

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 16 • Issue 10

ONE MAN'S TRASH

Apple seeds and opportunities

The Bookmark

The glory of imperfection

Upcycled

Turning coal into diamonds





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

For many people, coming to know and accept Christ is a life-changing event. For example, immediately after he met and talked with Jesus, Zacchaeus' entire life was turned around.¹ In a matter of days, Saul went from "threatening with every breath and eager to destroy every Christian"²

to preaching the gospel as the apostle Paul. More recently, many people have been known to be freed from addictions or other bad habits on the spot.

Although few converts experience such an earth-shattering change, we know that God wants believers to grow. As Billy Graham said, "Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion—it is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ." And here's Paul: "Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted ... Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature ... truly righteous and holy."³

Of course, no one is perfect; that is a fact of life. Fortunately, however, we have a God who is both omniscient—He knows our future and can prepare us for the changes we'll be faced with—and omnipotent—having Him in our corner significantly boosts our chances. He also loves us unconditionally and wants to help us succeed.

Even if you feel like life has dealt you some crushing blows and you don't know if you can recover, or you fear you've outlasted your usefulness or are worthless, don't despair. God is in the upcycling business (see page 14), and you never know what great things He might have in store for you just around the corner.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. See Luke 19:1–10.
2. Acts 9:1 TLB
3. Ephesians 4:22–24 NLT

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BY JAS SINCLAIR

The Bookmark

I'M SITTING HERE STARING AT THE SIDE OF MY COMPUTER SCREEN, where I've stuck one of the cutest little bookmarks I've ever owned. It has a picture of a mother hugging a little child, and a quote from Charles Dickens at the bottom: "It is not a slight thing when they, who are so fresh from God, love us." When I read that quote, it thrilled me through and through. I resolved to use that bookmark for my next reading project. Unfortunately, I failed to immediately tuck the dear little bookmark safely away, and so it lay, halfway to greatness, on my desk—at just the right height for a very cute short person (my three-year-old daughter) to spot it and pick it up.

This bookmark is one of those with three sides of a little square cut out near the top, so it can be hooked over

the top of a page and stay in place. By the time I noticed that Kimberly had found it, she had pulled on and accidentally broken the top part off.

I knew this was an innocent act, of course. She hadn't meant to tear it; she was just trying to figure the thing out. But because I had had such a special bonding experience with that bookmark, I was a bit distressed. I snatched the pieces from her and put them aside.

Later, after Kimberly was in bed, I picked up the two pieces of the bookmark and read the quote again. Suddenly the whole experience struck me in an entirely new light. Did this bookmark have to be perfect to be special? I could tape it back together and it would be as good as new—maybe even better than new because it would have something

that it hadn't had before: evidence of having been touched by those little hands that I love so dearly. Now that bookmark is twice as special to me, Scotch tape and all. ■

Riches take wings, comforts vanish, hope withers away, but love stays with us. Love is God.—Lew Wallace (1827–1905)



Let us strive to see things that are as they should be; and as we live in an imperfect world, let us be content to glory in that imperfection, that each building block of the day's events may rest upon another to form the final product of a life rich and full—not in the glassy beauty of perfection, but in the rich fullness of love.—Author unknown ■

BY MARA HODLER

JEWELS OF THE

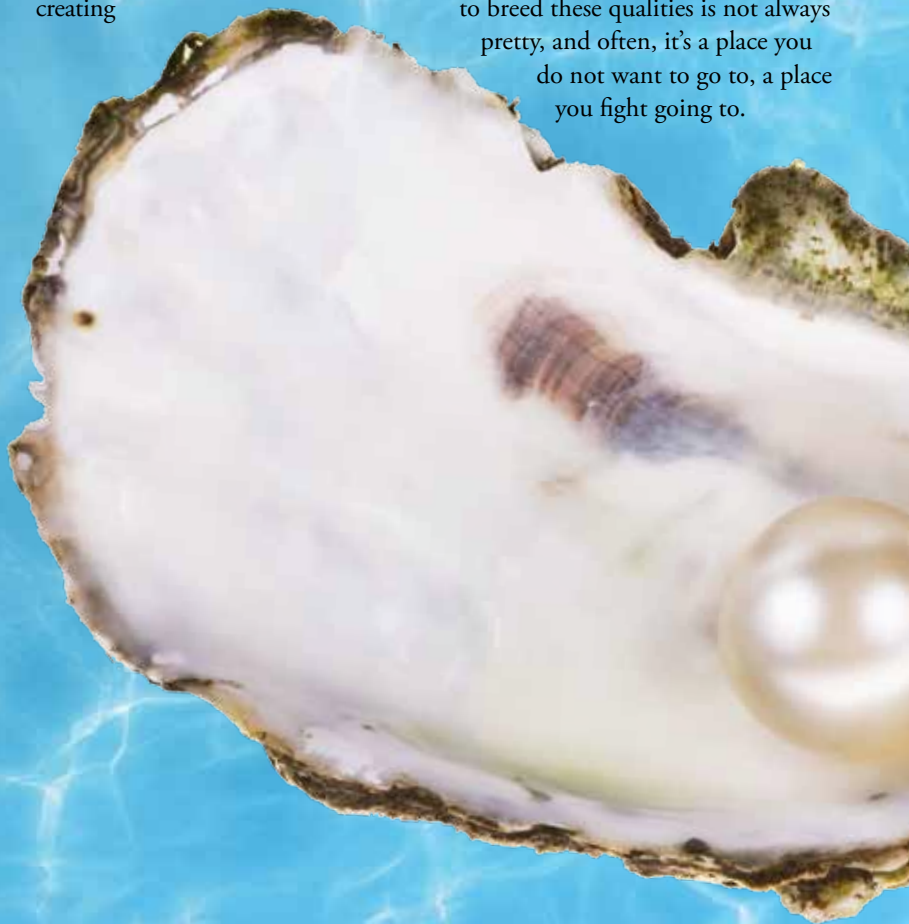
ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SOMETHING PRETTY, I noticed a small nugget of smooth glass as I walked along the beach. When it's smooth and polished, an ordinary piece of glass seems precious, like something to be showcased in a beautiful wind chime, necklace charm, or the like. The ocean does the same thing to wood. A smoothed and polished piece of driftwood can be changed from a worthless branch to the material designer furniture and art are made from. Each piece of wood or glass that is smoothed by sand and water is unique, and some have even been collected or sold.

Nature is full of examples where harsh circumstances convert something of little worth or beauty into something exceptional and valuable: the pearl, the diamond, the hardwood

that grows high in the mountains. Even maple syrup needs cold and long winters for there to be enough sap for production.¹ You can also find a lot of examples of harsh circumstances creating

extraordinary people—those who are empathetic and gifted with wisdom, hope, joy, patience, self-sacrifice, or other admirable qualities.

But where you *actually* have to go to breed these qualities is not always pretty, and often, it's a place you do not want to go to, a place you fight going to.



1. "Why Maple Syrup Costs So Much,"
<http://www.businessweek.com/stories/2008-09-27/why-maple-syrup-costs-so-much>
businessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice

2. Romans 5:3–4 NLT

DEEP



I've never experienced anything extremely traumatic in my life. I still have all my limbs, no one's been shot before my eyes or died in my arms, but there have been times in my life when God took me to that broken place through other means, like embarrassing big mistakes, changes I did not like, personal relationships that ended, health issues, and other things that have roughed up my life the way the ocean waves assault a piece of glass.

The first time I found those smoothed pieces of glass on a beach, I was so excited. I had all kinds of ideas of what I would do with these treasures. And to be sure that I would never run out of beautiful smooth glass, I decided I would make my own. Finding pieces of sharp broken glass was never hard to do. I found a

few in different colors: brown, light green, dark green, transparent, and even a light blue piece. I placed these soon-to-be treasures in a little pool of water and sand that was trapped in a rock basin that the waves washed over constantly and anticipated what I was sure I would find in a few short weeks.

Of course, when I came back to that spot a few weeks later, I was not impressed with what I found. The glass was still there, obviously roughed up a bit, but it was not smooth. It was not beautiful—not yet.

The point is, you have to be patient. It takes time for the glass to become smooth, for the grain of sand to become a pearl, for the lump of coal to become a diamond, and for you and me to develop the gentleness and brokenness that Christ is known for.

The next time you feel a wave crash over you—maybe you've tried something and failed, maybe someone you care about doesn't seem to care as much about you, maybe there is something you have had your heart set on that just doesn't seem to be

materializing—whatever your “wave” might be, just remember what it's doing to you.

It's making you patient. It's teaching you to endure. It's drawing out your empathy. It's showing you that God is the only one who does not disappoint. It's teaching you a peace that is not based on circumstances. Whatever it's teaching you, I think you'll be happy and at peace with the outcome.

“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.”²² And, as much as I don't love tough stuff, I have to agree with Paul there. I know that each wave that has bashed into me has changed a little bit of me for the better.

MARA HODLER IS A FORMER MISSIONARY TO THE FAR EAST AND EAST AFRICA. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES IN TEXAS WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN AND RUNS A SMALL FAMILY BUSINESS. ■



TEARS AND MENDS

BY ROSANE PEREIRA

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, my mother used to keep a pile of clothes to mend, mostly belonging to us kids, by the sewing machine, and she would patiently work on them every Saturday morning. I have many happy memories of sitting beside her and learning simple sewing and making doll dresses. But the most important thing she taught me there was one day when she said: “Life is like this mending I do every week. When something goes wrong, you fix it; then if something else tears, you mend it, and that is how you get along.”

Sure enough, as I grew up, I learned that life is not always like a brand-new cloth. It sometimes tears and it sometimes opens at the seams or loses a button. But like Mom taught me, we just have to try again, or apologize and try to fix the mistake we’ve made and forgive the blunders

of others or help them to undo their messes.

Proverbs 27:6 says, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” When I first read that, I was shocked. I had thought that being a friend meant only saying positive things and never criticizing or correcting anyone. I learned I could gain through listening to reproof from the people I knew loved me, like well-meaning friends, my husband, brothers and sisters, and my own grown children.

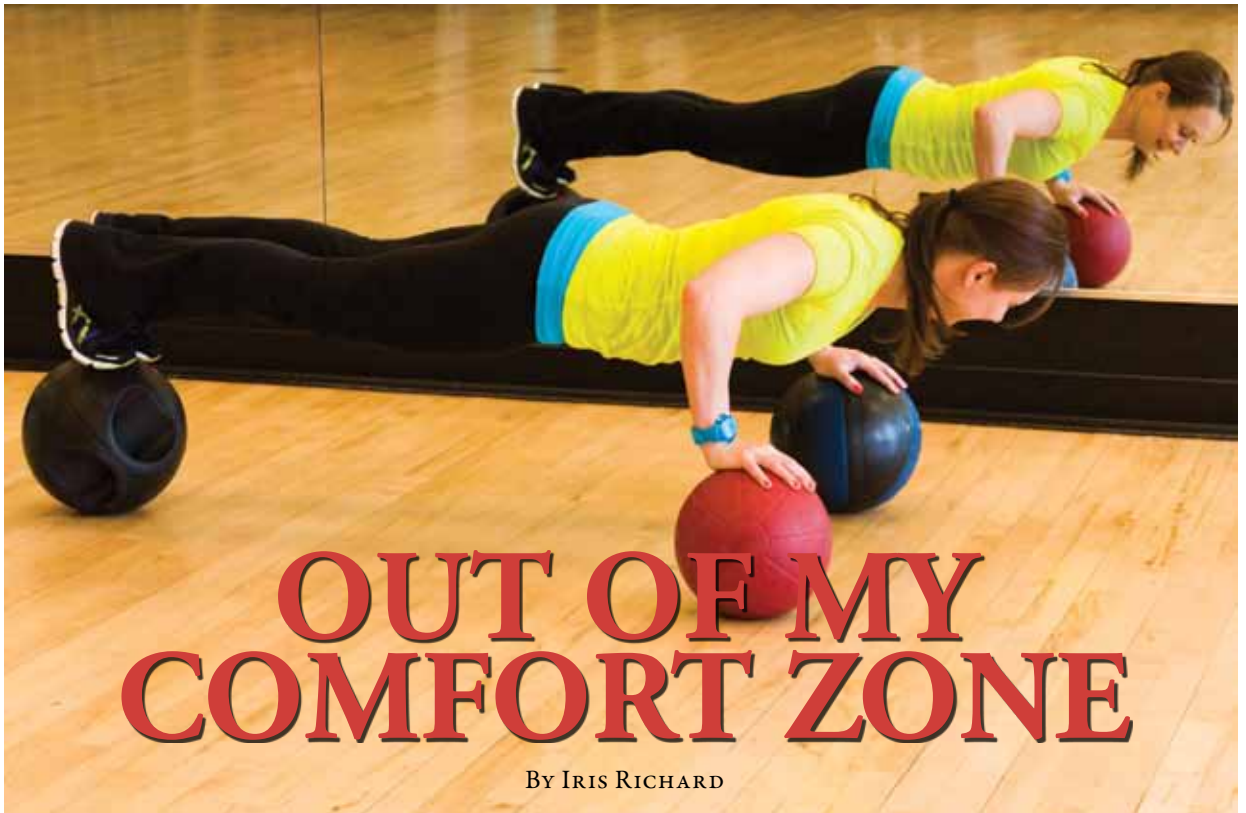
I realized that to grow spiritually we need input from all sources and that we should listen to good advice and meditate on it for a while, rather than rejecting it out of pride. We can also try to counsel loved ones against continuing on a path that we know by experience will only lead to defeat and heartbreak.

When driving, it is much easier to

see the lights from another car than to see our own. The same is true of our own weaknesses and shortcomings. Faithful friends will help us see them and improve. Then we will grow spiritually and become more of what God knows we are capable of being. We will also feel happier and more fulfilled as time goes on, like passing exams in school and moving on to higher grades.

So when something goes wrong, don’t despair. There is always room for improvement. God is in the second-chance business. The important thing is to learn from our mistakes, pass our grades, and move forward. Remember, when something tears, it can usually be mended.

ROSANE PEREIRA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND WRITER IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■



OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE

BY IRIS RICHARD

RECENTLY, I had the uneasy feeling that I needed a change, but I couldn't quite put my finger on what it was. I had a nagging feeling, but I didn't make much effort to do something about it.

Then my daughter Joanna invited me to a special exercise program that covers a variety of routines like toning, stretching, concentration, and meditation. I'm generally not very fond of group calisthenics and initially decided that I didn't really want to try this out. I preferred to do my exercises alone in nature or at home, to ride my stationary bike, or work out with my tailor-made aerobic program.

She kept prodding. "Come on, Mom. You need to do something different and get out of your comfort zone. Just give it a try. It'll be refreshing."

"Leave my comfort zone ... it'll be refreshing" kept ringing in my mind. Perhaps she was right. Despite my preference for staying within my comfy space, I realized that now was time for change.

When I entered the studio, Joanna was all smiles and led me through the introduction: "Oh, I forgot to tell you—the exercises are performed in a hot room, for detoxing."

Yikes—another no-like factor. I cringed, but there was no turning back.

Now, six months after having committed to do the exercise program twice a week, I am happy that I took the step into the unknown. This seemingly small decision has opened the door to other new ideas, new friends, and a fresh outlook. I


feel better physically and even a bit braver to try something new again.

It is easy to fall into a cozy rut. This experience served as a reminder of how vital it is to keep the vision of following God closely and take the time to listen to His still small voice for direction and change on a daily basis. Not only my daughter, but God Himself has new things for me! I realized that I had slacked off, not just in my physical habits, but also in receiving God's guidance.

I am happy that I climbed out of my comfort zone box and will now try to keep re-examining my daily routines periodically.

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

FORMULA OF 5 — SPIRITUAL GROWTH



BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED

*HE SET HIMSELF TO SEEK GOD ...
and as long as he sought the Lord, God
made him prosper.¹*

If you want to be physically fit, you have to eat right, exercise, and put some time and effort into building good physical habits. Similarly, if you want spiritual growth—if you want to be spiritually fit—it will require investing in a spiritual regimen.

Let's look at five points in a formula for spiritual growth.

NUMBER 1: Connect with God through spiritual input.

Making time daily for godly input and spiritual nourishment is paramount to having a vibrant spiritual

life. Jesus affirmed that God's Word is our source of spiritual nourishment when He quoted the Old Testament verse: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."²

The Bible is the "word that comes from the mouth of God." Just as we need to eat physical food every day for sustenance and good health, we need to take in spiritual nourishment every day. If you only have a few minutes to spend with God, don't skip it and figure that it won't count or make a difference. Jesus said, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."³ Don't miss your daily infilling of "spirit" and "life."

Where should your spiritual input come from? First and foremost is the

Bible, God's Word. Another source is devotional, faith-building material (or media) authored by godly men and women. The inspired writings of other Christians can serve to strengthen your faith, open your understanding of the Scriptures, and help you to practically apply God's Word to your current needs and challenges.

NUMBER 2: Develop an active prayer life.

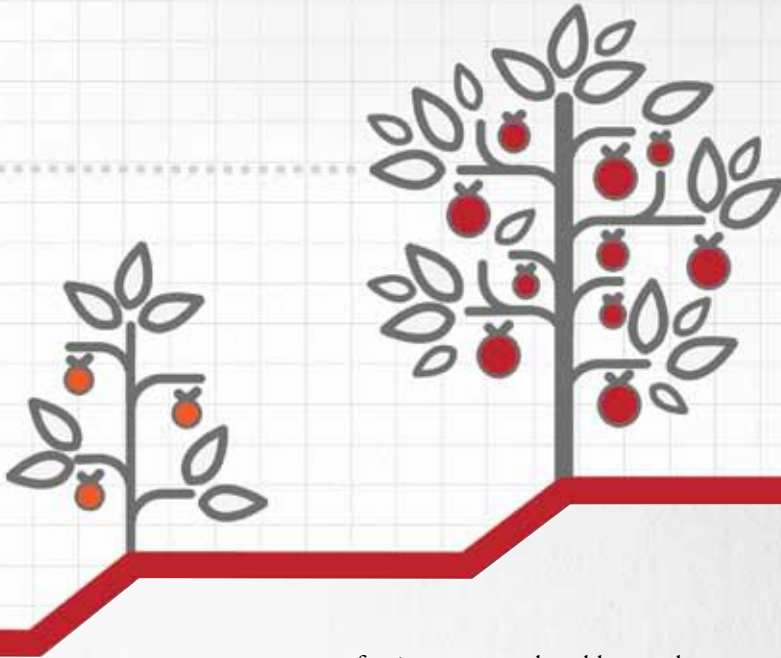
Prayer is a key component of our spiritual life; it's how we communicate with God, our Creator. We can speak with Him, praise and worship Him, and tell Him our concerns, troubles, needs, and ask Him for His help, intervention, and strength. Prayer is asking for the will of God to be done, and through prayer, we listen to His voice and seek His guidance, encouragement, comfort, and instruction. Prayer is designed to

1. 2 Chronicles 26:5 ESV

2. Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3 ESV

3. John 6:63 ESV

4. See James 1:22.



be a two-way conversation, a means of developing and deepening our relationship with God.

Through prayer, we can cast all of our earthly cares upon His strong shoulders. If your heart is concerned about something, God is concerned too. As has been said, “If something is big enough to worry about, it’s big enough to pray about.”

NUMBER 3: Keep your heart right with God.

The next point in our formula of spiritual growth and health is to stay right with God. This doesn’t mean you have to be perfect. Jesus understands our flaws and human weaknesses, as He experienced life as a human. When He gave His life for our sins, He knew very well that we’d never get everything right, no matter how hard we tried. We can enter into that wonderful place of peace and forgiveness by regularly confessing our faults, mistakes, and sins to Him. We can find peace in His

forgiveness as we humble ourselves, acknowledge our faults, and run to His outstretched arms.

Regular cleansing allows your spiritual life to flourish and brings peace. When you know you’re right with God, when you have no unconfessed sin in your life, you’re more apt to come to Him for times of worship and prayer, and you have more faith for Him to bless you and take care of you.

NUMBER 4: Follow God (His Word, voice, and guidance).

Another foundational point for spiritual growth is *doing* what God’s Word says to do. We are called to obey what God asks of all Christians, as well as His personal guidance and instruction to us as individuals.

We don’t want to just be “smart Christians,” people who know a lot about spiritual things and doctrine and theology. We don’t want to just be able to *talk* about Jesus and His expectations for His followers. We are to apply the spiritual principles, to be living examples, and that comes

from being *doers* of the Word and not hearers only.⁴

NUMBER 5: Participate in a community of believers.

When we believers are together, we gain a lot. When we have spent time with other Christians worshipping, reading God’s Word, singing and praying together, and confiding in one another, we come away stronger. We are refreshed, our vision is clarified, and we are better prepared for what God will bring into our lives.

It can be a challenge to carve out the time for quality fellowship or to find a Christian community where you feel at home. It is important not only for your personal edification and enjoyment, but it also helps empower you to make a difference in the world.

So to cultivate a thriving spiritual life, put these five foundational points into practice. You’ll be happy with the results.

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

BY CHRIS HUNT

FAREWELL TO AN OLD FRIEND

MY ELDERLY MOTHER WAS ON THE PHONE. “The next time you visit, would you mind looking in the garage? Your brother is helping clean it out, and he came across some of your old things.”

What childhood leftovers could possibly remain? When I arrived, there it was: a ponderous manual office typewriter, as sturdy as ever, but a little rusty from three decades of disuse. The sight brought back happy memories. My parents had bought it secondhand to reward me for passing an important exam at age 11. I’d taught myself to type and spent many hours during my teen years hammering out poems and stories.

Before I could reconcile with the idea that my old friend should finally be thrown away, I tried typing on it again. I had forgotten how much force was required to press a key on

an old manual typewriter! Maybe it was the old ribbon, but I could barely see what I had typed. Oops, I made a mistake! My right pinkie shot up to fix the mistake, and then I remembered there was no key to delete backwards, that I was back in the day of crumbly typewriter erasers. Hammering painstakingly, I managed to type a few words. A bell sounded, signaling me to pull back the lever that advanced the paper and returned the heavy carriage to start a new line. I had expended a lot of effort and had very little to show for it.

How different it is typing on my tablet! Lightweight and portable, I can take it with me virtually anywhere. I slip it out of my purse, press the power button, and it turns on instantly. A few feather-light keystrokes and the first words form on the screen. One press of the backspace key deletes my mistakes. A few more keystrokes and spelling mistakes are autocorrected. One

more click and I save my work. A few more clicks and I can email copies to friends around the world—no carbon paper, envelopes, or stamps needed—and they will get them almost instantly.

Our spiritual lives are a bit like that. God offers us “portable spiritual technology” to use throughout our daily lives—prayer power, a personal relationship with Him, and gifts of the Holy Spirit such as wisdom, knowledge, and faith¹—but it’s up to us. We can avail ourselves of the gifts He offers, or we can try to manage without God’s help. That sounds every bit as unreasonable as me working today on my old typewriter instead of the fast, easy, and portable tablet. God’s spiritual technology can improve our lives, so let’s use it.

CHRIS HUNT LIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND HAS BEEN READING *ACTIVATED* SINCE IT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1999. ■

1. See 1 Corinthians 12.



TURNING DREAMS INTO REALITY

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

TO ONE DEGREE OR ANOTHER, just about all of us are unsatisfied with ourselves and our circumstances—and that’s not necessarily a bad thing. A certain amount of dissatisfaction is necessary if we’re ever going to make progress. To become all that we can be, we must dream of being more than we are. The problem is, too many of us stop there, in the dream stage. Why do you suppose that is?

More often than not, it’s because we don’t think we have what it takes to turn our dreams into reality. And we’re usually right about that. We can make some changes by sheer willpower or working harder, like reaching a new sales quota or dropping a dress or pants size. But what about the bigger changes, the changes inside that we know would make us so much happier and enable us to truly make a difference in our corner of the world? It’s that kind of change that is usually most elusive.

We’re not good enough, we tell ourselves. We have too many flaws and make too many mistakes. It’s just not in us!

Jesus summed it up so simply when He said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”¹ The secret lies in putting ourselves in God’s hands and letting Him do the impossible for us and through us and sometimes in spite of us. We’re small, weak, and incapable, but there is a very big and strong and capable God just waiting to help us.

KEITH PHILLIPS WAS *ACTIVATED*’S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FOR 14 YEARS FROM 1999 TO 2013. HE AND HIS WIFE CARYN NOW WORK WITH THE HOMELESS IN THE U.S. ■

1. Mark 10:27

BE LIKE HIM

Christ in you, the hope of glory.
—*Colossians 1:27*

The secret of a Christian is that the supernatural is made natural in him by the grace of God, and the experience of this works out in the practical details of life.—*Oswald Chambers (1874–1917)*

To be like Christ. That is our goal, plain and simple. It sounds like a peaceful, relaxing, easy objective. But stop and think. He learned obedience by the things he suffered. So must we. It is neither easy nor quick nor natural. It is impossible in the flesh, slow in coming, and supernatural in scope. Only Christ can accomplish it within us.—*Chuck Swindoll (b. 1934)*

That energy is God’s energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working.—*Philippians 2:13 MSG* ■



ONE MAN'S TRASH

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

WHEN WE LACK FAITH, we miss miracles that are trying to be delivered to us. Life is a lot about having the faith to see possibilities that others might overlook. Take apple seeds, for example. Most people throw away the core and seeds as worthless, but someone with faith as small as that seed might see in them a world of opportunity.

When His disciples were frustrated that they were unable to cure certain diseases, Jesus told them that they were ineffectual because of their unbelief: “You don’t have enough faith,” Jesus told them. “I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to

this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.”¹

Hey, wait a minute! Jesus said mustard seed, not apple seed. Right, but the point was that if we just have a little bit of faith we can accomplish a lot, even move mountains! And that was before the invention of dynamite or huge dump trucks to blast and haul mountains.

Behind my house is an old and venerable apple tree. Come late August the grass below is full of apples, most of them with a worm or two squiggling about, as we don’t use pesticides. The majority is only fit for the compost, but if you cut out the bad bits before the worm has gotten too comfortable, and slice or chop them up, you can make a fantastic apple pie.

This brings me to one of my favorite examples of a man who had a lot of faith to see opportunities in small possibilities. I am talking about John Chapman, affectionately known as Johnny Appleseed. Legends abound concerning this American folk hero, but there is enough truth about his life to warrant retelling:

Johnny Appleseed lived from 1774 to 1845 and came from the area of my hometown, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He collected the discarded apple seeds from the apple cider mills, then cleaned and dried them in preparation for planting. He would put them in a pouch and set off to the pioneer areas out west that were just being settled at that time. He planted apple nurseries with his seeds and nurtured them until they

1. Matthew 17:20 NLT

2. <http://elixirmime.com>



were saplings, big enough to sell or barter for clothes and other items.

This barefoot tree-planting preacher was a welcome visitor to the settlers. They invited him into their homes, glad to hear news from the places Johnny had just been to and the stories he had to tell. He also was a kind of mobile lending library because he had his Bible divided up into sections and would leave one book with a settler home and then exchange it for another book when he passed through that same way again.

Apples from trees that are grown from seeds are seldom sweet, so the apples Johnny grew were usually processed into apple cider (used as a food preservative), and the trees were used to mark land boundaries.

Like Johnny, we can grab ahold of the opportunities that come our way. When the doors or windows of possibilities open to us, we can enter in and partake of the blessings that God has for us and for others that we touch. Realizing an opportunity when it presents itself is just the first step, and then come all the steps that follow to bring that possibility to fruition, not unlike the many challenges Johnny faced nurturing apple trees from seeds.

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A SCRIPTWRITER AND MIME ARTIST² IN GERMANY. HE HAS WRITTEN A FICTIONALIZED STORY OF JOHNNY APPLESEED, WHICH CAN BE READ FOR FREE HERE: [HTTPS://BRINGELIXIR.WORDPRESS.COM/2013/11/11/CHRISTMAS-WITH-JOHNNY](https://bringelixir.wordpress.com/2013/11/11/christmas-with-johnny). ■

MAKING IT HAPPEN

It is not my ability, but my response to God's ability, that counts.—*Corrie ten Boom* (1892–1983)

Alas for those who never sing, but die with all their music in them.—*Wendell Holmes* (1809–1894)

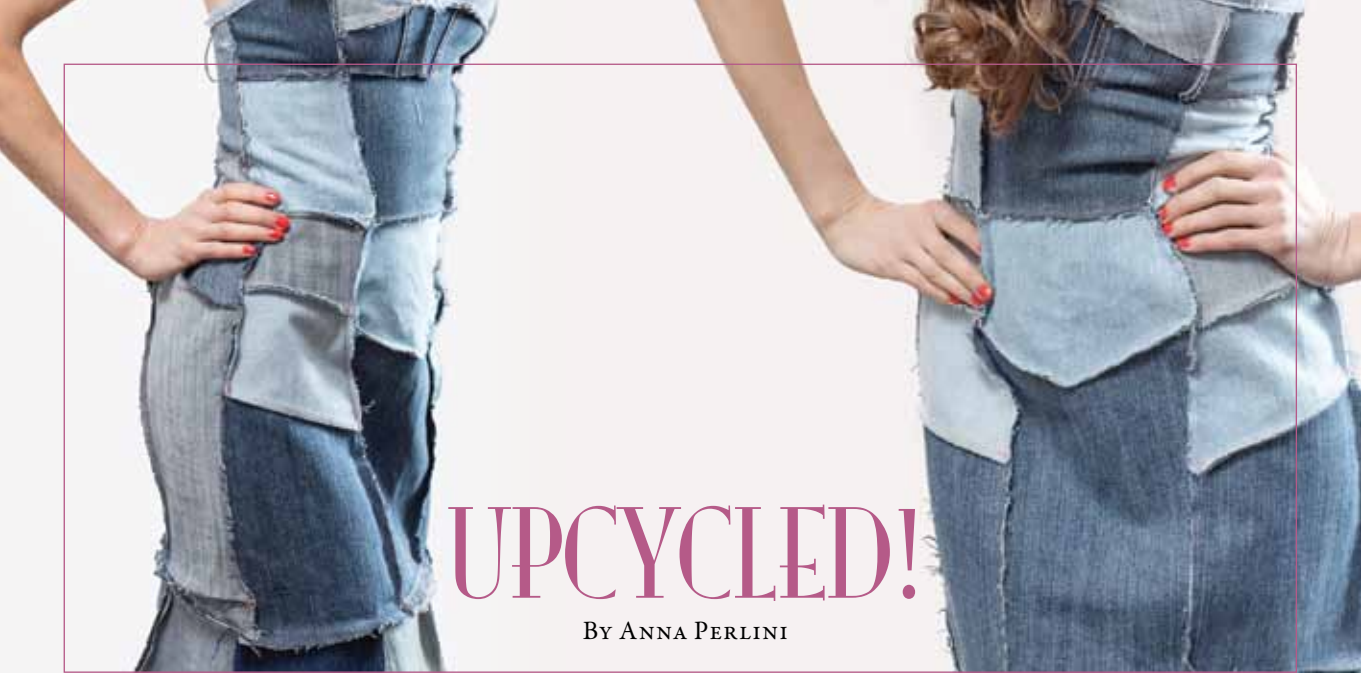
Trust yourself. Create the kind of self that you will be happy to live with all your life. Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement.—*Golda Meir* (1898–1978)

Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma—which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most importantly, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.—*Steve Jobs* (1955–2011)

Here is the test to find whether your mission on earth is finished. If you're alive, it isn't.—*Richard Bach* (b. 1936)

Don't be afraid of the space between your dreams and reality. If you can dream it, you can make it so.—*Belva Davis* (b. 1932)

Don't be too timid and squeamish about your actions. All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1803–1882) ■



UPCYCLED!

BY ANNA PERLINI

IT NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME HOW LIDIJA, a dear friend of mine, can turn garbage into works of art. As a volunteer, she runs a day center called *Koraci* (Steps) and organizes art workshops for children, the elderly, the disabled, young people, housewives, etc.

Besides the more conventional techniques, such as ceramics, pressed flowers, and decoupage, I find her upcycled art the most fascinating, almost like a miracle performed each time she puts her hands on something of apparently no value. In fact, I keep a bag by my desk labelled “Lidija,” in which I collect all sorts of cans, broken pieces of glass, bits and pieces of material, discarded jewelry, small cardboard containers, and whatnot. If it wasn’t for Lidija’s bag, these would go in the garbage bin.

Over and over, I’ve seen all of the above transformed into astonishing pieces of art. Lidija’s motto is “Never throw anything away; it can

all be used.” People who know her often smile when they see her eyes get that special spark—*there she goes again*—but she can already visualize what a random discarded object can become.

But there’s another field, even more valuable, in which Lidija practices upcycling, and that is at her workplace. For a few years now, she’s been working in a reformatory for juvenile delinquents, ranging from 8 to 18 years old. These kids, usually coming from the worst strata of society, are like diamonds in the rough; it takes someone with extra eyes of love and faith to see the potential in them. Every time I observe Lidija in action, showering love and attention on these kids, teaching them art, cooking, manners, giving them a hug or an extra snack on the side, treating them like they were her own sons, crying and praying for them, rejoicing when they succeed, well, that’s the best kind of “upcycling” I see!

Thanks to her loving care, some of them have made it to better lives,

diamonds in the rough, forever thankful that one day someone picked them from the virtual garbage can and upcycled them!

ANNA PERLINI IS A COFOUNDER OF PER UN MONDO MIGLIORE,¹ A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION ACTIVE IN THE BALKANS SINCE 1995. ■

Upcycling: Recycling means to turn waste into a reusable product or to refurbish a product for reuse. Upcycling, a particular form of recycling, involves turning waste material or an unwanted product into a better-quality product. Upcycling projects can be as simple as folding an old newspaper into a biodegradable flowerpot. Other options include jewelry made from zippers, felted slippers made from the wool of used sweaters, bags made from crocheted strips of plastic grocery bags, and T-shirts turned into trendy children’s dresses.—<http://homeguides.sfgate.com/recycling-vs-upcycling-79761.html>

1. <http://www.perunmondomigliore.org>

A high-angle photograph of a man and a woman in a kitchen. The man, wearing a blue t-shirt, is leaning over a white sink and smiling. The woman, wearing a red and white plaid shirt, is also leaning over the sink and smiling. They are both looking at several paint color swatches that are fanned out on the edge of the sink. The background shows a white kitchen counter and a white bowl containing more paint swatches.

In need of a makeover?

Quiet Moments

BY ABI MAY

THERE ARE COUNTLESS PEOPLE WHOSE LIVES have been changed by an encounter with Jesus, both within and beyond the context of Bible history.

Paul is often rightly cited as an example of the power of Jesus to transform lives. He was a Pharisee (a member of an ancient Jewish religious group) who was so dead set against the followers of Jesus that he took it upon himself to launch a crusade for their imprisonment and in some cases death. Yet after “seeing the light” on the road to Damascus and his subsequent dramatic conversion, he went on to become one of the principal

leaders of early Christianity. He is credited with writing approximately two-thirds of the New Testament’s text and was undoubtedly one of the driving forces behind the evangelism of the non-Jewish world of the time.

That is one outstanding transformation, and just because it is so outstanding, it can easily seem out of reach. Most of us want to improve ourselves, but we might not consider it likely that we could have such a remarkable makeover. After all, how many of the millions of converts to Christianity each year get their “names in the paper” like Paul, not to speak of the other 2.2 billion Christians alive today?

That’s why looking at some of the other people whom Jesus met can be a little bit more relatable.

There’s the woman with a dubious past who found peace of mind.¹ There’s the tax collector who decided

to mend his dishonest ways.² There are all the nameless people who were just happy to hear Him speak.³ There’s the lady who stood up straight for the first time in 18 years.⁴ Even Thomas, whose analytical mind was often a barrier, discovered true faith at the touch of the risen Savior.⁵

God’s makeovers happen in ways big and small. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”⁶ The new creation doesn’t usually happen at once, but the more we live in Him day by day, the further we go toward reaching our potential.

Dear Lord, help me to dwell in You day-by-day, so that in turn You will work in me and help me become ever more like You.

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

1. See Luke 7:44–50.
2. See Luke 19:1–10.
3. See Luke 8:40.
4. See Luke 13:11–13.
5. See John 20:28.
6. 2 Corinthians 5:17



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Learning equals progress

Take a look at the natural world. Look at the plants as they sprout new leaves and the flowers as they blossom. Look at the little birds as they learn how to take flight for the first time. Look at the little kittens and puppies and how enthusiastic they are about each opportunity to explore and learn new things. Learning and growing makes the world beautiful, and it can make your life beautiful as well.

Learn from the cycle of growth in nature. There is constant renewal and growth in both plant and animal life. Life that doesn't continue the renewal process will eventually die. Growing is what life is all about. I provide you with the opportunities for growth, learning, and renewal that your spirit needs; you just need to reach for these things, accept them, and flow with them.

Don't ever be satisfied with what you already know to the point that you're not willing to learn more. What you learned in the past is important, but it's not all that you need. You've got to apply the useful things from the past, leave the outdated and cumbersome things behind, and press forward toward the new.

Learning is an essential part of the school of life. At each phase of life, I teach you something new. Then, once you've learned all that I have for you in that phase, I graduate you to the next phase. And you continue in the cycle of learning, until your graduation from this life into the next.¹

1. See Matthew 25:23.