

The Cause Within You

✖ Matthew Barnett with George Barna | BarnaBooks

When Matthew Barnett moved to Los Angeles at age 20, he planned to build a big church like his dad, megachurch pastor Tommy Barnett, did—but God had other plans.

Sixteen years later, the younger Barnett finds himself leading a successful inner-city ministry, the Dream Center. It is the singular cause that now drives him, and he tells the story of how it became his driving force in *The Cause Within You: Finding the One Great Thing You Were Created to Do in This World*.

Co-written with researcher George Barna, the book encourages readers to find and use their gifts and abilities and be released to the mission God has planted in them. But, as Barnett knows personally, fear can hold a person back from living for their cause.

“One of the greatest things that blocks people from reaching their cause is fear that they don’t measure up to the need that is there and they don’t have a solution to it,” he said. “You do have a solution because in the end it’s always about consistent, faithful love that breaks down walls.”

Barnett knows that God used his emotions to motivate him. “Emotions should never be discounted when you’re seeking after your cause,” he

said. "Emotional experiences—oftentimes God uses them as launching points into your future."

God used Barnett's desire to build a great church to move him to California, but then showed him something powerful. "In order to build the church, you had to build great people," Barnett said.

Today he is senior pastor of the historic Angelus Temple, but early on he lost his congregation, whose members wanted to do church the typical way. Now Barnett lives to help build the community through a 24-hour church that ministers to addicts, juveniles in trouble, homeless families and victims of human trafficking, among others. The church also has a hospital, and there has been a 73 percent crime drop in the neighborhood, he said.

Nearing the 15th anniversary of the ministry, however, Barnett found that something was stirring in his spirit. Rather than going along with the church's plans to celebrate the occasion, he felt God was leading him to spend the night as a homeless person would on Skid Row, where he said people come "to basically give up and die." The experience turned out to be life-changing.

"God really took me and did something extraordinary in my life that night," he said. "People thought I was crazy, and [I] probably was, but it was that night that I set out to experience something that I needed to get in my spirit if I was going to go somewhere new in the

next phase of my
life after 15 years of pastoring.”

Barnett believes that sometimes a shock is what’s needed to revive the heart. “I just needed to change the scenery and do something that was so different that night to be able to kind of shock me back into the purposes of God for the next years of my life,” he said.

Barnett says he is happiest when he is helping to meet the next need. “I really believe that the happiest person in the world is somebody who has one cause before them at all times, who constantly has something before them that they have to reach forward to and who is meeting the next need that is right before them.”

Early in the ministry, though, he wondered if he had what it took to minister to addicts and alcoholics, especially since he couldn’t relate to their plight, having never abused drugs or used alcohol. He thought he was irrelevant, but today he thinks otherwise.

“When God starts putting something in your heart to meet a need, to make a difference, don’t discount [that] based upon feeling that you’re not relevant to meet that need because it has nothing to do with being relevant,” he said. “It has everything to do with having an extraordinary love and a dedication towards that cause.”

That dedication must be lit by a fire. “I think every Christian needs to force themselves to burn,” Barnett said. “And what I mean by

that is that they need to put themselves in a situation to where life looks different, life feels different, and their experiences are different. Step out and meet a need, step out and get involved. ... Then when God puts something in your heart, God speaks through your passion.”

[Click here to purchase this book.](#)