



M2: Week 2

Who we are: Design Reveals Destiny

All men die, but few men ever live.—William Wallace

Isn't that a great scene in Braveheart? When William Wallace is giving the speech before battle, face painted and full of passion about his cause, which was the just and right freedom of his countrymen. Deep down, we all long for that kind of passion. We long for the stirring of something greater within us. God put that longing within you because you are meant for something greater! God has designed you with your great adventure in mind! He has built you specifically, as Mordecai said to Esther, "For such a time as this..." You were knit together for this time and this place. You have an incredible destiny and if you really look within, you've known it all along. There's a reason that we all love movies like Braveheart, it's because we want to be men like William Wallace, valiant, brave, and willing to die for justice. There's another old movie that I love called, "Hud" starring Paul Newman. In the movie, the family is faced with having to kill all their cows because one of their cows had died of the highly contagious bovine disease, brucellosis or to sell the rest of the herd quickly, hoping that the disease hadn't yet spread to the rest of the herd. They could follow the law and kill their herd or pass on their problem and possibly an epidemic, but save themselves from financial ruin. What a dilemma? A family argument ensued and

When embarking on your great journey, it's good to take inventory of the tools that you have. Not all of the tools you have are sharpened and ready for use because you may be unaware that you have some of them. What if Michael Jordan never picked up a basketball? He might have been an above-average baseball player or a pretty good golfer, but the world never would have been able to witness the pure poetry on the court better known as Air Jordan.

You have tools and gifts that God has given to you. We often think of our talents as the hyper-abilities of our bodies or minds, but God's gifts are eternal and therefore, He has equipped you with Spiritual gifts that you're going to need for your journey. Now, before we go any further, I need you to buy-in a little. God has a great adventure awaiting you. He has a plan for your life that is going to be challenging, adventurous and will draw out of you everything you never knew you had. Much like Gandalf was Tolkien's God

metaphor for Bilbo Baggins, God has a very real life adventure that He has designed for you. Here's the buy-in: You need to choose which life you want. On one hand, you have your comfortable life, which is great because it has its challenges, but it's... Comfortable. On the other hand, you have the life that God wants for you, which is not comfortable at all. It's going to test every limit you have and unlike Seal Team training, there's no bell to ring! Once you're in, you're in. When Ezekiel waded into the water, he was in control until the moment he lifted his feet and let the current take him down river. God's great adventure for you is not going to be easy; but you'll never be fulfilled until you've chosen it.

Now let me be clear, God is going to use all of your talents and abilities on your great adventure, but many times we neglect the ones we can't see as well---which is our Spiritual Gifts. So, make sure you've taken your Spiritual Gifts Test. There are many of them out there on the internet. Pick one or two and then write down your top three below:

God has called you for a purpose. Last week we read Ephesians 2:10, "¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."(NLT)

You were created to do good things! You were made to do a job. The One who knit you together in your mother's womb made no mistakes when He made you. You are designed by God for a reason. Doesn't it make sense to ask Him, the designer of the machine, to find out why you were made?

Just as there are 3 aspects to God, there are three distinct aspects to each man: the Spirit, The Soul and the Body. (Intelligent Design)

The Spiritual gifts work in tandem with our intellect, our emotions, our personality and even our physical make-up to complete WHO WE ARE. We can't get a really good picture of who we are without distinctively looking at all three facets of man and discovering how unique we are to fulfill the purpose that God has set before us.

3 Areas of Design:

- 1. Spiritual: Our Spirit Man (Take the Spiritual Gifts Test)**
- 2. Soul: Mind, will and emotions. (IQ, personality profile, EQ)**
- 3. Body: Physical attributes and skills (Height, strength, speed, agility, coordination)**

Spiritual

When you received Christ, your spirit was born. It wasn't alive prior to you accepting Jesus Christ as your savior. Peter talks about some of us staying spiritual babies and only being able to drink spiritual milk. So, there's clearly a process of "growing up" spiritually that occurs. I think many of us stay spiritual babies until we go through a struggle or a process. I often liken the spiritual process to the Exodus story of the Israelites.

- The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. We were slaves to our sin.
- The Israelites crossed the Red Sea to defeat the Egyptian army. We crossed the Red Sea of the blood of Christ when we accepted Jesus as our Savior.
- The Israelites were attacked by the Amalekites and were losing as long as Moses' arms weren't lifted. We are going to be attacked by the enemy and unless we have a Moses (a spiritual covering), we are going to get our butts whipped.
- The Israelites wandered through the desert for 40 years, grumbling and complaining about all of their hardships, wishing they were back in Egypt. Many Christians never grow up because they grumble and complain and glorify their past life of sin.
- The Israelites saw the Promised Land and believed God that it was better. As we mature as Christians, we no longer long for Egypt or the sin life, but we see that what God has for us is better than what the world has for us and we grow up spiritually.
- The Israelites crossed the Jordan River. (The name "Jordan" in Hebrew means to flow down or to descend. Crossing this second body of water is like the acceptance of the fullness of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Once we receive the Holy Spirit, we are equipped with all that God has for us for battle.
- Lastly, the Israelites defeated the land of Canaan through warfare and obedience. Similarly, we will take ground for the Kingdom and enter our own place of rest, once we figure out that we are called to FIGHT for His Kingdom.

You were called to be a warrior. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he told us to "Put on the armor of God." That armor was the exact armor the Roman soldiers wore. He wasn't saying your life should be passive. The very description of what we are to do daily is to gather up the weapons of warfare and get ready for a fight. **You as a man, won't feel useful until you are engaged in the battle.**

God has given you specific gifts in order to engage the enemy. You are called to battle. If you were engaged in a normal battle, you might be a gunner, a tanker, a pilot or a drone operator. Or, to put it in spiritual perspective: you might be a teacher, an encourager, an administrator or an evangelist. All are important in the Kingdom of God and I'm pretty sure, the pay is the same. Our job is to win as many people to Christ before they die or we do. Some of us might be able to build websites, start small groups

while others can play a guitar or write new TV shows that point young people to Jesus. Whatever your assignment is, it will be incredibly exciting! God is ready to bring you on the great adventure!! You were made for this!

FROM THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS TEST

What are your top two spiritual gifts?

- 1.
- 2.

Do you agree with these two gifts?

What were two other gifts where you have high scores?

- 3.
- 4.

Do you agree with these gifts?

What gifts were you weakest in?

- 1.
- 2.

Did you agree with these assessments?

Based on your spiritual gifts test, what do you think you should be doing to build The Kingdom?

The Soul: The Mind, The Will, The Emotions

The soul is harder to assess because it encompasses a great deal of who we are. The soul is made up of three intertwined areas that are extremely complex and difficult to really assess. I'm not sure I believe in IQ tests, but they do exist and can possibly indicate how well someone can learn data and solve problems. We all know the person that can read anything and remember it all but couldn't turn a screwdriver to save his life! We also know the person that may not be good with numbers at all but could take apart an engine with no instructions, fix it and put it back together without missing a single washer placement. Both are geniuses in my estimation, but society looks upon one that scores better on a test than the other as "smart". I know this for certain, God gave us enough ability to do what we

were made to do and it's our job to enhance both the areas of both our strengths and weaknesses.

Most people would agree that Michael Jordan was the greatest basketball player, ever. In full disclosure, I never saw Wilt Chamberlain play, but I do remember Dr. J and Magic and from what I've seen, I would certainly agree that Jordan was the GOAT. Jordan had great talent, but his teammates would attest that he outworked every one of them in practice. He honed his talent, practiced intensely, worked out and became the greatest because he took what God gave him and increased it. That's taking 5 talents and making 10!

Like Michael Jordan, God designed you to gravitate toward the things you are good at. He placed the desire for honor inside of you, and that's a good thing! Although this quest for recognition and honor inside of you is healthy and helps guide you along your path to the purpose that God made you for, it can also become an unhealthy source of pride which separates us from God. Part of our soul print is the desire for honor. God made us in His image and as I've mentioned before, the first three commandments deal with God fiercely desiring honor! You are His handiwork made in His image and therefore, you also desire honor. It is God's way of guaranteeing that you will gravitate to what you're good at, rather than languishing at the things you aren't good at. Imagine if Michelangelo never picked up a paint brush but tried to be a so-so musician his whole life. What a tragedy! The world would never have known the greatest artist that it has ever seen.

We all love to pause to see greatness! I don't watch basketball much but in the 1990's, I watched MJ play every chance I could. My wife watches Chip and Joanna Gaines TV show because she enjoys seeing this incredibly gifted, creative couple and what they can do to transform a house. It's truly amazing to see a person operating in their gifting. The whole world is full of these examples, but what we may not understand is... WE ALL HAVE INCREDIBLE GIFTS! As good as Michael Jordan was at basketball... you could be that good at something. God is not a respecter of persons. He knit you together with special gifts in mind. He put greatness inside of you and deep down, you KNOW it. You can feel it. I believe that with every fiber of my being. The guy who graduated last in his class just might become the greatest saxophone player on the planet! Or artist or soccer player or even physician. We utilize cumbersome tools to measure men and so I don't want you to get caught up in these measurement tools, but I want you to let them be a reasonable rubric to start developing an idea of "Who you are".

One of the best assessments is what other people say about you. The term, "Mother's know best" is appropriate here. What does your mom or someone that loves you no matter what you do, say about you? Are your friends constantly saying, "You should open a restaurant! You are the best chef I know." Or are they saying, "You could be a professional fisherman! or "You

should write a book!”. Sometimes, those things are confirmations of what God has placed in our hearts. The best thing to do is to ask God! Talk to Him about what you should be doing. Many times, men think of this as your vocation but that’s not always the case. You might be the best mentor of young people, but your title is bus driver. You might have the gift of encouragement, but your job is to be a crossing guard and to smile and pray for people as they drive by. Your little gift can change the world if you give it to God. But if you try to hold onto it for your own glory, it will only serve as a snare.

What gifts and talents do I have, that others have confirmed?

What are the things I enjoy doing in my free time?

Though it has its ups and downs, overall, do I enjoy my job/vocation?

Scientists claim that every person on the earth has over 400 latent talents that they never discover! That’s because we are fearfully and wonderfully made! Perhaps you have a talent that God is whispering you to discover! **What are some things that I’ve always wanted to do but never started?**

TAKE THE DISC PERSONALITY PROFILE TEST

Personality Profile:

Do you agree with your personality profile assessment?

What are your two main personality traits?

- 1.**
- 2.**

What are the two sub-personality types?

1.

2.

Sometimes we view ourselves through a different lens than how the rest of the world views us. Everyone has a blind spot. A fun exercise is to have your wife or best friend complete the personality profile on your behalf.

Are the answers similar or totally different?

Based on this, do I have a blind spot?

Here are 3 Views of Oneself:

- How I view myself
- How others view me
- How I perceive others view me

Personality profile tests are blunt instruments. They're more like performing surgery with a jagged tin can lid. So, don't be distressed if you don't agree with your assessment. You are unique and there is likely no human instrument that can truly assess all that you are. Proverbs 20:5 says, "*The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.*" The same God that made every snowflake unique, made you. You are an incredible masterpiece, uniquely gifted and made to do something great! You were made to change your world! The world would not be as fulfilled if you weren't in it. You matter. Your design matters and the One who made you can reveal more about you than a test. Lean into God and discover your purpose! More than likely, you already have a good idea of why God made you. The first reason is so that you can worship Him. Worship doesn't mean you sing or play an instrument. We worship Him when we use our talents and gifts for His glory! We worship Him when we love the unlovable, help the poor, visit those in prison or even give a glass of cold water to someone. Start with those small things and God will help you to discover your true purpose.

Soul: Emotional Intelligence

One of the best books I've ever read is a secular book by Travis Bradberry called "Emotional Intelligence 2.0". I highly recommend this book. The beauty of Emotional Intelligence is that no matter where you start, you can improve your EQ score.

Tips on Emotional Intelligence:

- Take an assessment of a person's emotions before engaging
- What is the emotional feel of a room?
- Respond instead of reacting to conflict.
- Utilize active listening skills
- Practice self-awareness of your emotions
- Learn to take criticism well
- Empathize with others
- Be approachable
- Be sociable
- Count your blessings

Recently, we finished a time of 21 Days of Prayer at our church. Our pastor here at Church of the Highlands gave the final teaching and he said something that really struck a chord with me. He said that God doesn't owe us anything. He's already done enough. Going to God like a spoiled child that always wants more isn't the approach we should have. Instead, let us approach God with a heart of gratitude first saying, "God, I'm so thankful for what you have already done. You don't owe me anything." I really love this approach to God. I think if we are going to discover our purpose, then doing all of these analyses might be beneficial, but directly talking to God will be the MOST beneficial. When we talk to God, I believe that our posture matters. Our attitude matters. I'm a dad and I know when my children are genuine and when they're just trying to get something out of me. God knows our heart. He knows if our gratitude is genuine or not so when you go to God to ask Him why you were made, be genuine. Be grateful for all the gifts He has given you. Be authentic and let Him know that you believe He made you for a specific purpose with talents and gifts that are unique to you. You have greatness in you. But no man climbs a mountain in one leap. Greatness comes, like Muhammad Ali said, "Every day I went to the gym." Going to the gym 3 times a month isn't going to make you a great boxer. But going every day for 10 years certainly will.

Never despise the little things, the little changes. Greatness isn't going to come all at once. Your talent and ability alone aren't enough. You will need practice. You will need discipline. You will need consistency. If two people weighed exactly the same, had the same metabolism, the same body type and the same body fat percentages and one person decided to drink one coke a day while the other did not. That one change, over 2.5 years would cause the one who drank the Coke to gain over 35 pounds. It may not be noticeable at first but most certainly after just 30 months, the difference would be easy to see! In fact, I bet the overall health of each individual would be vastly different as well.

In this class, I'm going to challenge you to truly discover your life's purpose and set yourself on that path. I want to see your talent on display... and so does God! Don't be impatient. Start by making the commitment to change one thing that will make the biggest impact in your life. Start now. Work on that for four weeks and THEN work on the next thing. After 2.5 years, there's no telling where you'll be but you'll be in the same place you are now if you don't COMMIT to a new direction.

The Body

I once heard a story about an investment banker that was propositioned by a beautiful woman to be his wife. He thought pensively for a moment and then he said, "No. I don't think I will. You see, I don't invest in depreciating assets." No matter how athletic or beautiful we think we are, those assets are depreciating. We are all getting older, slower and eventually, this body will break down and we will die. (Unless the Lord returns first) Now, that sounds morbid, I know but it's true. This life, this body, this stuff... All of it are depreciating assets. We should have the foresight of the banker, in this instance. We should start placing our treasure in Heaven!

That doesn't mean that we aren't supposed to take great care of the body. 1 Corinthians 6:19 says that the body is the Temple of the Lord. We should take care of it. So, part of "Who You Are" is your body. Your looks. Your gait, your hairline, your eye color and your health. Take great care of it, because it doesn't belong to you. It belongs to God. The better we treat the machine, the better it will perform.

Environment

One of my favorite movies from the 1980's was "Trading Places" starring Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd. If you haven't seen the movie, the plot is pretty simple: The two heads of a stock brokerage company decided to swap places with a homeless person played by Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd. Dan Aykroyd's character had all of the advantages of a great education and upbringing and was successful. The question raised is of course "Nature vs. Nurture". Was Dan Aykroyd successful because of his genetics or was he successful because he was at the right place at the right time. I'm not here to answer that question but I am going to say that environment absolutely plays a factor in all of our lives. Who our parents are, who our friends are and what influential people we've had in our lives will help define our character. Tennyson said it this way in his poem, *Ulysses*, "I am a part of all that I have met." We are also a part of all that we have met but there is no litmus test for environment. There is no measurement for how we are raised but there are certain determining factors that play a large role in who we are. For instance, if you were born in India and live your entire life there, the odds of you becoming a Christian are 2.3%. That's the number of practicing Christians in India today.

Last week, we went over these important statistics. Here they are again: Growing up fatherless also plays a major role in our lives: (According to the website, www.fatherhood.org)

- 7 times more likely to become pregnant as a teen
- 7 times more likely to be abused or neglected
- 7 times more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol
- 4 times more likely to live in poverty
- 4 times more likely to have behavioral problems
- 2 times more likely to be obese
- 2 times more likely to commit a crime
- 80% of incarcerated inmates in the US come from fatherless homes.

The importance of having a father in our lives is indisputable. God not only presents himself as our Father, but he was the original Father to Adam. I wonder what it was like, taking those long walks in the Garden of Eden as God poured His wisdom into Adam. We do not know how long that lasted. I'd like to think it was several years. I think about those walks and what the first Father/Son experience must have been like. I can only imagine. Thankfully, we now have the opportunity to commune with the Holy Spirit as a friend and a person. He really is within us and around us all the time. All we have to do is talk to Him and He hears us. He is our Father that loves us. Nothing can change that just like I can't imagine ever not being in love with my own children. They may disappoint me, anger me or even grieve me sometimes. The Bible says that we can grieve the Spirit of God. I pray that I never do.

To make our constitution even more complex, we must tie in our family history. A good physician will ask you to fill out a family history chart to see if you have a history of cancer, heart disease or diabetes. Scientists know that certain diseases are passed down through the genetic code. Family history can be complicated and difficult to discern what is passed down and what is not. That is why we look at it, not as a rubric but to see if any of the gifts or proclivity to sin (*both the good and the bad*) was passed down through our father.

Exodus 20:5 "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Now, I know what you're saying. This verse was reversed later on in scripture and God said he would not hold children accountable for their father's sins. That is absolutely true. We are NOT responsible for our

father's sins but the same spiritual weakness that our father displayed has been proven to be visited upon his children. We see alcoholism, drug abuse, pride, anger, lust, adultery and many more sins that seem to be generational. How many times have you looked at a family and seen the historical similarities in their behavior over generations? There is definitely a link between what our fathers have bowed to what will be visited upon us. Let me be clear, that doesn't define our destiny at all. Even our past behavior doesn't define who we are because when we get saved, all things are made new. God renews everything but the enemy will still visit us with sin that he thinks will cause us to stumble! A good thing to do is to know what our family history is so that we can combat it by staying far away from that cliff! (A Pastor Chris-ism)

What does that mean?

It means that Satan sees us with spiritual eyes. He sees us with the ability to know what chinks we have in our armor. He knows our weaknesses because he knew our fathers. Therefore, he is going to TEMPT us with sin that he believes we will bow to because he hates us and wants to destroy us. Satan will tempt us where he thinks we are weak. That doesn't mean we pay for our father's sin, but it does mean we will be tempted or visited by it. It is still our choice what we decide to do with that sin. We can reject it, as many children of abusers do, or we can receive it as other children of abusers do and go on to become abusers themselves. We still own our sin but seeing a family history of alcoholism is probably a good indication that a person may have an addictive personality trait and should avoid addictive substances.

What are some of the things you struggle with that might be from your family line?

Those we Admire:

There's a great line in the old Paul Newman movie, "Hud", "A nation will come to resemble those whom it admires." We tend to adopt the traits and customs of those we admire. That's why it's really important to guard out hearts. Many times, you can tell whom someone admires by the way they dress. Once we're past about five years old, our mothers no longer pick out our clothes for us, so many times, we subconsciously choose clothes and styles that resemble people with whom we most identify.

Who are your favorite actors or sports figures? Your favorite people from history? Chance are, they have had an effect on the lens through which you view the world. Many times, we admire characteristics in people where we are lacking. That's healthy and part of your design. However, when the people we admire also have character flaws then we subconsciously say to ourselves, "That person is successful here, so it must be ok to have the character flaw, there." How many times have we heard our children say that

their hero does this or does that and it must be ok? That's why the One we should admire and pattern our life after is Christ alone. It's healthy to admire traits we may not be as strong in as another, but we must be cautious enough to keep that admiration from becoming an idol.

Summary

Now that you see and understand the 3 different parts of "Who You Are", you can assess your family history and sprinkle in your upbringing and environment, you can really see that you are uniquely you! You have gifts and talents to offer this world and you are called to use them. We love to see people using their talents in the worldly sense like Michael Jordan or Michelangelo but how much greater is our talent utilized when the things we accomplish are eternal. Jordan won six world titles in his time with the Chicago Bulls. But in 2 million years, no one will remember or care. But if you lead one person to Christ, then that person leads his wife and his children, and one of their children goes on to become an evangelist... Your reward in Heaven will go to 1000 generations! That's how lavish and generous our God is. He is wonderful and He loves you.

He is calling you to get into the game. He is calling you to discover exactly why He made you! He placed that in your heart and you may already know what you should be doing. If you don't, that's ok. Pray. He will reveal to you what you are called to do.

Has God given you a dream or vision for your life?

Write it out:

What's the next step you should take to get there?

What is my calling?

Many people ask, "What am I called to do?" I heard it best expressed this way: Hold out your hand. What's in it? Your family. Your friends. Your co-workers. Your boss. Even your social media influence. Notice that your calling isn't things or a job. It's people. You are called to influence others

and to build the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God isn't brick and mortar buildings; the Kingdom of God is people. God's heart is people, not cars or boats or vacation homes. If your treasure is in eternal things, then you've aligned your heart with His and you can ask for anything in His name and He will give it to you. (John 14:14)

God has placed people that are lost in your path. Maybe your witness hasn't been stellar to these people and if that's the case, ask God for forgiveness right now. Now, ask God to give you another chance with these people that he's placed in your path. I believe this firmly, every word, every deed and every thought is either building the Kingdom of God or its building the kingdom of Satan.

You may not be an evangelist, but God has called you to go and tell the Good News. It may not be natural for you to do that. You may wonder if your friend might find it awkward or offensive?

Imagine that you are walking through the Oncology Ward of a Children's Hospital. You see children in their beds. Most of them have bright head bands and caps covering their baldness. You see the crayon pictures hanging on the wall, the stuffed animals and even through the pain and near certain death, you see the loving bright smiles of children. Some are resting, too exhausted to turn their heads as you walk through the ward. None of them know that you have just come from a lab that handed you 100 bright orange pills. Each pill was certain to cure the cancer that each child had. If you would just hand them the pill and they received it, they could be free from certain death. How selfish would it be to not help these little children? How awful would it be to walk through the hospital, visiting with each child, claiming we love them but to walk out of their lives forever knowing they are going to die. And this that we have, this cure we have is more than just a physical death! It is eternity. To not share with someone that could be dying and going to Hell is grieving to the heart of God. You are responsible for those that are in your path. You are responsible for your witness. You are responsible for their eternal death if you walk by and don't share the gospel of Jesus with them! I realize this is heavy-handed a bit. I realize this is hard teaching. It's real. If we share the heart of our Father, then we go after His lost sheep. Every man, woman and child is the image bearer of the Almighty God! How much do we have to hate a person to NOT share the love of Jesus with them? To not share the cure? To not offer the hope of eternal life to them? You may say, "They've heard it all before." Ok. Pray for them. Ask God to soften their hearts. You've been given a great responsibility. You are the chosen one to help them. Take the red pill, my friend. There are far too many that are asleep.

Who is in your sphere of influence that you should be praying for and working towards their moment of crisis with God:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.