positive change—no matter how small—is changing the world for the better. We can change the world by improving the lives of those around us, through deeds of kindness and consideration, and by showing faith in them. Here are some practical tips to help get you started changing your part of the world, one heart at a time.

• **BUILD UP EXCELLENCE.** Try to think of at least one thing that you find outstanding in a person, and then make it your task to let them know. Don't be shy; they won't get tired of hearing it. What you're doing

is building confidence in that one area, and as they gain confidence, they will start to improve in other areas as well.

• **SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY.** Give others responsibility in the areas in which they are strong. Make them feel trusted, needed, and appreciated.

• **APPRECIATE WHO THEY ARE.** Appreciating others for what they do is important, and people like to be thanked and acknowledged for it, but being appreciated for a personal trait feels a lot nicer than only being appreciated for the outcome of that trait.

• **KEEP APPRECIATION SIMPLE AND DOABLE.** Don't feel that you need to have wonderfully warm feelings about a person, or be their best friend and really know them deeply before you can make a difference

in someone's life. You can be a near stranger and still have a marvelous effect on someone.

• **SLOW DOWN.** It takes time to see people in a new light. Go slower in your interactions with people and give God a chance to reveal His perspective.

• **PAUSE TO MEDITATE.** Think of the positive ways that someone has helped you. You will have a change in how you view others, because you will have taken the time to go deeper, past the surface assumptions that are so easy to make.

• **LET GO OF THE PAST.** Everyone dislikes being labeled or put in a box. Be willing to see who the person is today or the potential of what they can be tomorrow, and don't let your view be marred by your past experiences. ■

THE UNSUNG HERO

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE
BY ABI F. MAY



THE STORY OF THE BOY WHO GAVE HIS LUNCH TO THE DISCIPLES TO SHARE WITH THE MULTITUDE IS WELL KNOWN.¹ Jesus took the five small loaves and two fishes, blessed the food which was multiplied miraculously, and thousands of hungry people were satisfied. Who was the little boy? What was his name? What was the name of his thoughtful mother who provided the packed lunch? These details are not provided.

Unsung heroes quietly performing simple acts of kindness provide the backdrop to so many miracles of deliverance, healing, and supply. Consider the men who carried their paralyzed friend on his bed; they were so eager to bring him to Jesus for healing, they opened up part of the roof to get him into the crowded house.²

1. See John 6:1–13.
2. See Luke 5:18–25.
3. See Luke 7:11–15.
4. See Luke 7:1–10.

The bearers who were carrying the body of the widow's son stood still at Jesus' command and witnessed the miracle of the young man's return to life.³ And we cannot forget the friends of the centurion who bore the message to Jesus, pleading in his stead for healing for the centurion's devoted servant. Upon their return, they found the servant healed.⁴

These nameless individuals showed kindness, often more than duty demanded. There is no record of them receiving thanks or reward. Their kindness was from the heart.

You've probably guessed the topic for this issue's exercise: Make it a point over the coming week to do a kindness for someone—a colleague, friend, family member, or stranger—without telling anyone what you've done or expecting anything in return. Better still, try to do this *every* week. You may not witness an outstanding miracle, but you will have brought a smile to somebody else.

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Carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward, safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you.—*Diana, Princess of Wales (1961–1997)*

BORN ANEW

A single moment surely
Will be my fixed desire:
To pour the ruddy fire
Of wine of kindness down throats
parched;
To overturn, spill joy upon the
scorched,
Hate-caked mud of earth.
Their joy will be my birth!
My only peace, their peace,
Their pleasure brings me ease,
Their dream will be my dream.
And my heartbeat the throb
Of hearts that beat with God.
Sound that ringing through infinity
Each day calls echoes of divinity:
“Today I'm born anew!”
—*Amado Nervo (1870–1919), translated from the original Spanish* ■



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Love at work

There is a special happiness and contentment that comes from putting others and their needs above your own. When you're doing something kind for someone, it doesn't just benefit them, it also benefits you. The happiness that comes through kind and caring and generous actions is not a light or frivolous satisfaction or pleasure; it's a much deeper feeling of fulfillment. You are letting My Spirit of love into the world around you, into the lives of others, and into your own life.

Where love is at work, there I am at work. It's human nature to look out for yourself first, to be selfish, even demanding, and to expect to be treated well by others before you treat them well. But it is My way to give. Doing something kind and generous for someone else often takes effort, and yet each time you do it, you realize that it's the best way to live. It's all about noticing others, appreciating them, looking not just *at* them but *into* them.

Look for ways to make someone else's day or week a little brighter, a little more enjoyable, a little more relaxing, a little more fun, a little less stressful, a little less burdened, a little less weary, a little less limiting. As you do, you're making your own day or week the same. Look for Me in others, and let them see Me in you too.