

Do You Believe in Divine Appointments?

Have you had one of those unexpected occasions where the trajectory of your life intersected with someone else's and you both came to realize it was a divine appointment that God intended for His holy purposes?

What might seem to be mere coincidences are seen, in hindsight, as God-ordained alignments.

Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

Jesus had such an occasion when an "expert in the Law" of Moses spoke out to test Him about how to obtain eternal life (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus responded by asking him what the Law said. The religious "expert" recited the Scriptures correctly and Jesus affirmed him and told him to do what he knew was right to do for his "neighbor."

Trying to sidestep his personal responsibility, the religious "expert" asked Jesus "Who is my neighbor?"

To this Jesus gave a narration about "the good Samaritan." A Jew going down from Jerusalem to Jericho was attacked by robbers and left for dead. A priest piously passed by the beaten man on the other side of the road. Likewise, a Levite (an appointed worker in the Temple) saw the man but passed by on the other side.

Then, a despised, "mixed-breed" Samaritan (John 4:9) saw the man and had "compassion" and a desire to help. The "good" Samaritan did not allow culture divisions, personal preference or prejudice keep him from getting his hands dirty. He actively showed mercy by attending to the wounds of the man and provided for his extended care.

At the end of the story, Jesus quizzed the quizzical “expert in the Law” by asking, “Who was the neighbor to this man?” He answered, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus’ response applied to the expert as well as us, “Now go and do the same.” We must show compassion and mercy for those in marginalized communities around us. We must be willing to “get our hands dirty” when our paths align with the needy around us! These occasions may be planned by God, just for us.

Love the Outcasts

Jesus had other “divine appointments”—some where His path and those of even outcasts of society crossed. Such was the case on Jesus’ last journey to Jerusalem (Luke 19:1-10). He came from Galilee down the eastern side of the Jordan River and crossed over it to enter historic Jericho, which served as a major customs site for goods entering Palestine from the East.

There, Jesus encountered a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus. He was both a social and religious outcast—socially because his job meant he was viewed as cooperating with the Roman occupational government and religiously because he cheated and lied about his fellow Jews.

A crowd followed Jesus, and Zacchaeus wanted to see who this popular rabbi was, but because he was of “short stature” he would not be able to see this Jesus of Nazareth due to the size and press of the crowd. So, Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed up onto the low hanging limbs of a type of fig tree, that made for easy climbing and viewing.

As Jesus came to where Zacchaeus was watching from the tree, they had their divine appointment. Jesus looked up at him and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down for today I must stay at your home.” Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully and repented of his sins and his mistreatment of his fellow Jews. This change of heart was evidenced by his promise of restitution that even exceeded the requirements of the Law (Lev. 6:1-5; Num. 5:5-7).

We all have our “divine appointments” to share.

What were we like before we surrendered to Jesus? Were we pride-filled religionists or “outcasts” in the neighborhood as well as “at church”? How did that “Divine Appointment” take place? What has our life become like since we opened up and welcomed King Jesus and the kingdom of God into our lives and homes?

✘ May our “divine appointments” continue to transform our lives and futures. Paul explains:

“Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying (Rom. 12:9-12, NLT).

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Gary Curtis served in full-time ministry for 50 years, the last 27 years of which he was part of the pastoral staff of *The Church on The Way*, the Van Nuys, California, Foursquare church. Now retired, Gary continues to write a weekly blog at www.garycurtis.com and frequent articles for digital and print platforms.