

Applying The Gospel According to Larry  
(According to Amanda)

Larry, aka Josh Swensen, may be pseudo-cidal, but in one-way he is a pretty lucky seventeen-year old. Josh starts his own website as “Larry” in Janet Tashjian’s novel, The Gospel According to Larry and he is exposed. The reason he is lucky after faking his own death and hurting the people he loves, is that he understood something that I apparently did not. Josh only owns seventy-five possessions, equal to my seventy-five pairs of shoes; he knows that we do not need to crowd our lives with useless junk. Companies try to get you to buy whatever product they are selling, but everything you own is your decision when you make the purchase. I’d never thought about needing to down-size my possessions before, until something happened that made living like Larry an immediate necessity.

This past summer, a car drove into my house. Contrary to the driver’s belief, cars cannot drive through houses (though the car did drive through my neighbor’s garage first). I had to pack up my room after storage was full from other rooms; this meant all my possessions either had to go in my closet or come to the hotel. While boxing up my stuff, I realized Larry was right and I owned a lot of completely unnecessary junk. He was also lucky. He knew how companies catch your attention and useless garbage just clutters in your thinking space. Larry did not need a shocking accident to slap him in the face for him to realize that, like I did. He also questioned why things such as “Pet Rocks” and “Crazy Bones” take off. Even I’m not entirely sure and I threw out handfuls of each. In my defense, the Crazy Bones were the most fascinating colors and shapes. I had a ton of clothes I will never wear, movies I will never watch, and enough bouncy

balls to bounce me to Venus, should I get sick of the hotel. Josh chose his possessions wisely, displaying a laptop, clothing, a belt, his mother's statue, and favorite books or movies. I do not recall him mentioning three years worth of fashion magazines, clearly no use by now anyway. If you are going to own something, it should be worth the effort to maintain and store it. I filled about five garbage bags of stuff to just trash, not because I needed to, not because it was in poor condition, but because I wanted to. The piling of magazines competing with McKinley for highest peak in the U.S. was not worth the bookshelf space or the work keeping them dust-free. Less stuff meant less stress and I am positive it will make it easier to move back into my room when the house is repaired.

After I had sifted out the junk, I still could not take everything I owned to the hotel. This left me picking out my favorite and most prized possessions to store in limited space (Kingston does not really give you a great choice of hotels- such a shock since it's a booming tourist spot). I looked to Larry for inspiration to see what was really important. Like he kept his mother's statue, I kept my great-grandmother's ring (along with most of my jewelry because I simply could not help myself). Larry also posted pictures of clothing, though I could not fit every item I own; I went from a walk-in closet to, well, not a walk-in closet. I picked only my favorite sweatshirt and shoes, purses and perfumes, and bracelets and books (all of which I have far too many of even after downsizing). Even though I probably could not get my possessions down to seventy-five, I did improve, and I do not intend to buy anything Crazy Bone-like again.

Larry is very lucky he understood the effects of keeping junk. I feel so much better now that 374 cool-looking but inkless pens and a set of never used paper dolls no longer reside in my care. One thing Larry does not know, however, is something I knew

all along. There is not a possession or reason in the world to abandon those you love.

When I heard news of the accident, I will admit I was concerned about material things. However, nothing inanimate came sixty-billion times close to my top eight concerns. You could call these my “top possessions.” They include my mother, father, brother, and five pets. Unfortunately, one pet was lost, but nothing could replace the relief I felt that we were not home. The car hit my parents’ bed and the living room couch and there is pretty much a one-hundred percent chance Mom and Dad would have been in one of those two places at ten o’clock at night. Wherever you are Larry, please go home. You may say you only have seventy-five possessions, but you are forgetting the two things that must have mattered the most- your best friend and your stepfather. They will forgive you. You need each other. Do not make yourself learn the hard way like I did. You have a choice.

-Grade 12 winner, Amanda Gibbons