

YOUR DESTINY.....it's in your hands

ROD DENTON EQUIPPING THE NEXT GENERATION

I have heard it said that the greatest buried treasure in any city is to be found in its cemetery. For this is the place where the accumulated unfulfilled potential of a large number of people forever lies.

I compare this with the life of Jesus who said just before His death on a cross at the age of 33, *"Father....I have brought you glory on earth by FINISHING THE WORK YOU GAVE ME TO DO."* John 17:4 He was born with a destiny and He gave His life to fulfill this destiny.



I was challenged by the words of John Maxwell in his message on How To Build A Legacy; *"Don't let people come to your funeral and determine for themselves what your legacy might have been. Rather determine from an early age the destiny purposed for you. And remember, the greatest legacies are not built in a moment, they are built over a lifetime."*

From the moment I grew to understand that I was born with a destiny, I began to accept responsibility for the gift of my life and I gradually focused on understanding and living out that destiny. I chose to live my life in such a way that I might maximise my capacity so that I too might one day be able to say, "Father, I have brought You glory on earth by finishing the work You gave me to do."

You too have a God given destiny and the following are steps that I have taken over a number of years to help me discover and live out my destiny, the most important discovery I have ever made.

1. BE INTENTIONAL

Take responsibility for your life. Believe that the Lord was speaking to you when He said, *"For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."* Jeremiah 29:11. Unlike many other voices you may have heard, know that the Lord believes in you and wants you to intentionally seek out His destiny for your life. Then determine to be willing to pay any price to pursue this destiny a step at a time. Start to be faithful in the little things, whatever they might be, so that the Lord can trust you progressively with bigger things. Luke 16:10.

2. NOTICE THE EARLY STIRRINGS

With the benefit of hindsight, I can now see evidences of God's fingerprint on my life from an early stage after I became a Christian. I now recognise the stirrings in my heart that caused me to naturally gravitate to certain roles and activities as coming from the work of the Holy Spirit in my life. Christian leaders that grew to know me started to open doors for me. In particular, people began to look to me to take a leadership role in various activities. My youth leader encouraged me to start preaching to smaller congregations. As I look back now I can see how those experiences were laying a foundation that was preparing me for the unfolding destiny that God had planned for me.

3. DISCERN GOD'S CALLING

It wasn't long after I married Sue, that one day I quite unexpectedly received a phone call from the pastor of a large Baptist Church in another state asking me if I would consider joining his ministry

team as Pastor for Youth and Young Adults. I was completely taken by surprise. I had no formal training, I was steadily making progress in my career in the business world and I never had ever considered the pastoral ministry as a career. I told the pastor that I had not contemplated such a calling, but he asked me to pray about it. He was very patient and seemed to know something I didn't know. And then it happened. After some months, God spoke through a scripture from my daily Bible study that deeply impacted me.

"He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me." Colossians 1:28-29

God had called and I shared this word with Sue who confirmed that this was of God. And so I called the pastor and shared with him the deep conviction that stirred within me that morning. God's calling has been a strong anchor for us as we have endured the highs and lows of ministry for 40 years. I am a strong believer that our destiny is strengthened by the calling of God that usually comes through meditating on His word. As your calling emerges, it might be useful to complete a *personal vision worksheet* that I have used.

<http://roddentoneng.com.au/personal-vision-worksheet/>

4. UNDERSTAND YOUR SHAPE

God has shaped each of us in a way that is consistent with His calling on our lives so that we might live as round pegs in round holes. With the passing of time I developed a growing understanding of my SHAPE which helped me to discern my strengths and my weaknesses.

Consequently I learned to:

- focus on developing my strengths (spiritual gifts) rather than my weaknesses.
- recruit people to my leadership team that would complement my weaknesses.
- trust the Lord for ministries that fitted my SHAPE
- include teaching on SHAPE in my church's discipleship pathway

The following is an overview of my SHAPE and the scriptures that defined the Apostle Paul's SHAPE:

<u>SHAPE</u>	<u>ROD DENTON</u>	<u>APOSTLE PAUL</u>
Spiritual Gifts	Teaching, Leadership	2 Timothy 1:11
Heart	To present everyone mature in Christ Developing leaders	Romans 15:20, Galations 2:8
Abilities	Organisational, cross cultural, sporting	Acts 18:2b-4
Personality	Choleric/Melancholic	Galations 1:13-15
Experiences	Family, army, mentors, marriage, study	Acts 8:1, 9:1,22:3 2 Corinthians 12:7

5. SEARCH OUT THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it." Matthew 13:45-46

This parable speaks to me of people:

- who were willing to pay the price and sell everything to live out the destiny that God had planned for them.
- who were not willing to let good things get in the way of the best thing.

- who maintained a lifelong focus on the destiny planned out for them in the kingdom of God.
- who wouldn't let anyone else compromise God's calling and destiny for their lives.

6. **A GOOD MENTOR**

It wasn't long after I began full time ministry that I realised that there was much that I didn't know, and that I would need the help of a person wiser and more experienced than I was. I wanted one day to be able to look back and see that I had realised my full potential in living out the destiny that God had planned for my life.

Early in my ministry I went to a seminar conducted by a man who immediately impacted me, and I left the seminar wanting more. At the end of the seminar I was bold enough to ask John Mallison if he would give me some of his time on the next occasion I would travel to Sydney. He agreed and I ended up spending two days with him. Following those two days I convinced John that he wouldn't be disappointed if he would agree to becoming my mentor, and for the next 30 years he invested into my life in so many valuable ways. I am convinced that to fulfill our God given destiny, we need a person who can speak into our lives along the journey.

7. **CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS**

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" Proverbs 27:17

As my ministry unfolded, I realised that one way I could maximise my personal growth was to spend time with various people who could inspire me and add value to my life. Whenever I found such people, I would boldly ask them if I could meet with them. In the process, I travelled around Australia and to a number of countries to meet with people and attend conferences, and even to study at Fuller Seminary in America. Along the way I developed a valuable axiom when looking to ask people for help: *Start at the top and work my way down. They might say no, but they could say yes.*

8. **WORK HARD AT SELF LEADERSHIP**

It didn't take long before I realised that the hardest person that I would ever lead was myself. Further, I grew to see that I couldn't expect to lead others where I hadn't led myself. The first book I ever read on leadership was *Spiritual Leadership* by Mr J. Oswald Sanders. One of the quotes that has stayed with me has to do with self leadership.

"A leader is a person who has learned to obey a discipline imparted from without, and has then taken on a more rigorous discipline from within. Those who rebel against authority and scorn self-discipline – who shirk the rigors and turn from the sacrifices – do not qualify to lead. Many who drop out from (leadership) are sufficiently gifted but have large areas of life floating free from the Holy Spirit's control. Lazy and disorganised people never rise to true leadership."

So remember, before you can conquer the world, you must first conquer yourself.

9. **MARRY A PARTNER WHO SHARES YOUR DESTINY**

The greatest gift of my life has been the gift of my partner in marriage, Sue. Together we have shared a destiny where step by step we have seen a future unfold that we could have never accomplished on our own. Sue has been my greatest encourager and has believed in me in the midst of my moments of doubt. Her spiritual gifts and personality have complemented mine and she has added a dimension that has enriched me and enlarged me. Her unique ministry has touched people in a way that I could never have, and she has disciplined the two most important people in our lives, our two daughters.

In a journey where we often had to take steps of faith into uncharted waters, Sue displayed great

courage and was prepared to make costly sacrifices without a word of complaint, because of the destiny that the Lord had planned for us.

I have grieved over people I have known whose great destinies were compromised because they lacked a unified foundation in their marriage. Sue is the friend who knows all about me and loves me just the same.

10. PASS THE TESTS

“.....we speak as those APPROVED by God to be ENTRUSTED with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God who TESTS our hearts.” 1 Thessalonians 2:4

Paul’s words to the Thessalonians summarises the way that God develops His people along their destiny journey. He continually tests them so that when they pass these tests He approves them and entrusts them with growing opportunities to serve Him.

God tests our hearts (Proverbs 17:3, 1 Corinthians 2:4), God tests our faith which is of greater worth than gold (1 Peter 1:7), God tests our faith because it produces perseverance (James 1:3). God tests us through fiery trials (1 Peter 4:12) and God tested Abraham’s obedience (Genesis 22:1).

God has tests for us that we will encounter from time to time as we pursue the destiny that He planned for us. These tests are designed to strengthen us, and grow our faith and dependence on God and build in us an obedient heart.

His tests usually come unannounced. In 1989 I travelled to America with my family to study at Fuller Seminary. I mistakenly presumed that all my tests would happen in the Fuller classrooms. But I later grew to understand that the biggest test I would encounter was LIVING BY FAITH 101 as Sue and I depended on God for our financial resources as we lived for 22 months without any form of income or support. God is so committed to us reaching the destiny He has planned for us that at strategic times He tests our hearts to ensure that we are ready for the next challenges He has planned for us. So be alert and pass the tests.

I recently wrote an article called *Make Plans That Outlive Your Life* -

<http://roddentoneng.com.au/make-plans-that-outlive-your-life/>

In that article I mentioned four types of plans that describe the way we can live our lives.

1. Little plans that help us to live a day at a time and to just exist.
2. Limited plans that have a cut off date that is called retirement after which we can sit back and relax.
3. Lifelong plans that ensure we will live fruitfully for the extent of our lives.
4. Longer than life plans that will outlast us and impact eternity.

A God given destiny is a longer than life plan that will not just impact our generation but will sow seeds that will live beyond us. So don’t let people come to your funeral and determine for themselves what your legacy might have been. Rather take steps now to determine the destiny God has planned for you and commit yourself to that destiny.

After all, your destiny.....is in your hands.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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