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Ordinary People Can Live with Significance

By David DeFord

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It's holiday time—a time when our thoughts rise from our everyday living to higher ideals. Something lifts our sights above the everyday, and helps us focus on our relationships, on our neighbors, and on our fellowman.

The Babe from Bethlehem changed everything. His perfect life, inspiring teachings, and infinite sacrifice has had a profound impact on the world ever since. It was the turning point of human history.

Can ordinary people like us live lives of significance? Can we have profound impacts on others?

I am convinced that every person born to this earth has the seeds of extraordinary significance built into him or her. While our circle of influence may be much smaller than Christ's, we can lift the lives of those around us. We can have lives filled with deep purpose and meaning.

"There is no passion to be found playing small—in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living." — Nelson Mandela

Our Circles of Influence

Of course most of us can't have the influence to inspire the world like Nelson Mandela, we can influence our own circles.

Our Families

Some people focus so much on their work or their other passions that they fail to inspire and lift their own families.

David O. MacKay said,

"No success can compensate for failure in the home."

And Harold B. Lee added,

"The most important of the Lord's work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes."

Ordinary People Can Live with Significance

We should all see that our drive to succeed in the world does not keep us at such a distance from our families that we lose our opportunity, or shun our responsibility to teach, love, comfort, nurture, and develop our own family members.

Family is the basic unit of society. Our work at home can effect many generations.

Those Around Us

We have wonderful opportunities everyday to live with significance by influencing those around us. Treating others with respect, kindness, patience, and empathy lifts them and fulfills us. Have you ever been greeted by a store clerk or restaurant worker with enthusiasm and true concern? They communicate to you that they want you to have a good experience. How does that make you feel? It

lifts your spirits, gives you positive energy. You can have the same impact on others.

Our Community

Many people want the government to take care of every need for those who require help with healthcare, food, housing, small business loans, and most other humanitarian efforts.

When the government takes away from society the need and the ability to serve our fellowman, we all lose. When we, of our own volition, choose to serve, we choose true and abundant significance.

In spite of the billions of dollars the government spends for the relief of others, there are many needs to be satisfied by ordinary people. Unfortunately, it isn't especially easy to find out where you can serve.

Here are a few suggestions:

Agencies for the elderly need people to deliver food, perform yard work, shovel snow, run errands, provide transportation, and dozens of other tasks.

Homeless and battered women shelters need painting and other fix-ups, as well as mentors for assisting their clients.

Service clubs, like Rotary, Kiwanis, and Exchange, provide service opportunities throughout the year.

Schools face shrinking budgets and need volunteers to help in their libraries, teachers' aides, and help with athletics.

Youth programs, like Scouting and athletics, always need positive people to teach and guide our young people.

How to Find Volunteer Opportunities

Check your local phone book in the government pages for elderly care, and your yellow pages under, "Social Service Organizations" and "Youth Athletics." You can also use the search engines under "Service Clubs."

Living with Significance

When we look back on our lives, we usually don't savor our professional achievements as much as we do the impact we have had on the lives of others. We should not be content with our normal work-a-day lives—but see the great potential for positive influence we can have for the people around us.

As we approach the coming year, I challenge you to raise your sights, serve others, and live your life with extraordinary significance!

David DeFord is the owner of Ordinary People Can Win, a personal development company dedicated to helping ordinary people achieve extraordinary success in all areas of their lives. See his website at <http://www.OrdinaryPeopleCanWin.com> and subscribe to his free weekly e-zine. His new e-book, Ordinary People Can Achieve the Extraordinary—A Practical Guide to Goal Achievement, is available at <http://www.OrdinaryPeopleCanWin.com/extraordinaryachieve.htm>

IS YOUR LIFE SIGNIFICANT?

By Dee Mapa

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"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." – Matthew 16:18 (NASU)

The words of Jesus above spoken to Peter conveyed many meanings. They were not only an utterance of prophecy. They were meant also to build up and to give Peter a life of significance. Peter was a man given to impulse, a characteristic that belied an obvious need to be esteemed.

There are many like Peter, people who desire a life of significance. Yet, in this world of increasing materialism, instant gratification and compromised morals, finding significance is more like a search for the Holy Grail.

Still, living a life of significance is possible. It begins with four thoughts we can find in the verse quoted above.

1. **KNOW YOU ARE SPECIAL** ("...You are Peter"). Jesus wasn't merely reminding Peter of his name. He was, in effect, saying, "You are somebody. In fact, you're no longer Simon the fisherman, but Peter the rock!"

God doesn't create junk. He created you with a perfect and

eternal plan in mind that, when fulfilled, will reveal the profound love God has for all mankind. He's given you skills, talents and gifts so you can do your part in that divine plan.

2. KNOW YOUR PURPOSE ("...upon this rock I will build My church"). God's divine plan is fulfilled when we realize that we are in this world for a purpose. Certainly that purpose isn't confined in building our own home, owning the latest car model or wearing the most expensive jewelry.

Our purpose would definitely have something to do with other people. Thus, we must find our purpose in serving others or meeting their needs. A purpose that seeks to benefit others is not only noble, it is divine.

3. KNOW YOUR WEAKNESSES ("...and the gates of Hades will not overpower it"). What defeats divine purpose is our weaknesses,

because weaknesses tend to feed the self and cause problems (e.g. Peter's denial of Jesus).

Yet, when we admit our weaknesses and seek to correct them, we consequently mature and become more of a blessing to those we serve or relate with. In turn, we also help others mature. We must not go through life with a defeatist but a victorious attitude. This means we must first conquer our weaknesses.

4. KNOW WHO GOD IS ("I also say to you..."). It was Jesus who was addressing Peter, therefore he was trustworthy and believable. But, more than this, he was the Son of God!

And this is the crux of the matter: It is within a relationship with God that we can find significance in our lives. It's not about religion; it's not about doctrines and dogma; it's not about church and denomination.

It's about relationship. In our mundane world, we need to be able to touch the divine. To do so is to begin to live a life of significance.

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Dee Mapa has been a writer for over 20 years. His thought-provoking articles have appeared in various off-line and on-line publications. You can subscribe to receive his weekly messages by sending a blank e-mail to fromthewilderness-subscribe@yahoogroups.com



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