

Finding gold in the garbage  
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I have a confession to make. I've been known to "dumpster dive". I'm a firm believer in "one person's trash is another's treasure". Truth be known, I have mellowed out over the years, but recently God led me to go once more into a garbage bin.

It began months ago with God getting into my face to take better care of His temple called my body. God got my attention, and through lifestyle change and exercise, I have managed to drop over 125 pounds.

Life has taught me that there are consequences with every decision and action, and such was the case with my weight loss. I found that my pants weren't the only thing falling off. My ring finger is thinner and my wedding ring was loose. One night at bedtime, I realized that my ring was not on my finger. I had been all over the church that day and at the fellowship dinner that night – the ring could be anywhere.

I arose early the next morning and searched the grass and asphalt areas where I had traversed the day before. I even went through the garbage. No luck. I had resigned myself that it was gone and to convince myself that it was only a piece of metal.

Two nights later, God gave me a vision in a dream. (Yes, God still works that way!) In the dream, I saw my ring in a pan of meat trimmings from the Wednesday night dinner. The next morning was a work day at the church, and I went directly to the dumpster. I located the bag in my dream, and just for good measure, pulled out all of the other garbage bags from the dinner. A friend helped by dumping the bag from my dreams onto the parking lot, and I directed him to the pan of trimmings. The ring was right where I had seen it in my dream!

God still answers prayers – great and small – and miracles still happen! In reflection of this miracle in my life, I have realized that life is full of lost treasures in the garbage we experience daily. Each of us has strengths. Each of us has places God can use us most effectively. Each of us, by connecting with God can find gold even in the midst of life's dumpsters.

Some years ago a radio station invited people to call in and tell them the first thing they had said that morning when they awoke. It was funny. One guy said, "Do I smell coffee burning?" Another one said, "Oh no, I'm late for work." A woman confessed that her first words were, "Honey, did I remember to put the dog out last night?" and you could hear a muffled curse in the background and a man growling, "No, you didn't."

One morning, the station phone rang and the perky DJ said, "Good morning, you're on the air. What was the first thing you said when you rolled out of bed this morning?" A voice with a Bronx accent replied, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The caller was reciting the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4), so prized by our Jewish friends. The radio host did not know how to handle it. He was looking for junk and instead encountered gold. There was a moment of embarrassed silence, then the announcer cut to a commercial.

How do you start your day? With a moan about how difficult your life is or with a prayer turning to God? The garbage we face or the treasures we have lost do not have to determine our happiness or our success. What we need is to orient our lives in alignment with God and let Him direct us in the path we need to follow. Do this, and we will find our gold.