

You Can

By Anthony Hiss

If you're at all like me, you've struggled with purpose, identity, self-confidence, and pretty much everything else that would properly motivate anyone to do something productive. For a long time, I felt that listening to God, hearing His voice, and stepping out in faith was not something that was meant for me. I believed that "greatness" was reserved for "great" people. Don't believe that lie; we've all been called to greatness. Here is how you find yours.

God's Greatness for You Is a Seed

The spring and early summer of 2019 was a rough one for farmers in Northwest Ohio. Rain pounded the region for days, only to let up just enough to get hopes for planting up. Then came rain, rain, and more rain. This went on for a few weeks which left fields well-watered, but oversaturated and unable to support a tractor. This all would not have been a problem if it hadn't been planting season. Rain is great; we need it. However, too much rain early makes it a difficult task to get the seed planted. Every farmer knows that if there is no seed, there is no harvest - a concept as old as time.

It seems ridiculous to expect a harvest when no seed is planted. Unfortunately, this is how many Christians live. The expectation is that God will do all the heavy lifting, and we will reap the rewards. However, we still have work to do!

"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." James 2:17

How many of us reading this are expecting a harvest when we haven't taken time to plant the seed? You may ask, "what seed?" The seed I'm referring to is God's seed of "greatness" for your life, in other words, your purpose. This idea, this seed, must be planted in your heart for there to be a harvest of greatness! Finding your purpose

is not something that can be dictated, deemed, or taught. I believe, I know, that God has given us the tools we need as individuals to each find our purpose.

Planting the Seed

Greatness doesn't just happen. It starts somewhere, with something so small, so insignificant, that it most often is overlooked. A seed. A thought.

It is not the thought of "I can be great.", but more appropriately, "God made me, and made me great." It is not worldly "greatness", or perceived success, but the greatness Jesus defined as serving others (Matt 23:11) in excellence.

"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Now, that means you won't be great in the world's eyes, but does that matter? Once the thought, the belief that you are created in the image of God, designed for a God-ordained purpose which He wants you to fulfill, not only for His sake but for yours, takes root, amazing things will happen. That's just the beginning.

Nurturing the Growth

First comes the planting with the harvest coming later, but what happens in between? Patience. Nurturing. Growth. All part of a natural process that God designed. Mark 4:28 talks about this process:

"For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." Mark 4:28-29 NKJV

What this is telling us is that after the seed is planted, it grows in three stages: the blade, then the head, then the full grain in the head. After the grain ripens, then the farmer immediately puts the sickle to it, “because the harvest has come.” The key ingredient here is time. Time for the seed to germinate, sprout, grow, and ripen. Time is not an enemy here - it is what makes the whole process work. The farmer has accounted for the time. He plants according to when he wants to harvest. Time only becomes a “roadblock” when we do not plan for it, or see it for what it is and for what it allows.

Maturity.

Time is an asset here. Things take time.

- Cheese to age.
- Soap to cure.
- Crops to grow.
- Ideas to mature.
- Purpose to ripen.

The same is true for the seeds of thought to become beliefs. I heard a definition of a belief that I thought was very interesting: “a belief is simply a thought that you continue to think.”

*“Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.”
Psalm 1:1-2*

The word “meditates” in this passage also is translated “mutter”, and is described as “pondering by talking to himself.” As you are meditating in the Word, talking to yourself, the ideas in the Word become your beliefs.

We want to be planting good seed to bear good fruit, and that seed is God’s truth. Beliefs derived from the Word are true. Beliefs derived from the world are not.

Then, the harvest.

Prepare for the Harvest

What is the “harvest?” For a farmer, it’s reaping the fruits of your labor and time. It is bringing in the bounty of the earth in its season. The farmer did the work of preparing the soil, planting the seed, watching over it, nurturing it, praying for it through the season of growth, and now the seed has brought forth the ripened grain.

The same is true for us and our purpose. When the seasons of preparation, maturity, and time have passed, God’s purpose for you will ripen, and you should immediately harvest.

True Greatness

One of my biggest struggles with purpose was (and is; I’d be lying if I said I have it all figured out) recognizing who I am, who God made me to be. As I said before, I thought that “greatness” was reserved for great people, and that I was precluded from that group. Based on what? My perceptions, not God’s, I can assure you. I know, and have known that God has made me for bigger things, but have been too afraid to accept it and pursue it. Why? Fear, partly. Pride as well. I had my ideas and definitions of what greatness is, and how to achieve it. My attitude was, “Here God, let me help you out.” True humility would be to accept what God says about me and acknowledge it and walk in it.

Humility is Confidence

Let’s take a look at Numbers 12:2,3:

“So they said, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” And the Lord heard it. (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)”

Specifically, in verse 3:

(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)

Moses was a humble man, more so than ANY on the face of the earth. That wouldn't mean much, except for the fact that he (Moses) wrote this passage. Either Moses had a big ego, or he had extreme confidence in who he was in God. His identity was in who God said he was, not what others said about him. Humility is not self-deprecating. On the contrary, humility is the confidence to accept and act based on what God says about you. We should not be timid in accepting or sharing this. On the contrary, we should be habitual in reminding ourselves, out-loud, who we are and what we were made for. (Sound familiar? Read the section above again if you missed that!)

Speaking these things, these truths, out loud is more than just a mere exercise of new-age mental trickery. The Bible (Thank You Jesus) has the final say here.

We get what we ask for

I've often found myself at odds with "worldly wisdom", if it can be called that. That should always be the case, but it doesn't make it any less difficult to believe and act on God's Word. The pressure of the world is real, its noise is deafening and can easily drown out the truth of God's Word, and quickly, if we aren't consistent in focusing on it. It can be so easy to let "conventional wisdom" fall out of our

mouths. We must be diligent, as in Proverbs 18:21,

²¹“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.”

There's no grey area here. We are either speaking life, or we are speaking death. This doesn't say:

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit, except for the fruit that tastes bad, or that you didn't mean to eat.”

We've all done it. Sometimes there are times we say things that we don't mean. It happens. However, there should be a mental follow-up if you realize it, or are convicted by the Holy Spirit. Your words have real power, and Proverbs 18:21 tells us we should treat every word with great importance. The word "life" there is the same root word used to describe creation in Genesis. The word "death" is just that - death or the place of death. Our words can bring about the same life-giving power that was used at creation, or they can be used to take it away from ourselves or others. We should be using this power with authority and responsibility, but too often we act before we think and say something that can't be taken back.

What I do in this situation (and thankfully, it is becoming less frequent) is to rebuke what I just said and speak the true, life-giving Word to correct my original thought. Yes, this takes time, effort (a lot), and discipline. However, in the end, it is worth it for the prize. So why do these "things we don't mean" come out of our mouths in the first place? Ugh!

⁴⁵“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” Luke 6:45

Out of the abundance. Abundance means “what is greater than expected (thought to be the limit); what exceeds (what was measured), i.e. “more than anticipated.”

More than anticipated; that is for sure. When I speak, I am speaking out of the abundance of my heart. I want that abundance to be life; Genesis creation, life-power words, not death. No amount of Holy Spirit driven self-correction will ever cure this without changing what is ‘abundant’. So, as I move forward in my life, I want to be putting God’s life-power in my heart. How? I do that through teaching, preaching, listening, and spending time in His Word. Let’s make that our abundance.

So, what is coming out of your mouth? Is it life? Is it death? This was a humbling point for me. What was the “abundance” coming out of my mouth and heart? By spending time reading and meditating on the Word, we can be assured that the abundance that comes forth will be life.

I didn't used to be so careful with what I said. Today, I take care or, at least, try to take more care of what I am saying. Of course, there are times that things may slip, or I fall into a mental “pit” of sorts and can’t seem to find my way out, but largely I try to guard the things I say or pause to turn the words I speak from negative to positive. What I have come to realize is that our approach in speaking should be more than not speaking negatively, but in abundantly speaking the promises before we “need” the results of those promises. I want to constantly be speaking His best over my life and future. This has a manifold effect. First, we are constantly practicing speaking the Word over our lives. Second, by speaking, we are planting those seeds of promise in our lives. As we have learned; when seeds are planted, a harvest comes.

The question then arises,” What should I be speaking then?”

Who does God say that you are? What does God say you can do? The scriptures are too numerous to list here, but be well assured the Bible is chocked full of identity giving wisdom.

The Beginning: Renewing Your Mind

“Garbage in, garbage out.”

Now, I don’t *want* to be the bearer of bad news, but I will be. You can’t fill your life with filth and expect to get good coming out of your mouth.

²² *“The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”* Matt 6:22

In verse 23, the word used for “eye” is defined as “envy, eye, eyes, gaze, sight.” The word used for “bad” is “toilsome, bad, evil, etc.”. We need to take great care in where we are setting our gaze, or else we risk setting our entire body into darkness. Not just a part, like your left eye, or perhaps your pinky finger. Our whole body is at risk. I suppose it turns out that the “garbage in, garbage out” saying is based on scripture. Putting filth (new, tv, headlines, etc.) in, and expecting good to come out is, quite frankly, absurd.

A few questions for reflection:

What we hear every day reinforces our beliefs - so what are you hearing? Or rather, whom are you listening to?

What stops us from being who God wants us to be?

How do we break free of what is stopping us from being who God wants us and designed us to be?

The truth is that renewing our minds isn't a one-time deal. It's not a trade-in program. I would say it's more like a feedback loop. These days we are constantly being bombarded with problems: illness, social unrest, and global distress. Therefore, renewing our mind to Christ needs to be constant. It might not be easy, but it will get easier. As we begin to renew our minds daily, we put ourselves in the position to be the greatness that God wants us to be.

I want to encourage you. Renewing our minds is not the goal. It's the start. As we

plant the seed of the Word, ponder it and nurture its growth, we'll be met with a harvest that we can turn around and replant.

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