



Something You Should Know

Have You Found Your Sweet Spot Yet?

My second year in seminary, a member of the church I attended, who would eventually become my mother-in-law, suggested to her daughter that I should apply to be the summer chaplain at a YMCA conference center in North Carolina. The problem was that I was hoping to be hired for the summer as youth pastor for one of the early Centrifuge Camps also in North Carolina. I was disappointed when I was not chosen for the assignment, but I then did apply for the Blue Ridge Assembly chaplain position and got it. I was stunned by how quickly they hired me, especially since I had almost no preaching experience and that was a big part of the job. My responsibility was to serve as non-denominational pastor for the one-hundred college staff working there during the summer. It was an amazing summer. I helped two of the students become Christian and baptized them. I was able to counsel a number of the staff who struggled with depression and had many conversations with the students about deep spiritual issues. Attendance at the chapel services was more than in previous years and many of the students complimented me on the sermons. It was eye-opening for me as I discovered that I really was made to be a pastor...something I wasn't so sure was the case a year before.

Perhaps you have never considered the possibility that you are designed with a unique purpose in mind. God has a reason for you being here and how you are made perfectly fits into His plan for you. The Bible has this to say about your place in His world. **For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.** (Ephesians 2:10 NIV) Let's unwrap this incredible declaration! The term translated "workmanship" describes something created, made, or put together. God put you together; you are created just as wonderfully as any of His other creations: the stars, moon, sun, the Redwood forests, and the rolling beaches of Hawaii. You are as brilliantly made as the galaxies that span the sky. When God created you, Perfection could have been your middle name. There is though a fascinating twist to this that must be understood.

Sin has wrecked us all and we are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that never quite fit as a result. We do not live up to how well we have been made due to the sins we commit and what others do to us. Like a cuckoo clock that doesn't give the right time anymore and never sends out its little cuckoo, we are broken. However a miracle happens when Christ takes our sins from us and we are made new. Once again we fit perfectly into God's plan for us. That is because as we are told here we are "created in Christ Jesus" which is what Paul means by a new creation in 2 Corinthians 5:17. **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!** Through Christ, you are fitted for what God wants to accomplish in the world. Ephesians 2: 10 makes it clear that your new life in Christ has a point to it. You are made for good works, to be the craftsman of heaven inspired deeds! In fact, it is much more than that. God prepared in advance for you to do these good deeds, has put circumstances and resources in place for you to get them done. Your salvation is the glue that holds these two together, good deeds God wants done and the opportunity for them to be accomplished.

The idea that God made you for specific good works He wants done seems pretentious. You would not be the only one who sees it that way. Moses famously argued with God over his part in the plan to get Israel out of Egypt. **But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"** (Exodus 3: 11 NIV) Moses complained about his poor public speaking skills and his past failures but the Lord insisted he take up the task being given him. David too had every reason to think he wasn't the right one for the job of being the next king of Israel. He wasn't big and tall like the king they had. He was a mere shepherd boy and even his own dad did not bother to go get him when the prophet Samuel asked to meet with his family. Esther, the queen of Persia, the most beautiful woman in the entire empire thought she was not good enough to go before her own husband and ask for mercy for her people. Even though her entire nation was on the verge of being massacred, Esther was not willing to risk her own life for them. It sounds crazy looking back but if the truth be known, most of us are like that. Mordecai, her cousin, shook Esther from her complacency and self-doubt by pointing out just how involved God is in our lives and the importance of us to His plans. **When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"** (Esther 4:12-14 NIV)

It is hard to see yourself as an important part of God's plan for the world, but you are. No one is made like you and there isn't anyone who fits like you do into it. You are not Moses, but you don't have to be. You just have to be you to play a critical part in God's work in the world. We might not have the Apostle Paul's ministry if there was not a rather anonymous Ananias willing to take Paul, the one-time persecutor of Christians into the church and baptize him. The same could be said of the Apostle Peter who might not have ever been a Disciple if his brother Andrew had failed to go get him and introduce Peter to Jesus. What if Mary had not agreed to God's plan to bear as a virgin Jesus and be her mother? Mary was an impoverished villager at the time. How about Ruth? If she hadn't responded to God's call to leave her homeland and go with Naomi to Bethlehem, we might not have any of her descendants including David and Jesus. What seems to be such a trivial and unimportant life as yours or mine is nothing of the sort. You are a part of God's plan and what you do matters to Him!

I recently read the account of a nine year old girl who watched a video in church of children and adults in Africa who did not have access to clean water. Almost immediately she felt a tug to help those people. Brittany and her mother started to bake pies and sell them to their friends and neighbors to raise enough money to build a water well. After five years, Brittany raised more than \$100,000 which was enough to have 19 water wells installed. Now what she does is called the Dream Project and her entire community is involved. There is not a single limitation to you fitting into God's plan for good works being done. You are not too old or too young, too poor, or too lacking in talents. You are the one God has chosen to do specific good works that matter to Him.

Author Philip Yancey tells of the time his church located in downtown Chicago lost its pastor, attendance was dropping and a community outreach program the church ran was in danger of closing. It was suggested that the church have an all-night prayer vigil. Because it was in an inner city neighborhood, many wondered if it would be safe. Should guards be hired for the parking lot? What if no one came? Yancey said he was surprised to see that the ones most excited about the night of prayer were a group of senior citizens from a housing project. They were all very poor and had suffered from the effects of crime and poverty. How many of them had gone years without seeing their prayers answered? The group insisted on coming though and they were asked how long they planned on praying. The concerns about van shuttling needed to be considered. One or two hours was what most thought they would give. No, the group planned on staying all night. One woman, in her nineties, who had to hobble with a cane told a church staff member why she planned to pray until morning. "You see, they's lots of things we can't do in this church. We ain't so educated, and we ain't got as much energy as some of you younger folks. But we

can pray. We got time, and we got faith. Some of us don't sleep much anyway. We can pray all night if needs be." We all have a place in God's plan for the world. We all can do the good He wants done. We are made specifically for certain good deeds no one else can do. What is your place in God's world? What do you think He has for you to do?