

Make Your Work Serve Your Life

*...It doesn't matter to me
what you say you will do for others
I want to know
if you will act
with courage and conviction
if you will daily cradle the frail hand
of your mother when she no longer
knows your name.*

– Gloria Burgess from “Song to Myself”

Maggie is thrilled to be working in the job of her dreams, as the Executive Director of a foundation for one of the largest health services networks in the United States. It was a long road to get to there, a journey that began back in her childhood. Her mother was a director of nursing in a long-term care facility across the street from her own home, and Maggie spent long hours volunteering and just hanging out there. It was like a second home.

Though her family expected Maggie to follow in her mother’s footsteps and become a nurse, she chose a career in communications with the hope that she could reach a broader spectrum of people. After working nearly 20 years in communications in the health insurance industry, Maggie realized that she really yearned for a more hands-on approach to helping those in need of basic healthcare services. Over time she was able to transition to this kind of work, but first she realized she needed to make some personal changes.

Deciding to strengthen her faith, she turned to her faith community as a way to cope and find her way. She soon began to feel supported by others and not so self-sufficient and alone. She also came to understand the love of God and that in faith all things are possible.

Using the power of love and faith, Maggie was able to take meaningful steps towards her long held passion of working for the benefit of others. She soon took the position of Executive Director for a health-care organization she had

heard about for years. At first in this new position, she felt overwhelmed and unsure of her decision. But she quickly realized that the power of the mission of the new organization was far greater than the difficulties she was encountering.

Maggie admits that her work is difficult at times, but the personal rewards are extraordinary. Not only is she doing what she is passionate about, she gets to work within the community of residents for whom her organization provides services.

Leave the World Better Off

We all want to make a contribution that leaves the world a little better off than the way we found it, a contribution that is worthy of our lives here on earth. We can do this by walking a path of thoughtful choices, a path that in my life I have come to call legacy living.

Legacy living is about being fully who you are and doing what you have to do because it is the only choice that assures a congruent life, a choice that simultaneously links your present with the past and the future. It is about living your life to consciously create something of enduring value that will benefit both the present *and* future generations. And you will come to understand that you must do so with passionate intention.

Passionate intention means being deliberate about who you are, how you show up, and what you do, and deliberate in choosing your words and actions. Being deliberate shapes every other choice you make, propelling you forward with purpose, drive, and unstoppable momentum into a field of infinite possibility and allure, a field that can only be known by those who accept the *dare to wear their soul on the outside*. When you accept this dare, you are being true to your inner compass, to your authentic self, to your soul’s calling.

To wear your soul on the outside means that you choose sovereignty over your life. This means that you say *yes* to your own hopes and dreams and *no* to someone's agenda for your life. This radical stance means that what you say and what you do are in harmony *and* aligned with your calling.

When you connect to your passion and wear your soul on the outside, your first goal is to bring forth and manifest your unique personal attributes and the special gifts and talents that only you can offer, that can only come through you. Your second goal involves service to others, where your focus is not self-centered, but rather it is other-centered, directed towards being of service to others in the here and now and on behalf of the future. Empowered in this way, you can follow *your* path of legacy living.

For me to reconcile and integrate these twin goals into my life I use what I have come to call the ***Seven Sacred Promises*** of legacy living. As the foundation of my workshops and my writing, my seven tools of choice are: ***gratitude, faith, love, vision, integrity, creative action, and legacy*** (see sidebar). As you experience the Sacred Promises for yourself, they will provide a gateway and will support you as you make this critical choice to bring forth your uniqueness and strengths, thereby transforming your life and the lives of others in your family, community, workplace, congregation, and beyond. The impact of your choices creates the footprints of your life, the legacy that you live and the one by which others will remember you.

Recognize the Sacred Promises in Action

Seeing how the Sacred Promises can fit into one's life path is the first step toward a life of living your legacy now and for tomorrow. As the following table illustrates, Maggie worked through all seven of the Sacred Promises in her recognition and then pursuit of her passion in the healthcare community.

The Seven Sacred Promises

Gratitude means giving thanks for the blessings in your life, and expressing your appreciation for those who paved the way, those who cleared a path or built a bridge for you. Take a moment each day to acknowledge your blessings; then pass your blessings on by sharing your joy with others.

Faith allows you to say, "I trust myself. I can do it." Faith allows you to lean into a greater power, knowing that what you hope for will manifest, will become real, concrete, and tangible. Your belief in what is possible becomes the bridge that will support you as you respond to your calling and claim your life's purpose.

Love allows you to devote time and energy to whomever or whatever brings you joy. What we create with our hearts and hands is love made visible. Your actions become heart-centered instead of self-centered. With Self-love, Love for Others, and Divine Love, you learn to devote your passion and energy to be of service to yourself and to others.

Vision offers you a concrete snapshot of where you are and a picture of where you want to go. Vision invites you to see outwardly as well as inwardly with the eyes of your heart so that your soul responds in kind. Vision also invites you to invest in tomorrow with a sense of possibility and hope.

Integrity means to be true to yourself. It says, "This is who I am, and this is who and what I value." When you stand and walk with integrity, you bring the beauty and bounty of your own true voice with you wherever you go and you will be able to honor the values and wholeness of yourself and others, recognizing your interrelationship with all beings.

Creative Action includes all of the small and big steps to move you from where you are toward the direction of your vision and calling. Creative action is also the manifestation of your legacy in the making, the tangible fruit of the Sacred Promises at work in your life.

Legacy invites you to consciously focus on being of use to someone or something beyond yourself. Whether you use your talents to encourage and uplift, innovate and invent, be an architect or shape-shifter, your life will count for something, and you will leave the world a better place.

She would eventually create for herself and for the benefit of others a legacy for now and the future. Try creating a table like this for yourself to see how the Sacred Promises can support you as you transform your life:

Sacred Promise	In Action
Gratitude	For her faith community's support
Faith	In her trust in herself to step out into a new career
Love	For being in a loving supportive community
Vision	In recognizing that her new organization had a vision that matched her own
Integrity	In her internal conflict of deciding what part of the healthcare industry deserved her focus
Creative Action	For simultaneously committing to the new position and remaining true to her vision
Legacy	In listening and responding to the call of her powerful inner voice

Say Yes to Yourself

If you want a different tomorrow, you must do something different today. I invite you to look further into yourself to find and follow your calling, and apply these Sacred Promises in support of your life journey. In turn you can help others with their calling and, in applying the Sacred Promises, encourage them with their goals along their intentional life path.

Saying *yes* to the Sacred Promises as a sacred life path is a radical act not only because it has affinity with soul, but because when you acknowledge and respond to your soul's calling, you claim power and authority in your life. Like any other form of artistry, proclaiming and wearing your soul on the outside is a political act, a revolutionary offering of bread and water to the hungry and thirsty in spirit. When you

say *yes* to the Sacred Promises as a sacred life path, this positive, life-affirming action will ensure a different tomorrow for yourself and others.

Yes, I Can: How Do You Say Yes to Yourself and Others?			
		Yes	No
Gratitude	When you say "thank you," do you look the person in the eyes and wholeheartedly say thanks with your eyes, heart, voice, and hands?		
Faith	When you believe in a project or new idea, do you follow through and make it happen, standing firm in the face of criticism and rejection?		
Love	Do you say an emphatic <i>yes</i> to what matters to you so that your passion can benefit yourself and others?		
Vision	Do you have a vision for your life so that you feel you can live to your fullest potential and live a balanced life in which all your needs are met?		
Integrity	Do you act congruently with who you truly know yourself to be rather than editing yourself to fit the circumstances?		
Creative Action	In situations where others see only obstacles and road blocks, do you imagine opportunities and possibilities?		
Legacy	Do you make conscious and frequent choices that are aligned with a vision for making your life count for someone or something beyond yourself?		
If you said <i>yes</i> to three or more of the Sacred Promises, you're on your way. Make a plan today for how you will change your <i>no</i> responses to <i>yes</i> . Keep it simple. Take one small action each day for the next 30 days, and see what a wonderful difference your actions make in your own and others' lives.			

About the author: Dr. Gloria J. Burgess is a behavioral scientist, consultant, and executive coach, as well as an award-winning poet, author, director, and performing artist. Gloria is the author of the best-selling book *Legacy Living* and her recently-released book *Dare to Wear Your Soul on the Outside: Live Your Legacy Now* (Jossey-Bass/Wiley).