

Talked Away from the Ledge

Author Jim Burns, in his book *Radically Committed*, tells about an incident a few years ago when police in New York City were called to a building where a woman was threatening suicide.

She was standing on top of a 54-story building, ready to jump to her death. The police suicide squad was taking the woman extremely seriously. She didn't look the type in her expensive dress and distinguished appearance. But every attempt to convince her to get down from the ledge ended in failure.

One of the police officers called his pastor to pray. His pastor said he would come right over and see if he could help.

When this wise old minister surveyed the situation, he asked the captain if he might try and get close enough to talk with the woman. The captain shrugged and said, "What do we have to lose?"

But as the pastor started walking toward the woman, she screamed as before, "Don't come any closer or I'll jump!"

The minister took a step backward and called out to her, "I'm sorry you believe no one loves you!"

This got her attention, and also that of the suicide squad because it was such an unorthodox style. The pastor went on to say, "Your grandchildren must never have given you any attention."

At this statement, the woman took a step toward the pastor and emphatically replied, "My family loves me and my grandchildren are wonderful. I have eight grandchildren."

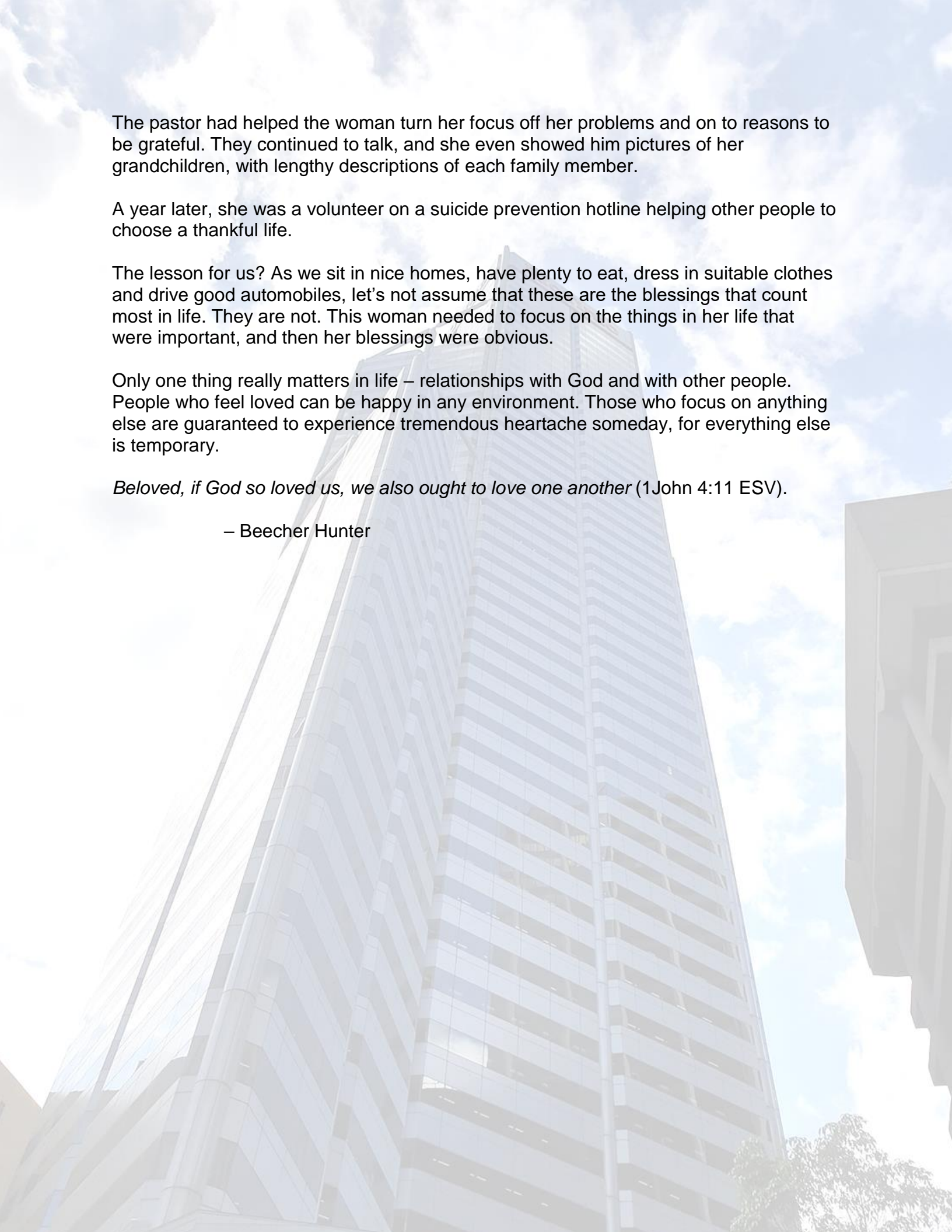
The pastor took a step toward her and said, "But then you must be very poor to be so desperate as to jump."

She looked at her plump body and very nice dress and said, "Do I look like I'm in need of a meal? We live near Central Park in a beautiful apartment."

The pastor took another step. He was now within three feet of her. He asked, "Then why do you want to jump and kill yourself?"

Her surprising reply was, "I don't remember."

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The pastor had helped the woman turn her focus off her problems and on to reasons to be grateful. They continued to talk, and she even showed him pictures of her grandchildren, with lengthy descriptions of each family member.

A year later, she was a volunteer on a suicide prevention hotline helping other people to choose a thankful life.

The lesson for us? As we sit in nice homes, have plenty to eat, dress in suitable clothes and drive good automobiles, let's not assume that these are the blessings that count most in life. They are not. This woman needed to focus on the things in her life that were important, and then her blessings were obvious.

Only one thing really matters in life – relationships with God and with other people. People who feel loved can be happy in any environment. Those who focus on anything else are guaranteed to experience tremendous heartache someday, for everything else is temporary.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (1John 4:11 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter