

The two most important days in your life are the day you're born and the day you find out why. All of us know our birthdays but few of us know why we were born. Only when we begin to answer that question do we begin to truly live.

Last weekend I was one of the speakers at a Mercy Ships event in California. Mercy Ships operates a hospital ship that provides medical care for the poorest of the poor on the African continent. (Photos) I have been involved with that organization for almost 25 years now. It was only last weekend that I heard Don Stephens, the founder of the ministry, tell how it came about. Don and Deyon were young missionaries with YWAM. They were in Calcutta, India, and he mentioned to someone how great it would be to meet Mother Teresa. To his great surprise, someone actually arranged a meeting. Don prepared a list of questions for her. When he sat down in front of her, he pulled out his questions. She brushed them away and said, "I have prayed for this meeting and I want to know about you." She asked him three questions.

1. Why were you born? 2. Where is your pain? 3. What are you doing about it?

Don knew that he was born to be a servant of Jesus Christ and that he wanted to serve the poorest of the poor. He had a young son who was born with significant handicaps that gave him a sensitivity to those afflicted with disabilities.

That encounter led to the start-up of a ministry that has provided quality health care to over 2.5 million people in 57 countries in a world where more than 5 billion people have to access to safe surgical care.

That's the power of a God-given purpose. God gives us life and then calls us to the place where "our deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." (Frederick Beuchner). That is why we are so passionate about "calling each other to live out our God-given purpose." **When I am living on purpose, God is glorified, I am satisfied and the world is notified that there is a purpose to life.**

1. God is glorified. Everything God created was designed to reflect His nature. For example, Ps. 19:1-2, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge." Our first introduction to our Creator comes through the things He has created. Everything God created was good.

I'll never forget the answer given by the late S. M. Lockridge. A young college student once tried to deny God's existence by asking Brother Lockridge, "Where did God come from?"

"He came from nowhere...there wasn't anywhere for Him to come from. And comin' from nowhere He stood on nothin'." And the reason He had to stand on nothin' there was nowhere for Him to stand. And standin' on nothin' he reached out to where there was nowhere to reach and he caught somethin' when there was nothin' to catch and hung somethin' on nothin' and told it to stay there...Standin' on nothin' he took the hammer of His own will and He struck the anvil of His omnipotence and sparks flew therefrom and He caught them on the tips of His fingers and flung them out into space and bedecked the heavens with stars. And nobody said a word. The

reason nobody said anything there wasn't anybody there to say anything. So God Himself said, 'That's good.'

God created the universe, and on the sixth day, after He created "living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds," He created man, male and female. You are the pinnacle of God's creation, the ultimate expression of His nature. What cannot be revealed about God by the sun, moon and stars can be revealed by man. That is why Eph. 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." You are an expression of the heart of God. You are God's divine poetry.

Since you were created by God for a mission trip to earth it only makes sense that He has equipped you with what you need to accomplish His mission - to make Him known. Peter connects calling with the glory of God in 1 Pe. 4:10-11: "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; *so that in all things God may be glorified* through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." When we employ our gifts as good stewards of the grace of God, He gets the glory.

2. I am satisfied. There is no greater feeling than knowing you are doing what God created you to do. You don't have to persuade a bird to fly or a fish to swim and you don't have to coerce people to do what they were designed to do. "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." When you discover what you were created to do you feel God's pleasure.

That's the phrase made famous by Eric Liddell in the movie Chariots of Fire. Liddell was a runner but he was also a follower of Jesus who felt that God had called him to give his life serving the people of China. When he decided to run in the 1924 Olympics in Paris his sister, Jennie, was disappointed. If you have never seen the movie, here is the scene...Eric Liddell's famous words were, "God made me for China. But he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure." So Liddell ran...and he died in a POW camp in China when the Japanese invaded during WWII.

You don't have to choose your GGP, you discover it "Since you are an intentional creation of God, this means you don't create your life's mission; you discover it! When you adopt this perspective, life becomes a journey of discovery, an adventure into meaning and personal mission." Reggie McNeal. When God's people are living this adventure and feeling the pleasure that comes from living out their GGP, then we become a contagious force in the world.

3. The world is notified that there is a purpose to life. This past week I learned that 91,000 people a month Google the question, "What is the meaning of life?" They know that there is more to life than sucking air and eating groceries but they don't know where to find an answer to the question. We have the answer. At least we did. I have always been struck by the contrast between the way people viewed the early church and the way we are viewed today. "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and **having favor with all the people**. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." Acts 2:46-47

Contrast that description of the early church with the way many people view church today. The church is viewed as just another bloated institution where you are required to do a bunch of stuff that you don't want to do. Why should I go to church? "Well, first, you get to sit in a big room with a bunch of total strangers. Then you are going to get to stand up and sing. Then you get to pay in advance before you listen to a long lecture about some ancient civilization. Doesn't that sound like fun? But wait, there's more. If you do all these things you will get a reward. You get to go to Heaven where you get a harp and you can sit on your own personal cloud and play sacred hymns for all eternity." Wow! Where do I sign up?

What if the world could see a company of repurposed agents of the Kingdom, doing what they love to do and experiencing great joy as they live, work and play together as God's representatives where they are already doing life. Jesus envisioned a church that would be contagiously attractive to others and influential for the Kingdom. He envisioned men and women who were fishermen and carpenters and tax collectors who would be repurposed and see their occupations as a platform for spreading the Good News. He envisioned a church where His followers discover and pursue their unique calling and lead others on a similar journey.

So how can we do that? Would you help me answer that question? That is the question that is before us these days and I can't answer it but together I believe WE CAN. I know that some of the changes we are making are inconvenient for some of you. But I'm convinced that one of the things that has held us back in the past is that we have not had a united effort toward a single goal. When everyone in the orchestra is playing a different song you don't get music, you just get noise.

Beginning two weeks from now we are going to spend 10 weeks considering how we can get from where we are to where God wants us to be. We will do that by examining the book of Joshua together. God had a Promised Land for His people but they had to cooperate and take possession of it. We will get together each week on Sunday morning and in our Life Groups to discover how we can get from here to there in our own personal callings.

You can sign up this morning...

Stand for the benediction. This benediction was used by Dr. Dick Halverson, former pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Maryland and Chaplain of the U.S. Senate from 1981 to 1994.

Wherever you go, God is sending you, wherever you are, God has put you there; He has a purpose in your being there. Christ who indwells you has something He wants to do through you where you are. Believe this and go in His grace and love and power.