

QUALITY
OF
LIFE
BIBLE
STUDY



Destiny[©]

COMPILED BY
S.MCRAE

DESTINY “Quality of Life Series”

LEADER: The inevitable or necessary fate to which a particular person or thing is destined; one's lot. A predetermined course of events considered as something beyond human power or control.
Source ~ <http://www.bartleby.com/61/60/D0166000.html>

WHAT DOES THIS DESCRIBE?

It's the definition of "destiny" by the American Heritage Dictionary.

LEADER: Are you the master of your destiny? If not...who is? Do you have a choice in it?

Are you following your destiny or are you just letting it happen?

READER: “Van of your Dreams”

Source ~ http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2d/van_of_your_dreams.htm

Thanks to Henk Frijters sermon@minister.com

There is a story of a young man who decided that when he bought his first vehicle it would be the epitome of his dreams. He worked and saved and toiled and dreamed, until finally the day arrived when he was able to purchase his dream machine. It was a van: beautiful, loaded, luxurious; as good as they come; a perfect merging of the engineer's and designer's arts. The young man had every right to expect a great deal from this mechanical marvel, and he drove it off the lot with pride and the aura of a man who knows that destiny and determination have conspired to bring about the perfect union.

The next day, however, the beautiful new van came back to the lot on a tow-truck. It was bent and battered, obviously undriveable. Shortly thereafter the livid owner stormed into the salesman's office, not only demanding a complete refund, but also threatening to sue for medical damages.

“What happened?” asked the startled salesman.

“I bought your van,” sputtered the young man, “and I drove it out to the interstate to give it a test run. I set the automatic cruise control, went to the back to fix myself a cup of coffee, and it ran off the road!”

I suspect that there is a desire in each of us to put our lives on cruise control. We like to avoid responsibility--we want to sit back, eat, drink and be merry--to enjoy the benefits of the modern world without having to pay much for it.

LEADER: Are you on cruise control or are you in for the adventure?

How are you using the bumps, detours and stop signs along your journey.

READER: “Your Epitaph” John Woodbridge, More Than Conquerors

Source ~ http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon3b/your_epitaph.htm

“He will bless those who fear the Lord- small and great alike.” Psalm 115:13

What will be written on your epitaph? How do you want people to remember you? What type of legacy will your life leave behind? I interviewed a very successful and powerful man one time for a magazine when this question came up. The man ran an international business that is a household name to all. He was a professed Christian, but he had difficulty answering my question. “I always knew someone would ask that question some day. I am not sure I am any more prepared to answer it now either,” was the man's answer. He grappled for a few nice words, but it was clear he had not seriously considered his life much beyond his business success.

It is said of George Washington Carver that he got up early in the morning each day to walk alone and pray. He asked God how he was to spend his day and what He wanted to teach him that day. Carver grew up at the close of the Civil War in a one-room shanty on the home of Moses Carver-the man who owned his mother. The Ku Klux Klan had abducted him and his mother, selling her to new owners. He was later found and returned to his owner, but his mother was never seen again. Carver grew up at the height of racial discrimination, yet he had overcome all these obstacles to become one of the most influential men in the history of the United States. He made many discoveries with the use of peanuts and sweet potatoes.

However, after he recommended farmers to plant peanuts and sweet potatoes instead of cotton, he was led into his greatest trial. The farmers lost even more money due to the lack of market for peanuts and sweet potatoes. Carver cried out to the Lord, "Mr. Creator, why did You make the peanut?"

Many years later, he shared that God led him back to his lab and worked with him to discover some 300 marketable products from the peanut. Likewise, he made over 100 discoveries from the sweet potato. These new products created a demand for peanuts and sweet potatoes, and they were major contributors to rejuvenating the Southern economy. As he made new discoveries, he never became successful monetarily, but he overcame great rejection during his lifetime for being black. He was offered six-figure income opportunities from Henry Ford, and he became friends with presidents of his day, yet he knew what God had called him to do. His epitaph read: "He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world."

LEADER: George could've been bitter...asked "why me?"...but what did he do? (He sought the Lord first then followed the destiny the Lord had for him and used what appeared to be the negatives for positives.)

READER: "The Oyster" Thanks to HeartWarming heartwarming-subscribe@onelist.com

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2b/oyster.htm>

There once was an oyster whose story I tell,
Who found that some sand had got into his shell.
It was only a grain, but it gave him great pain,
For oysters have feelings although they're so plain.

Now, did he berate the harsh workings of fate,
That had brought him to such a deplorable state?
Did he curse at the government, cry for election,
And claim that the sea should have given him protection?

No - he said to himself as he lay on a shell,
Since I cannot remove it, I shall try to improve it.
Now the years have rolled around, as the years always do,
And he came to his ultimate Destiny - stew.

And the small grain of sand that had bothered him so,
Was a beautiful pearl all richly aglow.
Now the tale has a moral, for isn't it grand,
What an oyster can do with a morsel of sand?

What couldn't we do if we'd only begin,
With some of the things that get under our skin.

READER: "Starting Over" Excerpted from the book TGIF Today God Is First, by Os Hillman

Source ~ http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon4/starting_over1.htm

"The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position." James 1:9

Do you find yourself in humble circumstances? If so, James tells us that we are to take pride in this "high" position. These two things would seem to be an oxymoron. Most of us would not consider humble circumstances a high position. Successful business tells us that being on top means being wealthy, attaining favor and status, or having power to influence. However, Jesus influenced not from power, but from weakness.

J. C. Penney is a name synonymous with department store. He first launched his chain of "The Golden Rule" stores in 1907. In 1910 his first wife died. Three years later, he incorporated as the J.C. Penney company. In 1923 his second wife died giving birth to his son. In 1929 the stock market crashed and he lost \$40 million. By 1932, he had to sell out to satisfy...creditors. This left [Penney] virtually broke. ...Crushed in spirit from his loss and his health suddenly failing, Penney wound up in a Battle Creek, Michigan sanitorium. One morning he heard the distant singing of employees who gathered to start the day with God: Be not dismayed, whate'er betide, God will take care of you.... Penney followed the music to its source and slipped into a back row. He left a short time later a changed man, his health and spirit renewed, and ready to start the long climb back at age fifty-six.

By 1951 there was a J.C. Penney store in every state, and for the first time sales surpassed \$1 billion a year. [John Woodbridge, ed., *More Than Conquerors* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1992), 340-343.] The success of J.C. Penney can be traced to God's mercy in his life to bring him out of his humble circumstance. Do you find yourself in a humble circumstance? God is the only one who can help you see your humble circumstance from His viewpoint-a high position. It is a high position because of what God is going to teach you in this place. He does not intend you to stay there; it is merely a stopping place to learn some important things you would not learn otherwise. Press into God and trust Him for the outcome to your circumstances.

READER: “The Penthouse”

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1a/penthouse.htm>

He lived “way out in the sticks.” Maybe it wasn’t exactly the end of the earth, but you could see it from there. Then he won an all-expenses-paid trip to New York by being the designated caller in a radio contest.

So he took his first ride on a jet. He landed at LaGuardia only to have a limousine waiting for him. He was still wide-eyed as it pulled up to the entrance of a posh hotel and people rushed to open doors, carry luggage, and otherwise tend to his needs. A bellhop said he would show him to his room.

That room was his first disappointment. It was nice, but it was smaller than he had envisioned for a penthouse. And it seemed he was going to have to share it, for two people were already there when he walked into it.

Sensing something wrong, the bellhop asked, “Is there a problem, sir?”

“I don’t mean to gripe,” he said. “I was just expecting a bigger room.”

“Oh, sir,” he replied, “your luxury suite is twenty-nine stories up. This is only the elevator that takes you there.”

What are you facing today? Cancer? Bankruptcy? Bad job? No job? Frustration? Anger? Alcoholism? Unhappy customers? No customers? Being single? Being married? Being a parent? Being a child?

Don’t think for a moment that today’s situation has to be the story of your life, the sum of your existence. The good, the bad, and the indifferent of today are mile-markers on your longer journey to eternity. The terrain over which you are traveling ought not be confused with its outcome.

“You won’t see us drooping our heads or dragging our feet!” wrote Paul. “Cramped conditions here don’t get us down. They only remind us of the spacious living conditions ahead. It’s what we trust in but don’t yet see that keeps us going” (2 Corinthians 5:6-7, The Message).

If a lack of patience is a serious problem with you today, perhaps it’s because you have confused your pilgrimage with your destiny, the elevator with the penthouse. Hold on. Stay the course. You’re not there yet.

READER: “Raindrops” Our Daily Bread

Source ~ <http://www.christianglobe.com/Illustrations/theDetails.asp?whichOne=d&whichFile=destiny>

A certain courthouse in Ohio stands in a unique location. Raindrops that fall on the north side of the building go into Lake Ontario and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, while those falling on the south side go into the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. At precisely the point of the peak of the roof, just a gentle puff of wind can determine the destiny of many raindrops. It will make a difference of more than 2,000 miles as to their final destination. The spiritual application is clear. By the smallest deed or choice of words we might set in motion influences that could change the course of others’ lives here and now and could also affect their eternal destiny.

READER: QUOTE # 1

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=fate,destin>

“Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.” - Patrick Overton 43 BC-AD 17, Roman poet

READER: QUOTE #2

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=fate,destin>

"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." - Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), French philosopher, physician, musician, Nobel Prize

READER: QUOTE #3

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=fate,destin>

"The highest destiny of the individual is to serve rather than to rule." - Albert Einstein (1875-1955), German-born American theoretical physicist, theories of relativity, philosopher

READER: "Nicolai" From: "Salvation in Five Steps" (Excerpts) By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas.

Source ~ <http://www.abideinchrist.com/messages/rom8v29.html>

One of the most amazing men I ever met was Nicolai Alexandrenko. He was a Russian paratrooper in World War II who was wounded by German machine gunners who shot him down while defending his mother country. Nicolai in his own words was an atheist. He had been taught from a child that there is no God. He was taught to believe in Marx and Stalin and the good of society.

When Germans invaded he was sent to defend his country. Lt. Alexandrenko with the men under his command were gunned down by machine guns before they hit the ground. As the bullets penetrated his body he realized death was imminent. He saw his comrades fall and die before his very eyes. Even then he clung to his atheistic philosophy. In intense pain he did not shed a tear. In fact, he didn't even cry when his mother had died.

Nicolai was taken to the infirmary patched up and left to die. But he didn't die. Miraculously he recovered from his injuries. Later, he found himself in the barracks alone, freezing cold trying to light a fire with a piece of paper that refused to burn.

He began to read what was written on the paper, "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life*" (John 3:16). He continued to read these amazing words and other Scriptures printed on the Gospel tract. There in the coldness of the bitter night Nicolai bowed his head, with tears flowing from his eyes and believed on Jesus Christ as His own personal Savior. He later made his way to the U. S. and earned a doctorate in theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and became a professor in a Christian college.

LEADER: "Salvation in Five Steps" (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas.

(*NOTE TO THE LEADER: THE FIVE STEPS LISTED IN WIL POUND'S SERMON ARE: GOD IS SOVEREIGN; GOD FORKNEW YOU; GOD PREDESTINED YOU; GOD CALLED YOU; GOD GLORIFIED YOU*)

We read a testimony like that and think how amazing. How marvelous God worked in his life. However, the same thing is true in your life and mine.

God causes everything to work together for good to those who love God and are called by His purposes. Jesus stated God's eternal purpose in those verses Nicolai read. John the Apostle expressed it in John 20:31: "*these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*"

The Apostle presents God's eternal purpose in your life in Romans 8:28-30

READER: Romans 8:28-30

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

LEADER: “Salvation in Five Steps” (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas.

(GOD IS SOVEREIGN)

There is no greater assurance for the Christian when he is going through extremely difficult times than to remind Himself that God sees beyond today and He always has His eternal purpose for us clearly in mind. The Apostle Paul reminds the believer who groans because of the adversities in life of these precious words of encouragement in 8:28. *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

The promise is “to them that love God.” I repeat this promise is not for those who do not love Him. However, for those who love Him God causes “all things to work together for the good.” It is by God’s providence that all things work together for good to those who love Him.

READER: Ephesians 1:11-12

also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

LEADER: “Salvation in Five Steps” (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas.

God’s eternal purpose is being carried out in Christ Jesus. God has called us and saved us with His eternal purpose in mind.

READER: 2 Timothy 1:9

who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

LEADER: “Salvation in Five Steps” (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas.

(GOD FORKNEW YOU)

God “foreknew” you and me. He foresees all that comes to pass. However, the question is from whence comes faith? Does man psyche himself up to faith? Is it something he decides to do?

READER: John 6:44

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

READER: John 6:65

And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

READER: Philippians 1:29

For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

READER: Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

LEADER: “Salvation in Five Steps” (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas.

The Scriptures are consistent in their message that “the faith which God foresees is the faith He Himself creates.

READER: 1 John 4:19

We love, because He first loved us.

READER: 1 Corinthians 4:7

For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

READER: 2 Corinthians 4:4

in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

READER: Colossians 1:15

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

LEADER: “**Salvation in Five Steps**” (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas.

(GOD PREDESTINED YOU)

The goal of predestination is to conform us to the character of Jesus Christ. Everything that happens in our lives is with that goal in mind. God is concerned that we be conformed to the image of His Son. God selected His goal beforehand, in eternity past, that we should like Christ. God sees the end from the beginning. That “end” is conformity to the image of His Son. The glorious end product will be like Jesus in His character and destiny.

READER: Ephesians 1:5

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

READER: Philippians 1:6

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

LEADER: “**Salvation in Five Steps**” (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas.

This is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. It is a gradual process begun the moment the believing sinner was saved and it continues until Jesus returns in glory.

READER: Hebrews 2:13

And again, “I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.” And again, “BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.”

LEADER: “**Salvation in Five Steps**” (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas

We get our glory because we belong to Him and are members of His family. Our glory is reflected glory. The more we are around Christ the more we reflect His glory.

The quality of our reflection of His glory down here is in proportion to our intimate love relationship with Him. The more we become like Christ the more His glorification in us.

LEADER: So how is one who is predestined by the grace of God to be conformed to the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ recognized?

READER: James 2:18

But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

READER: Galatians 5:22-23

the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

READER: Romans 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

READER: Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

READER: Ephesians 5:1-2

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

READER: 2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

READER: 2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

LEADER: “Salvation in Five Steps” (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas

(GOD CALLED YOU)

The Holy Spirit begins to draw us and open our minds and create an interest in our hearts for the things of God.

READER: John 6:65

And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

READER: Romans 3:24-25

being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

LEADER: “Salvation in Five Steps” (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas

The one saved was perfected forever in the sight of God as being in Christ. The believing sinner has partaken of Christ's saving merit and standing forever. We don't have to add anything of merit to that which is already perfected forever. This removes works salvation. It is all of grace that it may be by faith.

READER: Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

READER: Hebrews 10:14

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

LEADER: What does sanctified mean?

To be made holy.
Do we make ourselves holy?
No...it by the grace of God through His Son.

LEADER: To repeat Romans 8:30

(GOD JUSTIFIED YOU)

and these whom predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

LEADER: “Salvation in Five Steps” (Excerpts) continued By Wil Pounds, preached at South McGehee Baptist Church, McGehee, Arkansas

Robert Haldane eloquently wrote (An Exposition of Romans): “In the passage before us, we see that all the links of that chain by which man is drawn up to heaven, are inseparable. In the whole of it there is nothing but grace, whether we contemplate its beginning, its middle, or its end. Each of its parts furnishes the most important instruction. If we are elected, let us feel and experience in ourselves the effects of our election. If we are called, let us walk worthy of our vocation. If we are justified, let us, like Abraham show our faith and prove our justification by our works. If we shall be glorified, let us live as fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God. Let our conversation be in heaven, and let us confess that we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth”.

READER: QUOTE #4

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=fate,destin>

“There is no such thing as chance; and what seem to us merest accident springs from the deepest source of destiny.” - Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805), German writer, “Don Carlos,” “Wallenstein”

READER: QUOTE #5

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=fate,destin>

“No amount of travel on the wrong road will bring you to the right destination.” - Ben Gaye, III, Author

READER: QUOTE #6

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Destiny>

“We are made for larger ends than Earth can encompass. Oh, let us be true to our exalted destiny.” - Catherine Booth 1829-1890 Known as “Army Mother” to the Salvation Army

READER: QUOTE #7

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=fate,destin>

“We are all in the hands of an omnipotent, omniscient, just and merciful God, and whatever may be the destiny of humanity (for real or woe), there will be a universal and eternal amen to all that God does.” - W. T. Ussery, Author

READER: QUOTE #8

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=fate,destin>

“As long as we are persistence in our pursuit of our deepest destiny, we will continue to grow. We cannot choose the day or time when we will fully bloom. It happens in its own time.” - Denis Waitley, Author Seeds of Greatness

READER: “Not Yet!”

Source ~ http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2b/not_yet.htm

Sometimes I ask the question,
“My Lord, is this your will?”
It’s then I hear you answer me,
“My Precious Child ... be still.”

Sometimes I feel frustrated,
cause I think I know what's best.
It's then I hear you say to me,
"My Busy Child ... just rest"

Sometimes I feel so lonely
and I think I'd like a mate.
Your still small voice gets oh so clear
and says, "My Child ... please wait"

"I know the plans I have for you,
the wondrous things you'll see;
If you can just be patient,
Child, and put your trust in me.

I've plans to draw you closer.
I've plans to help you grow.
There's much I do you cannot see
and much you do not know.

But know this, Child ... I LOVE YOU.
You are Precious unto Me.
Before I formed you in the womb,
I planned your destiny.

I've something very special
I hope for you to learn.
The gifts I wish to give to you
are gifts you cannot earn.

They come without a price tag,
but not without a cost; at Calvary,
I gave My Son, so You would not be lost.
Rest Child, and do not weary of doing what is good.

I promise I'll come back for you just like I said I would.
Your name is written on my palm, I never could forget;
Therefore, do not be discouraged
when my answer is... "Not Yet"

LEADER: What about your destiny?

- Are you seeking first the will of the Lord...are you doing the best with the gifts and situations He has given you?
- Are you on cruise control or are you in for the adventure?
- How are you using the bumps, detours and stop signs along your route?
- Are you following the example of George Washington Carver and the oyster...how about the example of Christ?
- What will your epitaph say?
- Are you focused on your final destiny?

LEADER: 2 Peter 1:2

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

COMMENTS IF TIME:

**STOP TEN MINUTES BEFORE CLOSING FOR:
PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES:**

COPY AND DISTRIBUTE THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO YOUR READERS:

READERS

“Van of your Dreams”

There is a story of a young man who decided that when he bought his first vehicle it would be the epitome of his dreams. He worked and saved and toiled and dreamed, until finally the day arrived when he was able to purchase his dream machine. It was a van: beautiful, loaded, luxurious; as good as they come; a perfect merging of the engineer's and designer's arts. The young man had every right to expect a great deal from this mechanical marvel, and he drove it off the lot with pride and the aura of a man who knows that destiny and determination have conspired to bring about the perfect union.

The next day, however, the beautiful new van came back to the lot on a tow-truck. It was bent and battered, obviously undriveable. Shortly thereafter the livid owner stormed into the salesman's office, not only demanding a complete refund, but also threatening to sue for medical damages.

“What happened?” asked the startled salesman.

“I bought your van,” sputtered the young man, “and I drove it out to the interstate to give it a test run. I set the automatic cruise control, went to the back to fix myself a cup of coffee, and it ran off the road!”

I suspect that there is a desire in each of us to put our lives on cruise control. We like to avoid responsibility--we want to sit back, eat, drink and be merry--to enjoy the benefits of the modern world without having to pay much for it.

“Your Epitaph”

“He will bless those who fear the Lord- small and great alike.” - Psalm 115:13

What will be written on your epitaph? How do you want people to remember you? What type of legacy will your life leave behind? I interviewed a very successful and powerful man one time for a magazine when this question came up. The man ran an international business that is a household name to all. He was a professed Christian, but he had difficulty answering my question. “I always knew someone would ask that question some day. I am not sure I am any more prepared to answer it now either,” was the man’s answer. He grappled for a few nice words, but it was clear he had not seriously considered his life much beyond his business success.

It is said of George Washington Carver that he got up early in the morning each day to walk alone and pray. He asked God how he was to spend his day and what He wanted to teach him that day. Carver grew up at the close of the Civil War in a one-room shanty on the home of Moses Carver—the man who owned his mother. The Ku Klux Klan had abducted him and his mother, selling her to new owners. He was later found and returned to his owner, but his mother was never seen again. Carver grew up at the height of racial discrimination, yet he had overcome all these obstacles to become one of the most influential men in the history of the United States. He made many discoveries with the use of peanuts and sweet potatoes. However, after he recommended farmers to plant peanuts and sweet potatoes instead of cotton, he was led into his greatest trial. The farmers lost even more money due to the lack of market for peanuts and sweet potatoes. Carver cried out to the Lord, “Mr. Creator, why did You make the peanut?”

Many years later, he shared that God led him back to his lab and worked with him to discover some 300 marketable products from the peanut. Likewise, he made over 100 discoveries from the sweet potato. These new products created a demand for peanuts and sweet potatoes, and they were major contributors to rejuvenating the Southern economy. As he made new discoveries, he never became successful monetarily, but he overcame great rejection during his lifetime for being black. He was offered six-figure income opportunities from Henry Ford, and he became friends with presidents of his day, yet he knew what God had called him to do. His epitaph read:

“He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world.”

“The Oyster”

There once was an oyster whose story I tell,
Who found that some sand had got into his shell.
It was only a grain, but it gave him great pain,
For oysters have feelings although they're so plain.

Now, did he berate the harsh workings of fate,
That had brought him to such a deplorable state?
Did he curse at the government, cry for election,
And claim that the sea should have given him protection?

No - he said to himself as he lay on a shell,
Since I cannot remove it, I shall try to improve it.
Now the years have rolled around, as the years always do,
And he came to his ultimate Destiny - stew.

And the small grain of sand that had bothered him so,
Was a beautiful pearl all richly aglow.
Now the tale has a moral, for isn't it grand,
What an oyster can do with a morsel of sand?

What couldn't we do if we'd only begin,
With some of the things that get under our skin.

“Starting Over”

“The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.” - James 1:9

Do you find yourself in humble circumstances? If so, James tells us that we are to take pride in this “high” position. These two things would seem to be an oxymoron. Most of us would not consider humble circumstances a high position. Successful business tells us that being on top means being wealthy, attaining favor and status, or having power to influence. However, Jesus influenced not from power, but from weakness.

J. C. Penney is a name synonymous with department store. He first launched his chain of “The Golden Rule” stores in 1907. In 1910 his first wife died. Three years later, he incorporated as the J.C. Penney company. In 1923 his second wife died giving birth to his son. In 1929 the stock market crashed and he lost \$40 million. By 1932, he had to sell out to satisfy...creditors. This left [Penney] virtually broke. ...Crushed in spirit from his loss and his health suddenly failing, Penney wound up in a Battle Creek, Michigan sanitorium. One morning he heard the distant singing of employees who gathered to start the day with God: Be not dismayed, whate'er betide, God will take care of you.... Penney followed the music to its source and slipped into a back row. He left a short time later a changed man, his health and spirit renewed, and ready to start the long climb back at age fifty-six.

By 1951 there was a J.C. Penney store in every state, and for the first time sales surpassed \$1 billion a year. [John Woodbridge, ed., *More Than Conquerors* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1992), 340-343.] The success of J.C. Penney can be traced to God's mercy in his life to bring him out of his humble circumstance. Do you find yourself in a humble circumstance? God is the only one who can help you see your humble circumstance from His viewpoint-a high position. It is a high position because of what God is going to teach you in this place. He does not intend you to stay there; it is merely a stopping place to learn some important things you would not learn otherwise. Press into God and trust Him for the outcome to your circumstances.

“The Penthouse”

He lived “way out in the sticks.” Maybe it wasn’t exactly the end of the earth, but you could see it from there. Then he won an all-expenses-paid trip to New York by being the designated caller in a radio contest.

So he took his first ride on a jet. He landed at LaGuardia only to have a limousine waiting for him. He was still wide-eyed as it pulled up to the entrance of a posh hotel and people rushed to open doors, carry luggage, and otherwise tend to his needs. A bellhop said he would show him to his room.

That room was his first disappointment. It was nice, but it was smaller than he had envisioned for a penthouse. And it seemed he was going to have to share it, for two people were already there when he walked into it.

Sensing something wrong, the bellhop asked, “Is there a problem, sir?”

“I don’t mean to gripe,” he said. “I was just expecting a bigger room.”

“Oh, sir,” he replied, “your luxury suite is twenty-nine stories up. This is only the elevator that takes you there.”

What are you facing today? Cancer? Bankruptcy? Bad job? No job? Frustration? Anger? Alcoholism? Unhappy customers? No customers? Being single? Being married? Being a parent? Being a child?

Don’t think for a moment that today’s situation has to be the story of your life, the sum of your existence. The good, the bad, and the indifferent of today are mile-markers on your longer journey to eternity. The terrain over which you are traveling ought not be confused with its outcome.

“You won’t see us drooping our heads or dragging our feet!” wrote Paul. “Cramped conditions here don’t get us down. They only remind us of the spacious living conditions ahead. It’s what we trust in but don’t yet see that keeps us going” (2 Corinthians 5:6-7, The Message).

If a lack of patience is a serious problem with you today, perhaps it’s because you have confused your pilgrimage with your destiny, the elevator with the penthouse. Hold on. Stay the course. You’re not there yet.

“Raindrops”

A certain courthouse in Ohio stands in a unique location. Raindrops that fall on the north side of the building go into Lake Ontario and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, while those falling on the south side go into the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. At precisely the point of the peak of the roof, just a gentle puff of wind can determine the destiny of many raindrops. It will make a difference of more than 2,000 miles as to their final destination. The spiritual application is clear. By the smallest deed or choice of words we might set in motion influences that could change the course of others’ lives here and now and could also affect their eternal destiny.

QUOTE # 1

“Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.” - Patrick Overton 43 BC-AD 17, Roman poet

QUOTE #2

“I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.” - Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), French philosopher, physician, musician, Nobel Prize

QUOTE #3

“The highest destiny of the individual is to serve rather than to rule.” - Albert Einstein (1875-1955), German-born American theoretical physicist, theories of relativity, philosopher

“Nicolai”

One of the most amazing men I ever met was Nicolai Alexandrenko. He was a Russian paratrooper in World War II who was wounded by German machine gunners who shot him down while defending his mother country. Nicolai in his own words was an atheist. He had been taught from a child that there is no God. He was taught to believe in Marx and Stalin and the good of society.

When Germans invaded he was sent to defend his country. Lt. Alexandrenko with the men under his command were gunned down by machine guns before they hit the ground. As the bullets penetrated his body he realized death was imminent. He saw his comrades fall and die before his very eyes. Even then he clung to his atheistic philosophy. In intense pain he did not shed a tear. In fact, he didn't even cry when his mother died.

Nicolai was taken to the infirmary patched up and left to die. But he didn't die. Miraculously he recovered from his injuries. Later, he found himself in the barracks alone, freezing cold trying to light a fire with a piece of paper that refused to burn.

He began to read what was written on the paper, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). He continued to read these amazing words and other Scriptures printed on the Gospel tract. There in the coldness of the bitter night Nicolai bowed his head, with tears flowing from his eyes and believed on Jesus Christ as His own personal Savior. He later made his way to the U. S. and earned a doctorate in theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and became a professor in a Christian college.

Romans 8:28-30

_____ □ _____

Ephesians 1:11-12

_____ □ _____

2 Timothy 1:9

_____ □ _____

John 6:44

_____ □ _____

John 6:65

_____ □ _____

Philippians 1:29

_____ □ _____

Ephesians 2:8

_____ □ _____

I John 4:19

_____ □ _____

1 Corinthians 4:7

_____ □ _____

2 Corinthians 4:4

_____ □ _____

Colossians 1:15

_____ □ _____

Ephesians 1:5

_____ □ _____

Philippians 1:6

_____ □ _____

Hebrews 2:13

_____ - _____

James 2:18

_____ - _____

Galatians 5:22-23

_____ - _____

Romans 12:1

_____ - _____

Ephesians 4:32

_____ - _____

Ephesians 5:1-2

_____ - _____

2 Corinthians 3:18

_____ - _____

2 Thessalonians 2:13

_____ - _____

John 6:65

_____ - _____

Romans 3:24-25

_____ - _____

Ephesians 2:8-9

_____ - _____

Hebrews 10:14

_____ - _____

QUOTE #4

"There is no such thing as chance; and what seem to us merest accident springs from the deepest source of destiny." - Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805), German writer, "Don Carlos," "Wallenstein"

_____ - _____

QUOTE #5

"No amount of travel on the wrong road will bring you to the right destination." - Ben Gaye, III, Author

_____ - _____

QUOTE #6

"We are made for larger ends than Earth can encompass. Oh, let us be true to our exalted destiny." - Catherine Booth 1829-1890 Known as "Army Mother" to the Salvation Army

_____ - _____

QUOTE #7

"We are all in the hands of an omnipotent, omniscient, just and merciful God, and whatever may be the destiny of humanity (for real or woe), there will be a universal and eternal amen to all that God does." - W. T. Ussery, Author

_____ - _____

QUOTE #8

"As long as we are persistence in our pursuit of our deepest destiny, we will continue to grow. We cannot choose the day or time when we will fully bloom. It happens in its own time." - Denis Waitley, Author Seeds of Greatness

_____ - _____

“Not Yet!”

Sometimes I ask the question,
“My Lord, is this your will?”
It’s then I hear you answer me,
“My Precious Child … be still.”

Sometimes I feel frustrated,
cause I think I know what’s best.
It’s then I hear you say to me,
“My Busy Child … just rest”

Sometimes I feel so lonely
and I think I’d like a mate.
Your still small voice gets oh so clear
and says, “My Child … please wait”

“I know the plans I have for you,
the wondrous things you’ll see;
If you can just be patient,
Child, and put your trust in me.

I’ve plans to draw you closer.
I’ve plans to help you grow.
There’s much I do you cannot see
and much you do not know.

But know this, Child … I LOVE YOU.
You are Precious unto Me.
Before I formed you in the womb,
I planned your destiny.

I’ve something very special
I hope for you to learn.
The gifts I wish to give to you
are gifts you cannot earn.

They come without a price tag,
but not without a cost; at Calvary,
I gave My Son, so You would not be lost.
Rest Child, and do not weary of doing what is good.

I promise I’ll come back for you just like I said I would.
Your name is written on my palm, I never could forget;
Therefore, do not be discouraged
when my answer is… “Not Yet”