

Calling and Destiny

I'm firmly convinced –however strange it may seem–that my life has followed a straight and unbroken course, at any rate in its outward conduct. Everything seems to have taken its natural course, and to be determined necessarily and straightforwardly by higher providence. I believe that nothing that happens to me is meaningless. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Chance, fortune, luck, destiny, fate, providence, seem to me only different ways of expressing the same thing, to wit, that a man's own contribution to his life story is continually dominated by an external superior power. Winston Churchill

¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; Matthew 16:16-19

1. Do you sense your life has a destiny like these men? Is destiny only apparent after the fact?

My destiny is my own selfhood, given by God, but not given as an established reality, like a rock or a hill, but as a task lying under a divine imperative. Not only is selfhood unlike any other natural process of growth, such as that of a plant. A destiny is a spiritual drama. Glenn Tinder

The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever—do not abandon the works of your hands. Psalm 138:8

2. Since destiny can be defined as more like a natural process of growth than an established reality how do you go about living out this spiritual drama? How do you balance taking things in your own hands verses relinquishing your responsibility in the process?

In reading letters, diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies, we feel that the lives thus revealed are of compelling concern. This reflects an intuition that the destiny of any human being is mysteriously pertinent to the destinies we ourselves must live. The unique importance of the novel as a form of literature may lie in its expression of this intuition. The novel not only pictures destiny unobscured by the accidental circumstances that nonfiction writers are compelled to record; it also exhibits destiny as at once universally human and intimately personal. Glenn Tinder

3. How does the concept of destiny have a universal appeal? Is there a destiny for each one of us? How have you been inspired by the destinies of others?

Christianity provides no rule telling one when to obey and when to disobey. It suggests on the contrary, that to seek such a rule is to flee from the mystery into which we enter when we make moral decisions in response to grace rather than in conformity with a rule. In a situation that renders obedience questionable, one can only observe, reflect, and pray, hoping to see the moral necessity given by destiny—the moral necessity that enables one to say, as Jesus said to Pilate, “For this I was born.” Many will feel this to

be inadequate guidance. But in the Christian faith, to look for guidance except in grace is, in the final analysis, idolatrous. Glenn Tinder

4. How can understanding your destiny and the nature of grace help you in making decisions?

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. ³¹What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:28-31

5. How is your ultimate destiny in your relationship with Christ as described in Romans connected to your destiny for your life's calling?

*There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves
Or lose our ventures.* Marcus Brutus in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar

Concepts such as “day,” “time,” “age,” “hour,” “moment,” and “generation” are critical to understanding Jesus and his gospel. Os Guinness

6. How are we to seize the moment, and not let it pass by?

²⁰Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, ²¹nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20-21

7. How is your destiny wrapped up in the world's destiny? How can we play the small part in the larger story written by God and move away from the story we write for ourselves where we are the star?

Discussion Guidelines:

1. Allow everyone a chance to speak. If you are bursting with ideas and tend to share a lot – great – but occasionally pause a bit before you go, sometimes the quieter ones are just waiting for their chance and they need a little space before they go.
2. Respect the opinions of others, and refrain from giving advice.
3. Keep discussion focused on the material being studied.
4. Maintain the confidentiality of personal things shared within the group.