

# Love Seeks Not Its Own

*The Characteristics of Love*

By Steve Viars

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-4

**Preached On:** Sunday, May 25, 2014

## **Faith Church**

5526 State Road 26 E

Lafayette, IN 47905

**Website:** <http://www.faithlafayette.org/church>

**Online Sermons:** <http://www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette>

On January 25, 1917 Louis Silvie Zampereni in Olean, New York to his parents Anthony and Louise who had just immigrated from Italy a few years before. By all accounts, Louie was a handful from the time he was born and by his teenage years he was known to be a master thief and a troublemaker. His story is told by a best-selling author, Laura Hillenbrand, in her book "Unbroken." Louie's family moved to Torrance, California and Hillenbrand remarks that when the police in Torrance received a call, the Zamperini door was the first one they investigated. His troublemaking came to a climax when the Torrance High School officials noticed that the number of students attending athletic games was far out-pacing the number of tickets their ledger books said had been sold. It was determined that young Louie was running a ticket-scamming business in the school basement which took him to the brink of being expelled. His salvation, so to speak, was when his older brother, Pete, offered to begin coaching Louie in track and field. Finally Louie found something productive in which to channel his energy and his talents. Zamperini became a track legend. At the Southern Californian Track and Field Championships in 1934, Louie set a new record for high school milers. The hometown papers began calling him the "Torrance Tornado" and while even in high school, he began competing against runners in college. Louie earned a track scholarship to USC, took first place in the NCAA track championship in 1938, setting a collegiate record in the mile that would stand for the next 15 years. By that time, he had his heart set on running in the Olympics which were scheduled to be held next in 1940 in Japan.

We know now historically that those are very ominous words, 1940 in Japan. You may know that Japan actually withdrew as the host of the 1940 Olympics and the games were then transferred from Tokyo to Helsinki, Finland. The previous year, Louie was having an incredible track season. In February, he ran a 4.08 mile at the Boston Gardens that was just 6/10 of second slower than the fastest indoor mile ever recorded. Two weeks later at the Madison Square Gardens, he ran even faster, clocking a mile at 4.07. Hillenbrand points out that with the Olympics months away, Louie was peaking at the ideal moment. Well, if you're thinking historically, you can probably put 2 + 2 together. Hillenbrand went on to say that on a dark day in April, 1940, Louie returned to his bungalow to find the USC campus buzzing: Hitler had unleashed his Blitzkrieg across Europe as Soviet allies had followed and the continent had exploded into total war. Finland, which was set to host the summer games, was reeling. Helsinki's Olympic Stadium was partially

collapsed, toppled by the Soviet bombs. Gunnar Hockert who had beaten Louie and won gold for Finland in the 5,000 in Berlin was dead, killed defending his homeland. The Olympics had been canceled.

That part of Louie Zamperini's story helps us put a personal face on the sacrifice that many men and women have made in our 200+ year history of this country in order to protect and preserve the freedoms that we enjoy today. I think it's good for us on Memorial Day to remember that for a lot of reasons including the fact that their sacrifice helps us gain a better understanding of what it means to practice biblical love. Biblical love.

With that in mind, please open your Bible now to 1 Corinthians 13. That's on page 137 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need that. Our church's theme this year is "Loving Our Neighbors" and so in order to help us understand exactly what that means, the past several weeks we've been doing a word-by-word study of this great love chapter in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, and we've been calling this "The Characteristics of Love." With the providence of God, the next phrase in the list is one that is especially emphasized and exemplified by many who have served and are serving in our armed services and serve on our police forces and our fire crews, that's certainly true of those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. We're talking now about how love does not seek it's own. Love does not seek it's own.

Please follow along as I read beginning in 1 Corinthians 13:1, where Paul said,

"1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three ; but the greatest of these is love."

We're talking this morning about how love does not seek its own and with the time we have remaining, let's look for four principles to help us practice unselfish love and I hope you came to church this morning to think of what are the ways that God is working that already in my life for which I can thank him and then also what are the way that I'm not, that I need to get more serious and principled about in the days ahead. Love doesn't seek it's own, four principles to help us practice unselfish love.

It's probably best to start with the meaning of this characteristic: what is the Holy Spirit trying to help us put our fingers on here, love does not seek it's own? The focus is on what you're seeking at any given moment. This is just four words in the original language and it's very straight-forward, *ou zetei ta heautes*, in the original language: “ou” which is not; “zetei” which is seek; “ta,” it's; “heautes” own. Many times in the Greek language, what's especially being emphasized is placed first in the sentence so “not seek it's own” so it translated very comfortably into English. The key word is “zetei” from the Greek verb “zeteo” and I've mentioned a couple of times in this study: a number of these words or phrases are very rare in the Bible. That is not true here. “Zetei” or “zeteo” are used all over the Bible so it's very easy for us to study other places in Scripture to help us have an understanding of what is Paul trying to help us get in our minds when he tells us that love does not seek its own, *zeteo*. For example, it's used to describe an intense search. You remember that after Jesus was born, for example, eventually the wise men came to see so-called King Herod and they asked, “Where is he who has been born King of the Jews for we saw his star in the east and we've come to worship him?” I said eventually the wise men came to find Jesus. You understand that when they saw the star they didn't jump on a 747 so it took time after the wise men saw the star to actually get to the place where they could ask Herod that question. The Bible goes on to tell us that Herod was very troubled when they came and asked who had been born King of the Jews because Herod thought he was the King of the Jews so if a real king had been born, his legitimacy was demonstrated in part by a miraculous sign and Herod's gravy train could be coming to an end here.

So, Herod called the chief priest and the scribes together and he asked them were there any ancient prophecies that predicted exactly where the Messiah would be born. What's the answer to that question? You'd better believe it, which by the way, is one of the many, many reasons why you should believe in the power and authenticity of the Bible you have in your lap because of fulfilled prophecy. And the priests explained to Herod that, yes, the prophet Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in the, do you want to sing it? The little town of Bethlehem. So, Herod explained that to the wise men and then he instructed them to go and find the baby Jesus and then come back and tell him exactly where he was so Herod said, “So I can go and worship him.” Matthew reports that after the wise men left, Mary and Joseph and Jesus and after an angel had warned the wise men not to do what Herod had asked, Jesus may have been at two years old by this point. Now, when they had gone, behold, we're looking for *zeteo*, in case you're wondering where all of this is going, “When they had gone, behold and angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.” Where do you think the verb *zeteo* appears in that sentence? It's

obviously right there at the end, “to search for the child.” Picture a jealous, enraged political ruler searching with all the resources at his disposal to destroy his perceived competition. That's what it means to zeteo something. Love seeks not its own, zeteo is an urgent search or in Matthew 18, Jesus said, “What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray does he not leave the 99 on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?” It's pretty easy now to find zeteo in that sentence, isn't it? That's what Paul wants us to picture in 1 Corinthians 13. Love seeks not its own. Like a king, zealously trying to find his competition or a farmer feverishly trying to locate a sheep. You see, the concept is zeteo, what do you tend to seek after? In a given situation, think back even over this past week, in a given situation, what are you searching for?

Here's another piece of this puzzle: it's motivated by what you value. We see that oftentimes when this Greek verb zeteo appears. It's motivated by what you value. For example: if you dropped a penny right now and it went rolling around the floor, if you couldn't find it immediately it's highly likely you wouldn't search for very long. In fact, some of you say, “I wouldn't even bend over for that bad boy. If it's gone, it's gone. For a penny.” Well, how far up the line would you have to go in value before you'd say, “You know, I would probably stoop over for that. I would probably search for that.” And I realize we're all at a different place, but let's just say \$20. If you dropped a \$20, would you bend over for that? Please tell me, “Yeah, for that. Not only that, I'd search for it. If I lost a \$20 right now, I would say, Myrtle, stop what you're doing and help me find this \$20.” You just change whatever denomination up or down you would need in order to get the point: motivated by what you value. That's the emphasis of zeteo in Matthew 13. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” You see zeteo there, don't you? A merchant seeking fine pearls.

Here's the principle: the higher you value something, the more intensely you seek it. Think about the last time you were really upset. Probably for most of us, that won't be very long ago. Think about the last time you were really upset: what were you seeking? Think about the last time you were really worried: what were you seeking? The last time you were really angry or you were really afraid or you were really excited: what were you seeking? You see, Paul wants you to think about that by using this word zeteo.

Here's another piece of this puzzle that we need to add to our discussion. This is often repeated until it become habitual. Some would say, “Ah, I don't need to think about that on a holiday weekend.” You need to think about it a lot and here's why: if we don't guard what we are searching, what we are seeking in a given situation right or wrong, it will become part of us. Here's a use of zeteo that might not be as obvious but is very important to our discussion, it's Mark 14:55, “Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any.” Where do you think zeteo is there? It's in the phrase “kept trying.” Over and over and over, they kept trying. That's why this word can also be translated “strive for,” or “demand,” or “expect,” or “consider,” or “deliberate,” or “examine,” or “investigate.” See on a given day, what do you tend to habitually seek?

In our key verse, Paul says that biblical love does not seek its own. The point is, you show love by not organizing your life around what is best for you. In other words, selfish unloving people wake up in the morning and they begin asking, they begin searching for what is in this for me? And who is going to serve me? And who is going to make me feel the way I want to feel? The selfish unloving person is seeking, he's searching out, he's demanding his own whereas a loving person does the opposite. Self is not at the end of his periscope; he's not seeking his own.

When Louie Zamperini's hopes of participating in the 1944 Olympics were dashed, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps. Hillenbrand details the kind of sacrifices that many men and women in our armed forces endured during those days. This picture survives of Louie and his older brother, Pete, they were both going into different branches of the service on that day. They were on the front porch of their family home with their mom and dad and other relatives before they headed off to war. Think about how many families had to take a similar picture. Hillenbrand writes how Louie and his father rode together to the train station. The platform was crowded with uniformed young men and crying parents clinging to one another saying good-bye. When Louie embraced his father, he could feel him shaking but they went and they did their duty. Why? Because love, what? It seeks not its own.

The book tells us about Louie's crew. He was the bombardier. Louie is the third man from the left in this particular picture. This picture struck me for a lot of reasons. Look how young they are and also look at the guy on the far right. He needs to go back to junior high. At one point, while they were in training, Hillenbrand quotes from a letter that Louie received from one of his other friends who was in training about an accident that just had happened and a number of men had died in that accident and Louie's friend was there to actually see what had happened to their bodies. I went back and forth, honestly, on whether I should quote from that letter and I decided not to just because of how graphic the story is but Hillenbrand goes on to say this,

“It was the kind of story that was filling the letters of would-be airmen all over the country. Pilot and navigator error, mechanical failure, bad luck were killing trainees at a stunning rate. In the Army Air Forces, there were 52,651 stateside aircraft accidents over the course of the war killing 14,903 personnel. Some of these personnel were probably on coastal patrol and other duties. It can be presumed that the vast majority were trainees killed without ever seeing a combat theater. In the three months in which Phil,” that's the pilot of Louie's plane, “Phil's men trained as a crew, 3,041 AAF planes, more than 33 per day, met with accidents stateside killing nine men per day. In subsequent months, death tallies,” this is by month, “exceeding 500 were common. In August, 1943, 590 airmen would die stateside, 19 per day.”

We enjoy our freedoms in this country and others do in countries around the world because of that kind of love which seeks not its own. Some have even suggested that this

is at the core of what it means to practice biblical love. For example, commentator Gordon Fee said, "In some ways this is the fullest expression of what Christian love is all about." Sure, all these words and all these phrases that we're studying in this text, we're studying in this series are important but it really is true at the core, love seeks not its own.

Now, lest we start looking at ourselves in the mirror and saying in our strength and in our own wisdom we could not possibly live like this. Please don't say, "Every morning, I just wake up and I start seeking the good of everybody. I don't even think about me." God would strike you with lightning right here on a sunny day. Me here, would just smash this pulpit so let's not do that but lest we say there's not way I could ever even make progress toward living like this, let's quickly bring the gospel into this conversation, huh? Think with me about how this attribute is perfected in Christ: love thinks not its own. The Scripture tells us that Jesus emptied himself. One of the most beautiful passages in the Bible is the Kenosis passage, Philippians 2:5, "Have this attitude in yourselves, Paul said, "which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself," there it is, "taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." The word "emptied" in this text is the Greek word "kenoo," that's why theologians refer to this aspect of Christ's life as the Kenosis of Christ. His love motivated him to empty himself, that's what love does, it seeks not its own.

Because of that, he came to serve, not to be served. "And Jesus called them to himself and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles, the ungodly persons, they lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them. It's not this way among you. Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, whoever wishes to become first among you shall be your slave just as the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many." That's what love does. It seeks not its own.

Are you allowing the Holy Spirit of God to use his word this morning to help you evaluate how you're really doing at this matter of being biblically loving? You're not saying right now, "I hope she's listening. I hope he's listening right now. As soon as we get in the car, I'm going to remind him of all the ways. I'm going to buy this tape for my mother-in-law." Let's let the Holy Spirit of God do his work on you, huh? Instead of being worried about what everybody else is sinning, your sin keeps you busy full time if you'll let it. I wonder if there were some sort of hourglass that we could turn one way during the day or it would just turn when we're seeking our own and another way back when we were being loving and not seeking our own, I wonder how much sand would be on which side of the glass at the end of the average day. I'm not sure I'd want to see that glass on the average day, would you? Love seeks not its own.

He submitted himself to the Father's will. He said, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me," that was authentic. He was a man; he was the God-man but he was a man. "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." That's what love does, it seeks not its own. And I hope you're saying this morning,

“That's the kind of person I want to be. That's the kind of church we want to be, filled with people who are growing toward the goal of becoming like Christ and letting Christ live his life in and through us so that we would be loving in part by not seeking our own.”

Someone posted on Facebook recently, “I want to be so full of Jesus that when a mosquito bites me, he flies away singing There's Power in the Blood.” We had an Intro to Faith dinner at our house for those who are new to our church on this past Friday night. We were out on the deck and man, there was a mosquito, that thing was the size of North Carolina. I wonder if he would have bit us what he would have sung next. There is power in the blood of Christ.

Paul goes so far as to say that he sought our good not his own. Romans 15:3, have you ever noticed this verse? “For even Christ did not please himself,” there it is, for even Christ did not please himself, “but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.'”

It's really amazing how much Louie and his crew were able to accomplish, especially when you take into account all the equipment failures, the dangers of their mission. They came back from one flight and their crew counted 594 holes that had been shot into their plane by enemy fire on that single mission. On Thursday, May 27, 1943, Louie and the crew were asked to go search for another one of their planes that had not returned from a mission the day before. Louie's plane, that one was gone because of the 594 hole incidents and so the only one that was available to them was that one right there, the Green Hornet. It was a hot mess; it had been cannibalized for parts. They were running low on everything. No one really trusted the Green Hornet but there were other men who were potentially lost at sea and so Louie and his crew went. During that assignment, the plane faltered and though they did everything they could to prevent it, their plane crashed at sea. All but three of the crew perished in that crash. Louie Zamperini survived along with two other men. They spent the next 47 days in the water and the book details the incredible horrors of being harassed by sharks, the tremendous hunger and thirst. They were actually strafed by an enemy plane while they were in their life raft and then the slow death of one of their remaining crew members.

When the two survivors actually made land, Louie Zamperini who had weighed 155 pounds the day they left for the mission now weighed 87 pounds. But their horror was really just beginning because the place they landed was enemy territory. They were shuttled to various POW camps, tortured mercilessly in an attempt to get them to expose military secrets. By that time, Japan was losing the war badly and they would do anything they could to these POWs in order to extract information. But remember, love does not seek its own and so even after this entire ordeal, they were not going to sell out their fellow soldiers and airmen. Their final stop was to a POW camp run by a merciless man named Watanabe, nicknamed the Bird. In one of the dozens of stories that could be related from this particular part of the ordeal, some of the enlisted men, Louie was actually an officer, some of the enlisted men from the US were caught stealing a fish trying to stay alive. They were actually put to work in the POW camp. This describes one of their days.

“One day that month, Louie, Tinker and Wade were shoveling on a barge when the foreman discovered that fish had been stolen from the galley. The foreman announced that if the thieves didn't turn themselves in, he would report the theft to the Bird. During lunch break, the innocent men persuaded the culprits to confess. When the men walked into camp that night, the foreman told the Bird anyway as he suspected that more men had been in on the theft. The Bird called for the work party to line up before him and ordered the thieves to stand before the group. He then walked down the line, pulling out Wade, Tinker and Louie and two other officers and made them stand with the thieves. He announced that these officers were responsible for the behavior of the thieves. His punishment: each enlisted man would punch each officer and thief in the face as hard as possible.

“The chosen men looked at the line of enlisted men in terror. There were some 100 of them. Any man who refused to carry out the order, the Bird said, would meet the same fate as the officers and the thieves. He told the guards to club any men who didn't strike the chosen men with maximum force. The enlisted men had no choice. At first, they tried to hit softly but the Bird studied each blow. When a man didn't punch hard enough, the Bird would begin shrieking and clubbing him, joined by the guards, then the errant men would be forced to hit the victim repeatedly until the Bird was satisfied. Louie began whispering to each man to get it over with and hit hard. Some of the British men whispered 'Sorry, Sir,' before punching Wade who was a British officer.

“For the first few punches, Louis stayed on his feet but his legs soon began to waver and he collapsed. He pulled himself upright but fell again with the next punch and then the next. Eventually he blacked out. When he came to, the Bird forced the men to resume punching him screaming, 'Next. Next. Next.' In Louie's whirling mind, the voice began to sound like the tramping of feet.

“The sun sank, the beating went on for some time two hours, the Bird watching with fierce and erotic pleasure. When every enlisted man had done his punching, the Bird ordered the guards to club each one twice in the head with a kendo stick. The victims had to be carried to the barracks. Louie's face was so swollen that for several days he could barely open his mouth. By Wade's estimate, each man had been punched in the face some 220 times.”

Think about how many stories like that could be multiplied to illustrate the kind of love that has been shown by men and women who we're called to remember this weekend. Friends, love seeks not its own.

This is really at the core of what it means to love God. It seeks not its own. Following Christ means denying yourself. I was teaching at a school this week with some 18 year



olds and some dear young man wanted to get into a theological argument with me on this point. You cannot debate this point. Following Christ means denying yourself. Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The cross isn't a fashionable piece of jewelry to be worn around someone's neck, it's an instrument of crucifixion and by coming to Christ we're saying we recognize our sin, we are willing to acknowledge it and we're placing our faith and trust in Christ and what he did on the cross as the only means of saving us. We're acknowledging our old selves have to be put to death. We're no longer living to seek our own. We now want to learn what it means to love, to love our God. This is an important part of what it means to live out the first commandment. We talk about it but do we understand what it really means? The foremost command, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one and you shalt love." Love seeks not its own. "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might and with all your strength."

What does it mean to love the Lord? With the material that we're learning this morning, it certainly includes seeking not our own interests but our God's. I would suggest this is an important principle as we plan our summers. What does it mean to love God this summer? And I hope you're not just thinking about your interests, I hope you're thinking about ways you can advance the plan and program of God. That's why we'll have many men and women this summer who will volunteer to serve in Vacation Bible School. Why? Because it's convenient? "Boy, that's going to be a lot of fun, Myrtle." No, because they love God and because they want to find ways to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ while they have the opportunity to do so. That's why many men and women will be helping us in these community development corporation houses. Our CDC board actually took a tour of the two beautiful homes you have now purchased downtown. Wow, hot mess one and hot mess two we ought to call them. And there's going to be all kinds of people who are serving in order to help us get those homes renovated and then prepared for a lower moderate income buyer and hopefully to be a brighter light in that part of our community. Why? Not to earn something from the Lord, we love him because he first loved us and we want to love him in part by living in a way that seeks not our own.

I would suggest, by the way, there is great satisfaction in living that way. If you'd say, "Man, what a gyp. I have to live for God and others and not me?" Listen, selfish people are boring, have you figured that out? And living for yourself is just an absolute bore. It is. Living for God and others brings joy. I'm teaching a class right now online as part of our seminary, it's a class on Introduction to Biblical Counseling and so every Thursday we have a conference call. The way the technology works, everybody's picture comes up from around the country and around the world who's in this class and we've been studying together and doing online work together and then we have a conference call. One of the men is a dentist; he's from Jordan. So there he is in his dental chair, that's where he has his part of the conference call from and he and his wife want to learn how to do biblical counseling so that they can do it effectively in the country of Jordan. I sit there thinking, "What a great privilege it is to be able to teach someone who is going to be able to use that material in a place that you or I could never get to." And it doesn't

matter if that's a convenient time for me or blah, blah, blah. It sounds trite even saying that. Love seeks not its own and it's a great way to live.

This is at the core of what it means to love others. The second commandment is like the first: you shall love, love seeks not its own, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. Loving others. You know, a number of us are going to be heading off for vacation sometime this summer. Do you think that would be a really good time to practice what we're studying this morning? Because you realize for many people, vacation is one of the worst times of the year. Do you know why? It's because you cram a bunch of selfish people in the same car, right? There's a journal for pastors, it's called Leadership Journal. It showed this picture of an airplane where a pastor and his wife had just gotten on the plane, they were going to go on a two week vacation together and there are little bubbles coming out of either window showing what each one of them was thinking. The wife's bubble, she was thinking, "Finally, two weeks with just me and him without those stupid books." From the husband's side he was thinking, "Finally, just two weeks with me and the books." They were not going to have a really good vacation, do you know that?

I hope you'll say, "I want to be the kind of person who is practicing practical biblical love." By the way, I realize as you hear this message you might say, "You know, I can't do this because I don't know Christ." You can't and please don't think about Christianity as if, "Well, I have to learn how to do all this stuff and then I can earn my...." No, it doesn't work that way. We're not saved by our works. And a message like this could be used in the lives of some who will hear it today to help you acknowledge, "I don't have a relationship with God which would give me the strength and power and direction in order to do this." Do you know what you need to do next? You need to come to him in repentance. You need to come to him with hands that are open, not full of your supposed good works but empty, recognizing your good works are like filthy rags and saying to him, "I want to ask you to forgive me. I want to trust what Jesus Christ did on the cross to save me and to direct me in the coming days." Friend, if you've never made that decision before, you can make that today. "Father, I know I'm a sinner and I want to place my faith and trust in Jesus Christ." That can and that will absolutely transform your life.

I should probably issue a spoiler alert here because some of you say, "I think I'm gonna read that book." Well, stick your fingers in your ears if that's the case, because I'm going to tell you what happened right at the end. Louis Zamperini actually survived WWII and he wrote a letter to Watanabe, the Bird. Here's how it went,

"As a result of my prisoner of war experience under your unwarranted and unreasonable punishment, my post-war life became a nightmare. It was not so much due to the pain and suffering as it was the tension and stress and humiliation that caused me to hate with a vengeance. Under your discipline, my rights not only as a prisoner of war but also as a human being were stripped from me. It was a struggle to maintain enough dignity and hope to live until the war's end. The post-war nightmares caused my life to crumble but thanks a confrontation with God through the evangelist

Billy Graham, I committed my life to Christ. Love replaced the hate I had for you. Christ said forgive your enemies and pray for them. As you probably know, I returned to Japan in 1952, was graciously allowed to address all the Japanese war criminals at Zuguna Prison. I asked them about you and was told that you probably had committed hari-kari which I was sad to hear. At that moment, like the others, I also forgave you and I would hope that you too would become a Christian.”

Then Hillenbrand says this, “On the morning of January 22, 1998,” do you remember where the winter games were held in 1998?

“On the morning of January 22, 1998, snow sifted gently over the village once known as Nakatsu, Japan. Louie Zamperini, four days short of his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday, stood in a swirl of white beside a road flanked in bright drifts. His body was worn and weathered, his skin scratched with lines mapping the miles of his face. His old riot of black hair was now a translucent scrim of white but his blue eyes still threw sparks. On the ring finger of his right hand a scar was still visible, the last mark the Green Hornet had left in his world. At last it was time. Louie extended his hand and in it was placed the Olympic torch. His legs could no longer reach and push as they once had but they were still sure beneath him. He raised the torch, bowed and began running. All he could see in every direction were smiling Japanese faces. There were children peeking out of hooded coats, men who had once worked beside the POW slaves in the steel mill, civilians snapping photographs, clapping, waving, cheering Louie on and 120 Japanese soldiers formed in two columns, parting to let him pass. Louie ran through the place where cages had once held him but the cages were long gone and so was the Bird. There was no trace of them here among the voices, the falling snow and the old and joyful man running.”