

Insignificant or Doer?

Unsung Heroes series

by Bill Aumack

Have you ever heard anybody asked the question? Why are we here? What's the meaning of life? What's my purpose? What are we doing here? Probably most of us have. And if we haven't asked those questions, we know somebody that asked. And all these questions kind of boiled down to the same thing. Am I significant? Do I matter? Sure. Maybe we've got some herons that might miss us. Maybe we have a spouse that would miss us or some kids that would miss us, you know, if we passed away unexpectedly. But beyond that, do we matter? Do we have any significance? And sometimes, you know, we look out at our contemporaries maybe. And we look at somebody else that's maybe about our age, and we compare ourselves. And we say, they're making it. Right? They, they got a better job, more power influence, more money in the bank account, they got a better car, nicer house, whatever. But somehow, they're making it somehow that we aren't. Right. I remember growing up and as a young adult, Larry Bird, and Magic, were just a few years older than me. You think, man, they're doing okay. I'm not making that kind of money. And then comes along Michael Jordan behind me, you know, even more, right? And we can look at these people and say, How come they're doing so well? And I'm not. Do I have any significance?

And let's be honest, most of us are not going to be famous. We're not going to invent the cure for cancer, or MS, or lupus or whatever other horrible diseases there are. We're not going to invent the next new computer, that's going to be so cool and crazy. Knock Microsoft and Apple off their pedestals do something different? Right, well, it's just not gonna happen for most of us. So the question is, do we really matter?

And some of you might be thinking now. Good grief. Bill. What a positive opening to the sermon I got is really a downer man. Glad I came today. Hang with me, we'll get there. Okay. Don't..... Hang with me.

And maybe sometimes what we have a glimpse or something happens, right. But, you know, we don't have a good way to measure apathy for the system for society, or hopelessness for society. There's, there's no way to measure this. But it seems like it's at an all time high. People just don't care anymore. They're hopeless. We have lots of mental health problems and issues. And it seems like it's at an all time high. It seems like it's an epidemic. So what do we do about it? And I think that becomes because we feel insignificant, because if we felt significant, we wouldn't feel helpless. Right? If we felt significant, if we felt like we mattered, we wouldn't feel hopeless.

And then sometimes you might get a glimpse in your life where it's see seems to work it happens. Most of you know that I have worked on the B-2 bomber several different times in my career. And this is what happened. Way back before any of you knew that the B-2 bomber existed. We weren't allowed to tell anybody what we worked on. Linda hated that. What do you do all day? Work. No you don't! You're back there playing games. No, we're working on something. No you're playing games. And finally one day was on the TV. And that's what we've been working on. I was like, Come here, come here, look at this TV. TV. I don't want to come here. Because I wasn't allowed to tell anybody. But if the TV told somebody.... {shrug}. Anyway, we weren't aloud to tell anyone what were working on.

I worked on writing the mission planning software, which controls the plane, the plane is controlled by a computer. And where does it go? Where does it take off from? How does it fly, the path it's going to follow, where it's going to turn, where it's gonna get refuelings. Where it's going to go stealthy, dropped bombs, come home, all that has to be planned. And I wrote the software that helped them do that, or I helped write the software to help them do that. And one time we were out at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri. Knob Noster, Missouri, that's a hotspot you want to visit. And we're putting in our software. And they're giving us a tour of the place that took us into this room that had the largest table I have ever seen in my life. And it was a light table that had that white glass with the lights under the signs up through so you can do artwork and stuff on it. And I don't know how big this table was. But it must have been 20 feet long and maybe 15 feet wide. It was huge. It was huge.

And all around it were gathered airmen. And it looked like kindergarten class, because they had scissors and tape and crayons, and they were busy cutting and making stuff. And I'm standing there looking, I'm going like what are they doing? I mean, it looks like arts and crafts hour at kindergarten. Well what's going on here. And it turns out that airplanes to fly back in the day used a thing called a flip chart. And when they were seated in the plane, they'd have this chart on their leg. And they could flip and had a map on it and their route and they could see where they were going. And they would make these flip charts by hand. They had maps made cut them up and they draw the route on it. And they would make little boxes next to them that told them what altitude they were supposed to be at and what speed they were supposed to be at. And you had to do this. Now an average B-2 flight takes off in Missouri, flies across the US, flies across the ocean, flies across the Mediterranean, does its business in the Middle East or wherever we're at, and then flies all the way back. How many charts is that? A bunch? Yeah, a bunch.

So these guys had to work making all these charts. And we were just flabbergasted. That night at the hotel me and my friends were traveling said that's a problem we can fix. Right? So we got busy wrote some software that would do this automatically for them. They could review it online, make some changes and just hit print and print it out. And boy, We were heroes! I mean they loved us. Because it turns out that the average airman doesn't like arts and crafts hour in kindergarten. Who knew? We all knew, right? We all knew they didn't like doing that. And then pretty soon we started getting calls from other squadrons. The B-1 bomber said, Hey, we heard you did this thing we want in on that. F-117 is calling us. The fighters are calling us, the A-10 tank killers. We visited every single Air Force Base in the continental United States, including some for the Air National Guard.

And we were heroes. I mean, okay, you know, there wasn't like people yelling and confetti and stuff. But they were always happy to see us when we showed up. Because we took something that took them a long time that they hated doing and turned it into hit print and it pops out of the printer and for a moment you're a hero you're like yes, we're significant we matter. And then it's gone. Because you know the story. What have you done for me lately? Right

And some of us have experienced this in our own lives. Because, you know, maybe you've done something where you helped your child's team. You know, it was the end of the season banquet, you know, and then you came through and got the trophies and got everything planned. And it was a big success. And you were a hero. Or you planned somebody's 50th wedding anniversary, and it was great. Everybody loved it. Successful Thanksgiving dinner and nobody fought. Some of you were laughing Yeah, right. And maybe we did something at work where we had an idea that saved the company a bunch of money, or we had a new idea for a new product that made the company a bunch of money. Right? And for a moment, everybody's like, Yay, go you and then it's gone. Right? You get your 15 minutes of fame. And that's it. And I my tablet doesn't even give me that before it turns off... and so we have to fight for our significance.

And what we're going to do we're going to look at a story here in the Bible. Open up with me your Bibles to Acts chapter 9. We're gonna look at the story of Tabitha. How many of you know the story of Tabitha raise your hand? A few. How many you know the story of Dorcas? Raise your hand? Oh, a whole bunch more hands. Same person. Okay. Dorcas was her Greek name. Her name was Tabitha. Okay. So we're gonna read Acts, chapter 9, verses 36 to 42. This is all the Bible says about her. It's all right here in this one passage. Let's read it and then we'll talk about it. Acts chapter 9:36 to 42.

in Joppa, there was a disciple named Tabitha in Greek Her name is Dorcas. She was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died. Her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Lydia was near Joppa. So when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydia, they sent two men to him and urged him, please come at once. Peter went with them. And then when he arrived, he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him crying and showing him the robes and the other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. Peter sent them all out of the room. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning towards the dead woman, he said, Tabitha get up. She opened her eyes. And seeing Peter she sat up, he took her by the hand, held her to her feet. And then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa and many people believed in the Lord.

So we don't know much about Tabitha. We know that the word Tabitha and Dorcas mean Gazelle. We don't know where Tabitha heard the message at. There had been previous disciples through the area, maybe she'd heard it from there, maybe she moved from somewhere else. Maybe somebody else heard it and came and told her, we don't know. But she had heard the gospel message. And in the original language, they use the female and male forms of some of these adjectives and verbs. And this is a female version of the word disciple. And it's the only place in the whole Bible where the female form of the word disciple is used. Okay, so she was a disciple. We don't know if she was single, or married or widowed. There's some church stories, you know, the legends that live on in church, that she was a widow, but we don't really know that. She lived in a port city. Sailing back in the day was a pretty dangerous occupation. And there was lots of widows in port cities. So that's possible could be we do know that she lived in Joppa. That's right on the coast, obviously, this port city, and it's where Tel-Aviv is now. So if you look on a map, you look up Tel-Aviv and that's where they were. She seems to have at least a little bit of means. She has a home with a second story room. That was kinda upper middle class, the roofs were used a lot, you know, to dry things on and put stuff out on. And if you had a room upstairs, it was usually smaller than the whole house because you needed that roof space. But some of the people that were little more well to, do, not wealthy but a little better off middle class, have these upper rooms. We know that she was an ordinary woman in an ordinary city, who did ordinary everyday things for ordinary people. She didn't stand before governors or kings didn't preach before 1000s. She didn't write a powerful theological set of commentaries. She didn't have big book sales, didn't have her own YouTube channel.

She was just an ordinary person. She simply did what needed to be done in the name of Jesus Christ. And she's kind of a person of no real significance. But for God, she's so significant that he raises her from the dead. And the question is why? Because not a lot of people get raised from there. We're gonna talk more about that here in a minute. But, you know, we're at a point in the church where the early church is facing persecution, Saul is unleashing his wrath on the church, and Christians are scattering and Saul and others are trying to stamp out this new religion. Okay, and there's martyrs that have died, Stephen has been stoned to death. And nobody raised Him from the dead. Okay. So, you know, why does she

get raised from the dead? Why is what she does so important? Why is she so significant, that she gets given this special honor? You know, significance in the kingdom of God is not identified by accomplishment, or status. How well you can preach, your popularity, your book sales, or your YouTube channel.

Significance comes from obedience to God's word. Right, significance comes to obedience to God's word. And when you think of all the big names in the Bible, the Moses the Abraham, no one, David, Daniel, the big names, what do they all have in common? They were obedient to God. Even when it may cost them their own life or their child's life, or they didn't know what was going on. They still did what God told him to do. And Tabitha fits in that category perfectly. She's doing what God asked her to do.

You know, in today's world, we like to do little random acts of kindness. You've heard this doing little paying it forward little acts..... If you know what I did today? I paid for coffee for the guy behind me when I'm in Starbucks. He doesn't need it. He's in line at Starbucks, perfectly capable of paying for his own coffee. That money could have gone for somebody that needed it, right. And somehow, we think if we release this little positive energy into the world, whatever that looks like, it'll flap around and hit some people and it'll be good, and then it'll come back to us even more so. That's not how it works. That's how it works. Now, the Bible does say, be careful of the measure you use because so it will be measured to you. Okay. But it doesn't work by us releasing this positive energy into the world. And we think we're doing good or worse yet, we try and capture it for our social media. Look at that i Today I help the homeless guy Please like and subscribe. That's not how it works. That's not what we do this for right?

Anybody here remember Dennis Rodman from the Bulls some years ago? You either loved or hated him right? There was no middle ground with Dennis Rodman. He was a premier rebounder, he knew how to rebound the ball. And he had his challenges. But here's one thing that most of us don't know that in most of the cities, Dennis Rodman went to when he was traveling, playing, he would go to Toys R Us, and buy mounds of stuff, and take it down to the local children's hospital. No TV cameras, no YouTube channel. Right. That's getting it done.

And we could start getting into this salvation by grace, salvation by works. And that's a pedestal that I will jump up onto. And so I gotta be careful. Let's hit this

real quick. We do not believe in salvation by works. You don't do good things like Tabitha does to be significant so that you can go to heaven. Right? That's backwards. That's backwards. We do the good things, because God has put us into heaven. And we want to respond to that. One of my favorite texts in the Bible, James 1:22, says, Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. What's it say? Do what it says, Be a doer. Be a doer. Okay? Be a doer. Do what it says. Okay?

This gift of salvation that God has given us is so wildly crazy. So unfathomably cool, so impossible to get on our own, that we want to do something in response. And we do that by showing our love, and our love we show by our actions.

The story is told about a family. Mom, dad, three boys and it was the end of the week. And it had just been a rough week, everybody was tired. Mom was tired and busy time in her work. She was tired. Dad was working overtime at his job. He was tired. The boys were tired school, extracurricular activities and homework and everybody was tired. Yeah, we've had those weeks, right. And it's supper time. And not much to set at supper time. Everybody just kind of sits there in a stupor, eating the food getting through it as best they can. And at the end of supper time, that says to the oldest boy, come help me clean up the kitchen. If you're the oldest, you've been there. Why me? It's always me. They never pick the youngest. That schmuck gets away with everything. Right? How many here are the oldest? How many here are the youngest? Yeah. The youngest don't want to raise their hands. And dad could have said, Just do it because I said so. Or it's your turn. Quit giving me some lip, right. But dad took a different approach. And he said you know what, your mom's tired. She worked hard all day. She had to stop at the grocery store and pick up a few things for supper, came home and fixed supper. Now you think she should clean up the kitchen to? If we clean up the kitchen. That gives her a little break. And we do that because we love her, so she can rest. A little boy didn't say too much after that, seemed to be thinking about it. A couple days later mom comes home from work and finds the young man in the kitchen cleaning up. This was rather surprising. And she says why are you doing this half expecting the son to say well dad told me to. And he looked at her and matter of factly said because I love. You know he gets it. He gets it. We do things for God, because we love him. Not because we have to, not because it's going to get us a better seat in heaven somewhere. But because we love him, Tabitha

under stood that she showed her love for Jesus, by her actions. She took care of the people that nobody else wanted to take care of.

Real quick, why does God raise Tabitha from the dead? I don't really know. But I want to talk about this some because I think this is interesting. How many people can you remember that had been raised from the dead in the Bible? Take a guess, how many people? Five, four.... Nine! Nine, not including the large group of people that were raised when Jesus raised from the dead because we don't have a good number for them. But nine individuals, including Jesus, without Jesus eight, okay, so let's talk about them real quick. We have Elijah raised the widow of Zarephath's son, right? Elisha raises the Shunammite women's son, I can never say that. And the one that I almost forgot was, I love this story. We don't know much about it. If you read in Second Kings. It's almost like bullet point of history. This happened. This happened. This happened. This happened. And I kid you not. It says And Elisha died and it goes on. And I'm like, one of the greatest prophets. It says Elisha died. That's it doesn't say that people mourn. Everyone was sad. Just that Elisha had died. The next sentence says, In the springtime when the Moabite Raiders came out, there was some men burying a man. They saw the raiders were afraid for their lives through the body into Elisha's tomb and took off. When the body struck Elisha's bones, he came to life and stood up. And I have so many questions. So many questions because like, do the Raiders take off? That dude was dead! We're out of here. And did other people come by later with dead people and say, let's try this. So many questions.

Then that's it for the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we have Jesus raises the widow of Nain's son, he raised his Jarius' daughter, of course, famously Lazarus, and Jesus raises Jesus. And then the last two are Peter raises Tabitha, and Paul raises Eutychus , the young man who fell out the window while he was preaching, nine people other than the group of people that are raised when Jesus raises. Nine people. None of them are famous. None of them are rich. None of them are sons or daughters of kings or queens. None of them are of any real importance in the world. Most of them are children or young people. Tabitha, the unknown man and Lazarus mean really the only adults... and Jesus. The rest of them are all children or young adults. Why does Jesus raise these people? It's a widow's son. It's the poor farmer's son. It's another widow's son. It's Jairus' daughter. It's Tabitha, who's taking care of the widows that nobody else wants to

take care of. This should tell you something about God's heart. And God cares for the people that nobody else cares about. And any anytime you feel like nobody cares. God cares. It tells us a great deal about God's heart.

So what do we learn from this? How do we be like Tabitha? Pretty easy. Find a need and get busy. Right Tabitha didn't have much she could do... I can make clothes for widows, okay, I'll do that. Maybe that's not your thing. Maybe you want to help with the greeters or the deacons or you want to help with the audiovisual team, we could use help on that team. You know, maybe you want to do something else, maybe you want to do some haven't started yet. Maybe there's a an AA meeting, we want to start or some kind of mental health group or, you know, something we haven't even done yet. We could stand up here all day long, and come up with ministries that we could do and start. But the point is, you got to find the need and get busy. What you may do may not seem like much to you or to the world standards. But that's not how God measures things.

Be like Dorcas and be a doer.

A reflection, what grabs at your heart when you hear about it? When people talk about a topic, and it pulls at your heart maybe has something to do with children or senior citizens or the sick or the orphans or whatever it is. Don't let it just pull at your heart. Do something about it. And we're all tempted to say, I'm busy. I get it. I'm busy too. Right. I get it. But when you say I'm busy, you're letting the devil steal something mighty precious from you. Okay, don't let him do that.

Our challenge, Take the first step in volunteering or get started this week. Don't put it off any longer.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us to be like Dorcas and to be a doer, Lord, to do the simple things that you have asked us to do. To be loving, to be kind to be merciful to care for others. Maybe we want to start a food bank. Maybe we want to help make blankets or hats or we want to.... Lord that there's so many options. Help us to have the courage to step out in faith and be a doer. Not just listen to the word. But be a doer. Do what it says. Be with us in this upcoming week. Lord, help us to make wise decisions and bring us back again. In Jesus name. Amen.