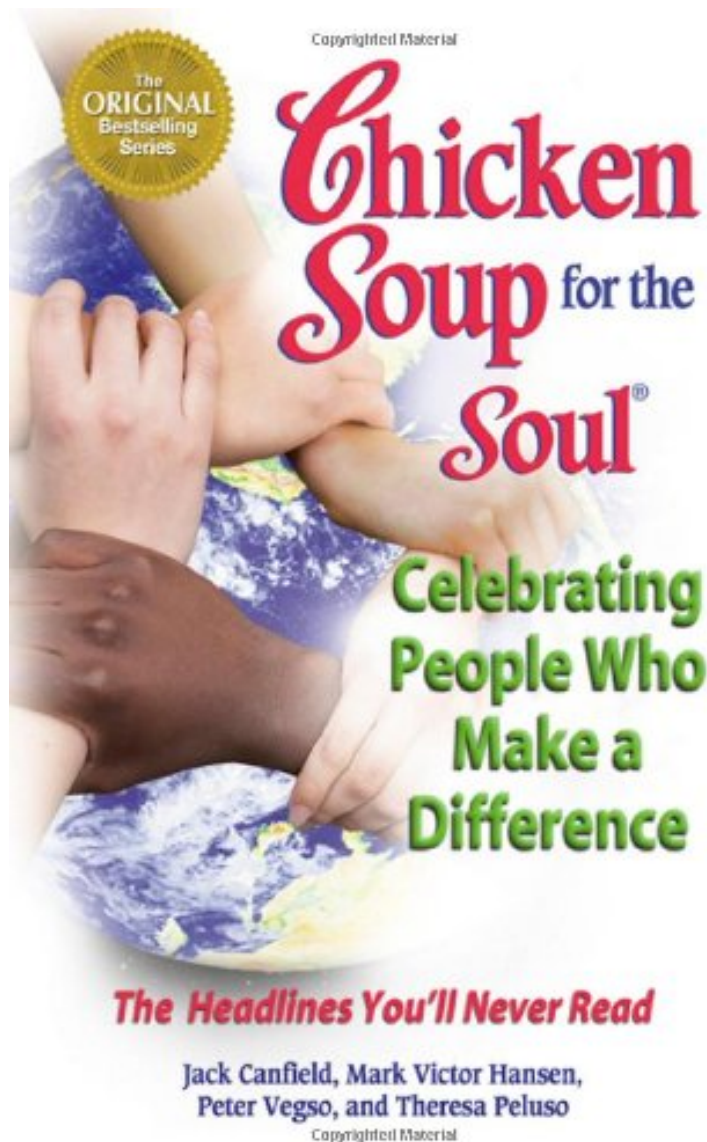


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Chicken Soup for the Soul Celebrating People Who Make a Difference: The Headlines You'll Never Read

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Changing the World One Person at a TimeChicken Soup for the Soul Celebrating People Who Make a Difference reveals a side of humanity we rarely see heralded on the evening news. This inspiring collection of stories chronicles the small kindnesses that make a huge difference, the ordinary experiences that have profound impact, and the defining moments that change the lives of everyday people. Your heart will be touched when the despair of a lost two-year-old's parents turns to joy as an exhausted rescue team finds their baby in critical condition, but alive. And you may be left wondering if you could act as one woman did, when driving home alone on a dark night she finds unknown courage to come to the aid of someone about to be assaulted at an isolated bus stop. If you wonder about the direction the world is headed and whether kindness and compassion still exists, Chicken Soup for the Soul Celebrating People Who Make a Difference will restore your faith in the human spirit with these true stories of generosity, character, and courage.

About the AuthorJack Canfield is a sought-after national speaker and author and the co-creator of the New York Times and USA Today bestselling Chicken Soup for the Soul series. Mark Victor Hansen is a sought-after national speaker and author and the co-creator of the New York Times and USA Today bestselling Chicken Soup for the Soul series. Peter Vegso is the publisher of the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, as well as the coauthor of Chicken Soup for the Horse Lover's Soul, Chicken Soup for the Beach Lover's Soul and Chicken Soup for the Soul Love Stories. Theresa Peluso is the coauthor of many Chicken Soup for the Soul books, including the national bestseller Chicken Soup for the Horse Lover's Soul. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. 1A Helping Hand We have stopped for a moment to encounter each other. To meet, to love, to share. It is a precious moment, but it is transient. It is a little parenthesis in eternity. If we share with caring, lightheartedness, and love, we will create abundance and joy for each other, and this moment will have been worthwhile. Deepak Chopra, M.D. Rescue of Little Naomi Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Calvin Coolidge Darkness was closing in as I maneuvered my old Dodge Charger down the treacherous road around Blood Mountain toward home after my shift at Union County Medical Center in Blairsville, Georgia. Beep! My pager startled me. I answered to hear, 'You're to call this number in Dahlonega.' 'Dahlonega?' I wondered aloud, fear taking hold. Duane was taking the children hiking toward Dahlonega. But they should have been home hours ago! I dialed the number. 'Lumpkin County Sheriff's Office.' Suddenly I felt sick to my stomach. 'This is Mirna Whidden,' I said, panic building. 'What's wrong?' 'You need to get down here right away.' I started to cry. 'Tell me what's wrong.' 'Mrs. Whidden, one of your children is missing.' My heart stopped. Dear God, help me. I don't recall the hour's ride to Dahlonega. Unanswered questions pounded inside my head. Which child? What happened? A kidnapping? I bolted out of the car smack into a bevy of media people with cameras and microphones in hand. The sheriff rushed out and escorted me into his office. 'Where are my babies? I want to see my babies!' I was becoming hysterical. Finally I heard him say, 'Matthew and Rachel are back there in an office, playing with a computer and eating cookies. But your youngest the two-year-old is missing.' 'Naomi! Naomi is missing? What are you saying? Someone took my baby?' By now, I had lost all control. 'Your husband said she wandered off while they were hiking. She's lost in the forest.' 'Lost? Naomi is lost in the forest? My baby is out there all alone in those mountains? It's cold out there. And dark. And raining. And there are wild animals! We've got to find her! Take me there!' 'We have crews out there searching, Mrs. Whidden. It will be best if you stay here.' 'Where is my husband? I want to see Duane!' I needed Duane, desperately. I needed his steadying strength. 'Mr. Whidden is here, but you can't see him right now. We're questioning him, trying to find out what happened.' By nine o'clock, the officers surrendered to my frenzied pleas and drove me out through rugged terrain to the Chattahoochee National Forest. We passed a roadblock, then came to a stop where an old logging trail snaked precariously around the side of a mountain. 'This is where Mr. Whidden parked his car this morning,' the officer told me. 'He said the children stopped to play in a clearing about a mile and a half down this trail. He took his eyes off them for a minute and little Naomi disappeared.' I called out across the black forest, 'Naomi Naomi Mommy's here, baby. Come to Mommy.' My voice was devoured by the vast darkness. Far away, across the valley, I saw a long line of lights moving slowly through the trees. The searchers! Dear God, please help them find my baby. Beautiful little Naomi had just turned two. Naomi, with the precious pixie smile and big brown eyes, her light brown hair tied with a bright ribbon on top of her sweet head. Please, God, send your angels to look after Naomi. In the patrol car, I could hear communication between the staging area and searchers in the woods. The radio's every crackle made me hold my breath. At one point an Army helicopter was brought in, giving me hope. Its heat sensors located two coon hunters and a deer. But no little girl. Then search dogs arrived. In teams of two, they were led down the logging trail, not making a sound. 'The dogs will find her if anything can,' someone stated. But they didn't. I shivered in the night air as the

temperature dipped down to forty degrees. 'Naomi. . . .' Please, God, if they don't find her right away, put her into a deep sleep so she won't feel anything. So she won't feel fear or cold or pain. And especially, dear Lord, so she won't feel Mommy and Daddy abandoned her. It just about killed me to think she might feel we didn't love her. When Duane was finally brought out to the site at three in the morning, we held each other and cried. Soon after, the sheriff drove us home to get Naomi's bed linens so the dogs could pick up her scent. There, in the baby crib, her little brown teddy bear waited. I couldn't watch as the men donned rubber gloves, removed her sheets and pillowcase, and placed them in a plastic bag. With the coming of daylight, I just knew they would find Naomi. But as the hours ticked by and steady rain cast a dreary pall, I experienced an indescribable mental agony. Eventually, my anguished prayers began to include, Lord, I don't need to know the why of this. And whether I like the result or not, help me to accept it. But, Lord, most of all, I pray you will give Naomi peace in her little heart. By early afternoon on Saturday, almost twenty-four hours since Naomi had disappeared, hope dwindled for the more than 200 professionals and volunteers who were combing the forest. One more sweep and the searchers would abandon their efforts. Kip Clayton and his volunteer unit, the Habersham County High Angle Rescue Team, were making their final sweep when he led his search team to the outer limit of their assigned area. Reluctantly, he turned to start back but 'something' told him to go an additional 250 yards. He did. 'I turned and took two steps. She was lying five feet in front of me.' Shocked, he yelled to his teammates, 'I see her!' Kip feared little Naomi was dead. She was lying so still, face down in wet leaves and mud. 'Just as close up against a log as she could get.' Then a tiny whimper almost like a sigh came from the little soaked body. 'She's alive!' he shouted into the radio. 'She's alive!' At the same time, Al Stowers, a physician specializing in pediatric trauma medicine, who had recently received special training in hypothermia, arrived at the staging area to volunteer. Because the last search for Naomi was coming to an end, Dr. Stowers was turned away. Just as he put his car into gear and was about to drive away, someone ran toward him. 'Don't leave. We've found her! She's alive!' Dr. Stowers reached the ambulance just in time to see it was a 'load and go' situation. 'I'm right behind you,' he called out to the driver as they both sped off toward the local hospital. In the patrol car, Duane and I heard Kip's shouts over the radio 'She's alive! She's alive!' Relief and gratitude filled my being. 'Oh, Duane. She's alive.' 'They're rushing her to an ambulance,' an excited officer told us. 'We'll meet them at St. Joseph!' We beat them there. As they hurried Naomi into the ER, I called out to the little form in the huge cocoon of blankets, 'Naomi, baby. Mommy and Daddy are here. We love you!' We prayed. The doctor pronounced Naomi's condition critical. She was unconscious, swollen, and blue. Her temperature registered only 74 degrees; her heart rate just 70 beats per minute. 'I doubt if she could have survived out there another two hours,' Dr. Stowers told us. Ordering warmed intravenous fluid for Naomi, Dr. Stowers and the local medical team worked feverishly to stabilize her enough for transport to Egleston Children's Hospital in Atlanta for more intensive care. Dr. Stowers asked the director of nurses, 'Can you get me a pediatric nurse to travel with us?' Gail Blankenship, a highly skilled nurse with regular weekend duty in Atlanta, just happened not to have left home for work. An hour later, Sherrie, the respiratory specialist, sat at Naomi's head, operating the breathing bag; an EMT at her left checked equipment; Gail, the pediatric nurse, was at Naomi's right, keeping the IV tubes functioning; and Dr. Stowers, at her feet, watched the heart monitor. They positioned me so I could talk to her and pat her little head, barely visible above the heated-air blanket. Naomi's temperature remained precariously low, and she continued to be unresponsive. But when I gently laid my index finger in her hand, she weakly, very weakly, closed her little fingers around it. Midway to Atlanta, Naomi's eyes fluttered, and she murmured, 'Mama.' We all gasped. I continued to gently stroke her forehead, whispering, 'Naomi, baby. Mommy's here.' Then a faintly audible, 'Mama, song.' I knew what she wanted. I started singing softly, 'Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so.' Sherrie sang, too. And then, unbelievably, little Naomi through swollen and chapped lips tried to join in. I looked around at the circle. Dr. Stowers made no effort to hide the tears spilling down his face. Nor did we. Dear Jesus, who loves Naomi, thank you, thank you, thank you! On arrival at Egleston, Naomi's condition was still listed as critical. She was not yet fully conscious indeed she slept through most of Sunday. But on Monday she woke up her normal self. As her dad laughingly describes it, 'She perked right up and trashed the room.' Later that day, she walked to the car. Our little family came home together. I can never say thank-you enough to all those who took time from their busy lives to rescue little Naomi. They have my undying gratitude and my prayers that they will be blessed beyond measure. I will never wonder whether or not God hears and answers prayers, for only God and his ministering angels could have orchestrated such a miraculous set of circumstances. Yes, he hears. And answers. 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