

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: January 4, 2009

Created To Make A Positive Difference

by Dan Trygg

“Now the Yahweh said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; ² and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; ³ and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’”

Genesis 12:1-3

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:10

Did you ever ask yourself, “What am I here for? What is the purpose for my life?” That is a very normal and natural question. There is something inside of us that *wants* to be significant, an inner longing to make a difference in this world. This should not surprise us. **We were created for greatness.** We were created to have dominion over the entire created order. We are made in the image and likeness of God, and we were set over all the creation, to watch over it and care for it (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15). Even though we have lost some of what God originally intended for humanity, there still is a sense of significance and destiny which cries out from within us. We know **we were created to make a positive impact in this world.** Then, once we come to Jesus, we are told that we are destined to be princes and princesses in God’s household, destined to reign with Him for at least a thousand years (Rom. 8:14-17; Rev. 5:10; 20:4). Beyond that, who knows? I think it is an understatement to say that we are destined for greatness.

In the Bible, whenever God comes to a person to reveal something of their purpose in this world, or to call them into action, His plan is always about the impact of that person’s life upon other people. God never comes to a person like the genie in the story of Aladdin and his lamp. God never says, “I offer you three wishes. I’ll do whatever you want.” No. **God’s focus is always downstream. He always intends to make that person’s life have a positive, significant impact on the lives of other people.** He has a plan, and invites or calls that person to have a strategic role in that plan. **God’s plan always involves bringing positive change and blessing to and through people, if they will cooperate with Him.** God called Noah into action to *preserve the human race* and the animals in order to repopulate the earth, because He was intending to destroy the horrific corruption that had spoiled the planet. With Abraham, it was so that he would become a great nation, and so that *all the families on earth might be blessed* in Him. **What greater significance could a person have than to be a blessing to all the families on the earth?** This covenant promise is passed down through the patriarchs, and then God reveals to Joseph that his brothers, father and mother would bow down to him. Clearly, he was called to greatness and significance. His brothers were envious and misunderstood the dream as though it meant that he would lord it over them. They resented him, and nearly killed him, choosing instead to sell him for profit as a slave. Little did they know that **God was at work to “preserve many people alive”, saving not only the millions in Egypt, but also people throughout that entire region** from the ravages of a horrific drought and famine, including his own father and brothers. God’s calling was to preserve life and to bless others. In the same way, God chose to use Moses to lead His people out of bondage in Egypt, and Joshua to lead them into the promised land. He raised up judges to free Israel from their oppressors and to call them back to God, so that the entire nation could benefit. He raised up prophets and kings to lead the people. When they followed God’s plan, they brought blessing not only to themselves, but to thousands affected by their decisions. **God never called someone just to bless them for themselves alone. The blessings of God were always intended to be passed along to others.** If we follow God, we will have a life that is fruitful and positive in its impact on others. God is a giver of good gifts. If we are being led by His Spirit, and conformed to His image, we will also be dispensers of grace and blessing to others.

How do we prepare for God’s plan for our lives? What can we do to be most ready and able to do what God has for us to do? The Greek word for “mature” (e.g., 1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Heb.5:14) is *teleios*, a derivative of the word, *telos*, meaning “end, goal”. A person who is mature is one who has “come to completion”, is “fully developed”, or has “filled out their natural capabilities”. *Telos* implies design, so a *teleios* person is one who has “filled out or completed the inner design” of their being, or they have “explored and exhausted every opportunity” available to them. Another Greek word, *katartizō*, means to “fit out, equip, shape, adapt, complete, repair, restore, prepare, train and make ready” (Matt 4:21; 21:16; Mark 1:19; Luke 6:40; Rom 9:22; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 6:1; 1 Thess 3:10; Heb 10:5; 11:3; 13:21; 1 Pet 5:10; cf. Eph. 4:12). When you put these two words together, you begin to appreciate that the maturation and preparation processes could be quite extensive, and touch our lives in many different ways. We all have hurts to heal from, areas of

weakness to strengthen, knowledge to gain, skills to develop. Wow! **If we had to be *mature* before God could use us, none of us would ever accomplish anything for God!** Thankfully, God is the one who prepares us for what He wants to do with us. He decides when and how to use us. Nevertheless, what can we learn from these two words? **(1.) There is an *inner design* that God has put into us which He will seek to develop; (2.) God wants to *grow us up* and move us toward health and Christlikeness; (3.) He tools, shapes and adapts us for specific purposes (an *external design*) that may not be like what He is doing in the lives of others.** These three general concepts can help us become aware of areas that may need to be addressed in our lives.

Anything we can do to grow up, get healthy, and become more skilled will make us a more useful tool in the hand of God. Furthermore, the more we apply ourselves to knowing Him, discerning His voice, and His ways, the more ready we will be to recognize and move with the leading of His Spirit.

We are to “train ourselves unto godliness” (I Tim. 4:7), “train our faculties of discernment” (Heb. 5:14), and to be ones “having been trained by the discipline of God” (Heb. 12:11). All three of these instances of “train” are translations of the Greek word “gymnazō”, implying “spiritual workouts”, whether of our own intention, or brought into our lives by God’s sovereign design. Growth doesn’t just happen. It requires *training*.

The good news is that **God is the one in charge of our preparation process.** *The most important thing we can do is to live for Him in every area of our lives. If we are faithful in following Him in the little things, then He will lead us into larger, more significant endeavors.* What God is looking for is men and women who are serious about discovering and doing the will of God. He is looking for people who are *available* to Him, and *faithful* to carry out the responsibilities He assigns. Ephesians 2:10 says **we are His workmanship, His self-designed and fashioned tool, for doing the good works He intends for us to do, ...and He will bring those opportunities to serve into our lives at the proper time. All we have to do is walk out what God has built into us at those times.** God is looking out for His promises and His purposes, even when we are oblivious to them. He is training and developing us for His purposes even before we have a clue as to what is going on.

If we look back at some of the people in the scriptures whom God used mightily, it is interesting to note how **God often develops and trains us through life experiences long before we have any clue regarding our ultimate destiny.** For example, God taught **Joseph** from the time he was a child about interpreting dreams, and Joseph was a faithful and effective servant and administrator no matter what setting he found himself in, as a slave, in the dungeon, or as second in command to Pharaoh. His interpretation of the cupbearer’s dream led to an audience with the king, and his effectiveness as an administrator made him wise and effective as the king’s overseer. As a result, he saved many, many people, and became a blessing to the entire world by preserving the line of the Messiah.

Moses was raised in the household of Pharaoh. To him, it was just the circumstances he grew up in. The Bible tells us that he was “educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was powerful in words and deeds” (Acts 7:22). When he was burdened for his relatives, the people of Israel, he sought to deliver them by his own power, and had to flee for his life. He spent the next 40 years in the desert as a shepherd, caring for sheep. These two aspects of his life experience had built into him some of the qualities which he would find necessary in order to lead the people of Israel through the wilderness. It was not these experiences *alone*, ...but these experiences *plus God’s leading and direction* that gave him success. He learned to write, speak and administer from his experiences in Egypt, and he learned how to be attentive, oversee and care for the people as a shepherd. His failure had humbled him, and his years of solitude had quieted him, so that he could uniquely hear from and respond to God, when He called him.

David was another one prepared for leadership by years of tending sheep. His time spent alone with God in the wilderness developed a gift of music and a devotion to God that bonded him to God’s heart. His encounters with a lion and a bear prepared him for his battle with the giant Goliath. He knew that God could deliver him against all odds. Even his place as the youngest son had prepared him to both be humble, and to stand up for himself, when needed.

Matthew and Luke were educated men who knew how to keep records and investigate things. **Paul** was trained from childhood to become Christianity’s greatest theological champion to express its main truths and to defend it against all opponents. Even the story of **Esther** strongly argues that God was setting the stage for a great deliverance that would come through her long before she or Mordecai could have possibly dreamed was possible.

What is critical is that we live with integrity and faith in all of our activities now. Laziness, compromise, deception and sin will *detract* from our preparation and usefulness, and can *dull* or *prevent* the positive impact God wishes to work through us. **When we determine to live for God, and seriously go after growth, we will rapidly mature, and He will quickly bring us opportunities for growth, usefulness and impact.** He puts us in the right place and gives us what we need, when we need it, in order to be a blessing for His Kingdom, and for many people.