Texas Governor Greg Abbott was paralyzed from the waist down in 1984 when an oak tree fell on him as he was jogging in Houston. He has since made overcoming adversity one of the themes of his public life.

For instance, he recently tweeted a video of a young man in a wheelchair climbing an indoor wall with the caption, “Never quit. Never give up. Overcome any challenge.” A person replied, “So great to see but if I ever end up in a wheelchair I’m just ending it.” The governor responded: “That’s what I thought before I ended up in a wheelchair. I’ve done more AFTER the accident that left me paralyzed than before that accident. With God all things are possible.”

Someone then tweeted back to the governor: “God put you in a wheelchair Greg.” Gov. Abbott replied, “God didn’t cause the accident that left me paralyzed, but He did help me persevere over that enormous challenge.”

He added: “I’m a testament that the glory of God is revealed by a young man’s back being broken in half and still rising up to be Governor of Texas. With God all is possible.”

How Luka Doncic changed a boy’s life

Greg Abbott is not the only public figure making news for the right reasons.

Prior to scoring twenty-seven points and leading his team to victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday, Dallas Mavericks superstar Luka Doncic met with twenty-two-month-old Kris Zudich and his family. The reason: Doncic helped raise more than $2.2 million so the boy could get medical treatment at UCLA for a rare muscle condition.

Three-time Cy Young Award-winning pitcher Clayton Kershaw and his wife, Ellen, are working with Dallas-based Topgolf and the International Justice Mission (IJM) to raise awareness on modern-day slavery, especially in the area of sex-trafficking. The Kershaws recently traveled to the Dominican Republic with IJM. They operate Kershaw’s Challenge, which benefits schools in West Dallas and Los Angeles, children in Zambia and, most recently, the Dominican.

And San Francisco 49ers star corner back Richard Sherman recently donated more than $7,000 to help
eradicate a middle school’s lunch debt. Earlier this year, his foundation donated $20,000 to Tacoma Public Schools for the same purpose.

Responders to terrorist are “truly the best of us”

Their stories remind us that making a real difference in the world comes at a cost.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan responded to the terror attack on London Bridge last Friday by praising those who acted to subdue the terrorist: “I will never forget the clips of three people (one a foreign EU citizen) taking on an armed and homicidal attacker with a whale tusk, a fire extinguisher and their bare hands. They and the police who joined them are truly the best of us.”

The Associated Press listed similar examples in the United States. Among them:

- Lori Kaye, who was killed as she blocked a shooter in a synagogue attack near San Diego last April
- Riley Howell, who died last May while tackling a gunman at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte
- Kendrick Castillo, who was the only student killed at his Denver school last May when he lunged at a shooter in his classroom, allowing other students time to escape
- James Shaw Jr., who wrestled away a rifle from a shooter in Nashville last April.

Examples of such sacrifice abound in God’s word. We think of Moses’ life-risking stand for his people before Pharaoh, Joshua’s courageous leadership in Canaan, David’s battle with Goliath, Daniel’s faith in the lions’ den, and the apostles’ testimony before the very men who arranged for Jesus’ execution (cf. Acts 4:8–12).

In fact, it’s hard to think of a person in Scripture or history who made a real difference for good without paying a sacrificial personal price.

The dot before the line

The supreme example, of course, is Christmas. Its purpose is stated succinctly in Scripture: God “made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV).

Now our Savior is calling us to respond to his grace with grateful, sacrificial service to others. William Barclay was right: we progress in life in proportion to the fare we are prepared to pay.

When you have sacrificial opportunities to serve others during the hectic, consumeristic Christmas season, it may help to reframe the moment. Remember that this day is the dot before the line, a blink before eternity begins.

The most fulfilling and joyful way to live on earth is to do now what God rewards forever. Because whatever it costs to follow Jesus fully, he more than repays eternally.
A life lesson from *Monopoly*

Well-known pastor John Ortberg learned to play the game *Monopoly* from his grandmother. He says of her, “She was a lovely woman, but she was the most ruthless *Monopoly* player I have ever known in my life.” She would defeat John every time they played.

Then came the summer when John played the game every day with a friend in the neighborhood. He learned how to acquire property ruthlessly. By the end of the summer, he was ready to play his grandmother again.

This time, he says, “I watched her give her last dollar and quit in utter defeat.” Then she taught him something he’s not forgotten, a statement that became the title of one of his best-selling books: “Now it all goes back in the box.”

What will you put in the “box” one day?