

Max Lucado: Outlive Your Life

In his new book, Outlive Your Life, best-selling author Max  Lucado reminds us that God has always used normal, everyday people to change the world. The disciples were ordinary people, working regular jobs, living normal lives. But they answered the call to follow Jesus and ultimately changed the world. God is still looking for regular folks-soccer moms, blue-collar workers, students-anyone who is willing to answer God's call to make an extraordinary difference.

This message has also been adapted for teens in the book You Were Made to Make a Difference, which Lucado wrote with daughter Jenna Lucado Bishop. Lucado's also releasing One Hand, Two Hands to help children realize that they can help others.

Lucado talks about the message of Outlive Your Life. (Side note: Lucado is already taking his own message to heart; 100 percent of the author's royalties from Outlive Your Life products are going to benefit children and families through World Vision.)

Q: Why did you write *Outlive Your Life*?

A: It started with three questions. I heard them about four or five years ago and I'm still reeling from them. The first question came from a fellow, just out of curiosity, who said if you'd been a German pastor during the Nazi occupation, would you have taken a stand against Adolf Hitler? Then someone asked me a similar question just two or three weeks later. They said if you had been a pastor in the Deep South during the civil rights movement would you have taken a stand against racism? Another good question, but I didn't live in the South during the civil rights movement. I certainly didn't live in Germany during World War II. That's why the third question was really powerful. The person said, when your

children and grandchildren learn that you lived in a day in which 3 billion people were desperately poor and a billion people were hungry, what would they think of your response to this crisis? Now that's a good question.

All of us have an opportunity now to do something to set a great example for our children and our grandchildren. That's why I wrote *Outlive Your Life*. 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.

Q: With billions of folks on the planet today, how can one life really make a difference?

A: 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.

You know I think down deep all of us want to make a difference. It's not enough just to do well; we really want to do good. And I think that's why the stories of the earliest followers of Jesus are so powerful. These folks written about in Acts are just ordinary people-converted street walkers, fishermen and even terrorists-who truly made a difference in their world. We're still studying and reading about what they did 2,000 years later. Who wouldn't want to be a part of something like that?

Q: How do we view global challenges, like hunger and AIDS, without losing hope?

A: The problems are so devastating and overwhelming. We have 3 billion people who are desperately poor; a billion people worldwide who are hungry; 30,000 children die every day of preventable diseases. These are devastating times, yet at the same time we have opportunities like we've never had. We can

travel around the world in 24 hours. We can send a message in a millisecond.

The church has never been more educated or more affluent. It's been proven there's enough food on the earth to feed everyone on the earth a 2,500 calorie-a-day diet. Now I realize there are huge distribution problems, and these problems are not simple, but the potential is there. My prayer is that this is the generation to take advantage of their extraordinary capacities during these devastating times and really make a difference.

Q: My own life has plenty of troubles to manage. How do I find a way to connect with the needs of others?

A: We do have our own issues. Our sputtering marriages, fading ambitions, dwindling bank accounts and stubborn hearts. How can we change the world when we can't even change our bad habits? We don't have what it takes to solve these problems. Best to climb in, just like a clam and shut the shell, right?

But I think there's a great answer to our natural tendency to crawl back in our shell in the biblical book of Acts. It's the story of the day of Pentecost and the great miracle that occurred. It's really a bizarre chapter. You've got the disciples in the Upper Room. They're praying, they're wondering what they're supposed to do next, and the Holy Spirit comes upon them. They are suddenly able to speak in languages that they've never studied. They're connecting with people from all over the world. What do we do with a story like that? When God gives us a challenge, He is also going to give us His power. When God gives us a challenge of changing the world, He's not going to leave us alone to figure it out on our own.

Get out there and walk around among the people with whom you are most "fluent." Look for the people whose language makes sense to you. I'm not talking about linguistics ability. Some

of you can speak the different languages-the language of the poor, the language of the young, the language of the academic or the language of the single mom. There are some people in society with whom you quickly connect, that's the language God has asked you to speak. That's your area of fluency.

Q: You are encouraging us to help those who are physically poor. What about spiritual poverty?

A: As we deliver bread we can't forget to deliver Jesus. There are a lot of people doing good works, many people reaching out to others around the world. The governmental agencies and secular relief organizations cannot give what Christ has given us to share, and that is the hope of eternal life; the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Other organizations can make this life better; because of Christ, we can make this life make sense. We can give hope by helping people understand that God loves them and cares for them. So yes, let's care for the body absolutely. But amidst the distribution of food and water and the digging of wells, let's make certain that we share the good news of Jesus.

Q: I believe we should help the poor. But how much of a priority should it be?

A: To me, the most electrifying image of God's concern for the poor is Jesus' first public message. He's been invited to speak at the local synagogue in Nazareth. He's handed the book of Isaiah, stands up to speak, and He selects His verse. This is the only occasion in the Bible where Jesus selects a verse to read. Many times He quotes passages but this is the only time He opens the Scripture and picks a passage. And here's what He picks. He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." He's barely opened His mouth and He's

already talking about the poor.

His mission statement, if you will, is focused on the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blind and the oppressed. All these people are included in His mission statement. Then Jesus says He's going to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. This is a reference to the practice in the Old Testament called the Year of Jubilee. During the Year of Jubilee all of the land was given a year off. The soil recovers. The slaves were set free. The property was returned to its original owners. Twice a century God wants everyone to get a fresh start. It's like He pushes the reset button on the machinery of social justice, or He takes society like a social etch-a-sketch and He shakes it and everyone gets a clean slate.

Q: You write about the disparity between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” What can be done?

A: A few of us have a lot while many of us don't have much. About 75 percent of the world's resources go to about 20 percent of the people. The “haves” and the “have-nots” are not very close together. This is a very complex issue but why does it exist? Why does this disparity exist on the earth? As the singer and humanitarian Bono says: People are born in the wrong latitude. People are simply born and raised in areas of the world that don't have the basic resources that many of us have taken for granted.

I'm thinking of a friend of mine who lives in Ethiopia named Dahdi. He's every bit of hard working as I am, likely more so. He's well-respected in his village. He has a delightful family. The truth of the matter is he was born in a place that doesn't have some of the basic things that I've benefited from, things like paved roads, access to education, vaccinations and government subsidies. Things I take for granted are things that he's never seen.

What can we do about this disparity? The book of Acts teaches

us the whole church should get involved. When the apostles realized that some of the people were not being fed in the city of Jerusalem they called for a churchwide meeting. The problem of poverty needs to engage every single person in the church. Second, the Acts church decided to get the brightest among us to direct us. The apostles said the problem is so big we need our best thinkers thinking about it. That's why we need to partner with organizations like Compassion, World Vision, Living Water and International Justice Mission. These people who are giving their best thoughts, their best energies, and their best hours to disentangling these difficult knots. Third, we can just get ticked off. We need to be upset. We need to be troubled by the fact that 850 million people are going to bed hungry every night. It needs to bother us that 30,000 children are dying every day from preventable diseases. The church should get mad and let's see what we can do about it.

Q: It can be a challenge to get past our biases when the needy don't look like us. How can we love and serve better?

A: I think it all begins with an honest look and a helping hand. There's a dear lady in our church whose son is homeless, and has been since he was 18 years old and now he's somewhere in his mid-30s. She only knows where he is when he gets put in jail and she is contacted by the authorities. When we had a conference about helping the poor in our church, she came forward saying she wanted to tell her story about her son. She wants to change the way people look at the homeless. Perhaps they will see a homeless person and think, That's someone's son.

The word for this is compassion, and compassion is a great word in the Bible. The Greek word *splanchnology*, which is the study of the visceral parts or literally a study of the gut. When you think about it, compassion is something we feel down deep in our stomach. It's kind of like a kick in the gut. This compassion says, Let's look at the hurting until we hurt with

them. Let's sympathize. Let's empathize. Let's try to understand their situation. No hurrying past, no polite glances, and then looking away, but let's look in the face of the hurting until we hurt with them. Then the actions that come out of the honest heart of compassion are not judgmental actions.

Q: How can we act on the message of *Outlive Your Life*?

A: It all boils down to this-God uses common folk to do uncommon things. The disciples were common. I mean they were regular guys. Peter knew more about bass and boat docks than he did the Roman culture. Most of the disciples, if not all of them, had never traveled more than a week from their hometown. They weren't the most predictable of guys either. Peter told Jesus to forget the cross. John wanted Jesus to torch the city. When Jesus needed people to pray with Him, they slept. When He needed friends, they ran.

But after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus-only six weeks later-we see these guys literally on fire. They changed the world. We're common folk like that too. Most of us sit in the bleachers. Most of us aren't the straight A students. Most of us aren't selected to lead the organization, we're just common folk. The big message of the book of Acts is that God can use regular folk like you and like me to literally change the world. There is no indication that Jesus chose His disciples for any other reason except this, that when He said, "Follow Me," they said, "I will."

What would happen if when Jesus says, "Follow Me," we say the same? You were made to make a difference. Now go and make the difference.

Click [here](#) to purchase *Outlive Your Life*.