Excerpts from

*Outlive Your Life: You Were Made to Make a Difference*

By Max Lucado

**Outliving Your Life (Chapter 1)**

By the time you knew what to call it, you were neck deep in it. You’d toddler-walked and talked, smelled crayons and swung bats, gurgled and giggled your way out of diapers and into childhood.

You’d noticed how guys aren’t gals and dogs aren’t cats and pizza sure beats spinach. And then, somewhere in the midst of it all, it hit you. At your grandpa’s funeral perhaps. Maybe when you waved good-bye as your big brother left for the marines. You realized that these days are more than ice cream trips, homework, and pimples. This is called life. And this one is yours.

Complete with summers and songs and gray skies and tears, you have a life. Didn’t request one, but you have one. A first day. A final day. And a few thousand in between. You've been given an honest-to-goodness human life.

You've been given your life. No one else has your version. You’ll never bump into yourself on the sidewalk. You’ll never meet anyone who has your exact blend of lineage, loves, and longings. Your life will never be lived by anyone else. You’re not a jacket in an attic that can be recycled after you are gone.

Some people don’t bother with such thoughts. They grind through their days without lifting their eyes to look. They live and die and never ask why.

But you aren’t numbered among them, or you wouldn’t be holding a book entitled *Outlive Your Life*. It’s not enough for you to do well. You want to do good. You want your life to matter. You want to live in such a way that the world will be glad you did. But how can you? How can I? Can God use us?

We are created by a great God to do great works. He invites us to outlive our lives, not just in heaven but here on earth. Here’s a salute to a long life: goodness that outlives the grave, love that outlasts the final breath. May you live in such a way that your death is just the beginning of your life.

**What About the Common Guy? (Chapter 2)**


Just ask the twenty-two people who traveled to London on a fall morning in 2009 to thank Nicholas Winton. They could have passed for a retirement-home social club. All were in their seventies or eighties. More gray hair than not. More shuffled steps than quick ones. But this was no social trip. It was a journey of gratitude. They came to thank the man who had saved their lives: a stooped centenarian who met them on a train platform just as he had in 1939.

He was a twenty-nine-year-old stockbroker at the time. Hitler’s armies were ravaging the nation of Czechoslovakia, tearing Jewish families apart and marching parents to concentration camps. No one was caring for the children. Winton got wind of their plight and resolved to help them. He used his vacation to travel to Prague, where he met parents who, incredibly, were willing to entrust their children’s future to his care. After returning to England, he worked his regular job on the stock exchange by day and advocated for the children at night. He convinced Great Britain to permit their entry. He found foster homes and raised funds. Then he scheduled his first transport on March 14, 1939, and accomplished seven more over the next five months. His last trainload of children arrived on August 2, bringing the total of rescued children to 669.

On September 1, the biggest transport was to take place, but Hitler invaded Poland, and Germany closed borders throughout Europe. None of the 250 children on that train were ever seen again.

After the war Winton didn’t tell anyone of his rescue efforts, not even his wife. In 1988 she found a scrapbook in their attic with all the children’s photos and a complete list of names. She prodded him to tell the story. As he has, rescued children have returned to say thank you. The grateful group includes a film director, a Canadian journalist, a news correspondent, a former minister in the British cabinet, a magazine manager, and one of the
founders of the Israeli Air Force. There are some seven thousand children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who owe their existence to Winton's bravery. He wears a ring given to him by some of the children he saved. It bears a line from the Talmud, the book of Jewish law: “Save one life. Save the world.” Chalk up another one for the common guy.

**Aren’t They All Our Children? (Chapter 5)**

Some years back a reporter covering the conflict in Sarajevo saw a little girl shot by a sniper. The back of her head had been torn away by the bullet. The reporter threw down his pad and pencil and stopped being a reporter for a few minutes. He rushed to the man who was holding the child and helped them both into his car. As the reporter stepped on the accelerator, racing to the hospital, the man holding the bleeding child said, “Hurry, my friend. My child is still alive.” A moment or two later he pleaded, “Hurry, my friend. My child is still breathing.”

A moment later, “Hurry, my friend. My child is still warm.” Finally, “Hurry. Oh my God, my child is getting cold.” When they arrived at the hospital, the little girl had died. As the two men were in the lavatory, washing the blood off their hands and their clothes, the man turned to the reporter and said, “This is a terrible task for me. I must go tell her father that his child is dead. He will be heartbroken.”

The reporter was amazed. He looked at the grieving man and said, “I thought she was your child.” The man looked back and said, “No, but aren’t they all our children?” Indeed. Those who suffer belong to all of us. And if all of us respond, there is hope.

**A Kick in the Gut (Chapter 7)**

Simon the Pharisee once disdained Jesus’ kindness toward a woman of questionable character. So Jesus tested him: “Do you see this woman?” (Luke 7:44). Simon didn’t. He saw a hussy, a streetwalker, a scamp. He didn’t see the woman.

What do we see when we see . . .

• the figures beneath the overpass, encircling the fire in a five-gallon drum?
• the news clips of children in refugee camps?
• reports of 1.75 billion people who live on less than $1.25 a day?

What do we see? "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). This word compassion is one of the oddest in Scripture. The New Testament Greek lexicon says this word means "to be moved as to one’s bowels . . . (for the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and pity)." It shares a root system with splanchnology, the study of the visceral parts. Compassion, then, is a movement deep within—a kick in the gut.

Perhaps that is why we turn away. Who can bear such an emotion? Especially when we can do nothing about it. Why look suffering in the face if we can’t make a difference? Yet what if we could? What if our attention could reduce someone’s pain? This is the promise of the encounter.

**Do Good, and Never Forget (Chapter 11)**

Gradually our big God changes us. And, gratefully, we lust less, love more, lash out less, look heavenward more. We pay bills, pay attention to spouses, pay respect to parents. People notice the difference. They applaud us. Promote us. Admire us. Appoint us. We dare to outlive our lives. We—who came to Christ as sinful, soiled, and small—accomplish things. We build orphanages, lead companies, deliver the confused out of depression and the sick out of disease. Why, we even write books. We don’t feel so small anymore. People talk to us as if we are something special.

“You have great influence.”
“What strong faith you have.”
“We need mighty saints like you.”

Feels nice. Kudos become ladder rungs, and we begin to elevate ourselves. We shed our smallness, discard the Clark Kent glasses, and don a Superman swagger. We forget. We forget who brought us here. We behave like the tick in the ear of the elephant. The big animal broke loose from the herd and charged across a wooden bridge. The worn-out bridge shivered and groaned, barely able to support the weight. When they reached the
other side, the tick puffed out its chest and declared, “Boy, did we shake that bridge.” We think we’re shaking up the world when actually we’re just along for the ride.

Take time to remember. “Look at what you were when God called you” (1 Cor. 1:26 ncv). Remember who held you in the beginning. Remember who holds you today.

**Don’t Give Up on Saul . . . or Max (Chapter 13)**

And you? Everyone else has written off your Saul. “He’s too far gone.” “She’s too hard . . . too addicted . . . too old . . . too cold.” No one gives your Saul a prayer. But you are beginning to realize that maybe God is at work behind the scenes. Maybe it’s too soon to throw in the towel . . . You begin to believe. Don’t resist these thoughts.

Don’t give up on your Saul. When others write him off, give him another chance. Stay strong. Call him brother. Call her sister. Tell your Saul about Jesus, and pray. And remember this: God never sends you where he hasn’t already been. By the time you reach your Saul, who knows what you’ll find.

My favorite Ananias-type story involves a couple of college roommates. The Ananias of the pair was a tolerant soul. He tolerated his friend’s late-night drunkenness, midnight throw-ups, and all day sleepins. He didn’t complain when his friend disappeared for the weekend or smoked cigarettes in the car. He could have requested a roommate who went to church more or cursed less or cared about something other than impressing girls. But he hung with his personal Saul, seeming to think that something good could happen if the guy could pull his life together. So he kept cleaning up the mess, inviting his roommate to church, and covering his back.

I don’t remember a bright light or a loud voice. I’ve never traveled a desert road to Damascus. But I distinctly remember Jesus knocking me off my perch and flipping on the light. It took four semesters, but Steve’s example and Jesus’ message finally got through. So if this book lifts your spirit, you might thank God for my Ananias, Steve Green. Even more, you might listen to that voice in your heart and look on your map for a street called Straight.

**Prayer & Action (Chapter 15)**

Let’s pray, *first*. Traveling to help the hungry? Be sure to bathe your mission in prayer. Working to disentangle the knots of injustice? Pray. Weary with a world of racism and division? So is God. And he would love to talk to you about it.

Let’s pray, *most*. Did God call us to preach without ceasing? Or teach without ceasing? Or have committee meetings without ceasing? Or sing without ceasing? No, but he did call us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).

Did Jesus declare: My house shall be called a house of study? Fellowship? Music? A house of exposition? A house of activities? No, but he did say, “My house will be called a house of prayer” (Mark 11:17 niv). No other spiritual activity is guaranteed such results. “When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action” (Matt. 18:19 msg). He is moved by the humble, prayerful heart.

**The value of compassion (Chapter 16)**

There are many reasons to help people in need. “Benevolence is good for the world.”

“We all float on the same ocean. When the tide rises, it benefits everyone.”

“To deliver someone from poverty is to unleash that person’s potential as a researcher, educator, or doctor.”

“As we reduce poverty and disease, we reduce war and atrocities. Healthy, happy people don’t hurt each other.”

Compassion has a dozen advocates. But for the Christian, none is higher than this: when we love those in need, we are loving Jesus. It is a mystery beyond science, a truth beyond statistics. But it is a message that Jesus made crystal clear: when we love them, we love him.

This is the theme of his final sermon. The message he saved until last. He must want this point imprinted on our conscience. He depicted the final judgment scene. The last day, the great Day of Judgment. Jesus at some point will “separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats” (Matt. 25:32).
Shepherds do this. They walk among the flock and, one by one, with the use of a staff direct goats in one direction and sheep in the other. Graphic, this thought of the Good Shepherd stepping through the flock of humanity.

How can one envision this moment without the sudden appearance of this urgent question: What determines his choice? How does Jesus separate the people? Jesus gives the answer. Those on the right, the sheep, will be those who fed him when he was hungry, brought him water when he was thirsty, gave him lodging when he was lonely, clothing when he was naked, and comfort when he was sick or imprisoned. The sign of the saved is their concern for those in need. Compassion does not save them—or us. Salvation is the work of Christ. **Compassion is the consequence of salvation.**

The sheep will react with a sincere question: when? When did we feed, visit, clothe, or comfort you (vv. 34–39)?

Jesus’ answer will sound something like this. “Remember when you got off the subway? It was a wintry Washington morning. Commuters were bundled and busy and focused on their work. You were too, mind you. But then you saw me. Yes, that was me! Standing between the coffee kiosk and the newsstand, that was me. I was wearing a baseball cap and a scarf and playing a fiddle. The mob rushed past as if I were a plastic plant. But you stopped. I knew you were busy. You looked at your watch twice. But still you stopped and remembered me. You stepped over to the coffee stand, bought me a cup, and brought it over. I want you to know I never forgot that.”

Jesus will recount, one by one, all the acts of kindness. Every deed done to improve the lot of another person. Even the small ones. In fact, they all seem small. Giving water. Offering food. Sharing clothing. As Chrysostom pointed out, “We do not hear, ‘I was sick and you healed me,’ or ‘I was in prison and you liberated me.’” The works of mercy are simple deeds. And yet, in these simple deeds we serve Jesus. **Astounding this truth: we serve Christ by serving needy people.**

**Mother Teresa (Chapter 16)**

Who would have ever pegged this slight Albanian woman as a change agent? Born in a cauldron of ethnic strife, the Balkans. Shy and introverted as a child. Of fragile health. One of three children. Daughter of a generous but unremarkable businessman. Yet somewhere along her journey, she became convinced that Jesus walked in the “distressing disguise of the poor,” and she set out to love him by loving them. In 1989 she told a reporter that her Missionaries had picked up around fifty-four thousand people from the streets of Calcutta and that twenty-three thousand or so had died in their care. I wonder if God creates people like Mother Teresa so he can prove his point: “See, you can do something today that will outlive your life.”

There are several billion reasons to consider his challenge. Some of them live in your neighborhood; others live in jungles you can’t find and have names you can’t pronounce. Some of them play in cardboard slums or sell sex on a busy street. Some of them walk three hours for water or wait all day for a shot of penicillin. Some of them brought their woes on themselves, and others inherited the mess from their parents.

None of us can help everyone. But all of us can help someone. And when we help them, we serve Jesus. Who would want to miss a chance to do that?

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