



The Fire Within

*Connect Your Gifts
with Your Calling*

MARCIA MALZAHN

THE FIRE WITHIN

Connect Your Gifts with Your Calling

Marcia Malzahn

Copyright © 2015 Marcia Malzahn

All rights Reserved. No Part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the Publisher.

Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are taken from the Holy Bible, King James Version.
Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation,
copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House
Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Control Number:
ISBN

Editing: Marly Cornell
Book Design: Ryan Scheife
Cover Design: Ryan Scheife
Cover Painting: Isa Tyler

Malzahn Publishing
Maple Grove, Minnesota, U.S.A.

CONTENTS

Introduction

Part I Your Gifts: The Discovery Process

1. Gifts Among Us
2. Treasure Chest—*You*
3. What Kind of Tree Would You Be?
4. Apply Your Natural Gifts to Succeed in Your Career
5. Music Within You
6. Avoid Comparing Yourself to Others
7. What's in Your Heart?
8. Discover Your Own Path to Success
9. Climb Your Own Mountain

Part II Your Calling: How to Connect the Two

10. How I Found a Purpose in Every Job
11. How I Found My Purpose in Life
12. The Corporate World—a Ripe Mission Field
13. Achieving your Purpose and High Calling
14. With a Purpose, There Is No Glass Ceiling
15. What to Do When You Lose Your Purpose at Work
16. What Will Your Legacy Be?
17. The End of *This* Road

Epilogue

Acknowledgments

About the Author

INTRODUCTION

I found my life's purpose. And I want to help you find yours. I am using the term "purpose," but others may call it a mission, a passion, a dream, a calling, a reason for being, or perhaps the answer to the question, "Why am I here?" It doesn't matter what you call it; what matters is the desire to feel useful, needed by others, and to make a positive difference in the world. Helping others is the bottom line, regardless of the specific calling. I firmly believe that we are all called on by God to help others, but we each have to find our own niche.

My mission in life is to help working people be successful in every area of their lives. But it took me years to discover that mission. My first step was figuring out what my actual God-given gifts were. As I began to recognize my own gifts, I found an intimate relationship between what I love doing and what I'm good at. I am better at things that are a combination of my interests and some natural talents. Certain abilities that I possess help me do certain particular functions or tasks well. Finally identifying those talents led me to explore areas of work where I can use them well.

Every adult person works, one way or another. What kind of work and whether a person is paid for the work is a different issue. Either way, everybody works. I have had a full-time job outside of my home since before I came to America, with only brief time off when I had my children. The stories in this book are from my own experiences throughout my life as a working person and as a Christian person of faith, first discovering my gifts and then my calling.

Though I don't pretend to know exactly what might inspire other people to discover their life purpose or mission, I hope that my story will help inspire you to consider yours. Whether you work inside or outside of your home, whether you are paid or not for the work you do, this book has a message for you. The message is a spiritual one and a practical one. I want to encourage and motivate you to recognize your gifts, polish them, and use them to help others.

I have already explained that my purpose is to help working people be successful in every area of their lives. What is your purpose?

Part I
Your Gifts
The Discovery Process

Chapter 9

Climb Your Own Mountain

I had the opportunity to attend a conference in Phoenix, Arizona. The hotel was right by Camelback Mountain. I went with my boss and one of our bank directors, a retired business entrepreneur. On the second day, my boss said to us, “Let’s skip tomorrow afternoon sessions and let’s go climb Camelback Mountain.”

I immediately said yes, and the next day we went on our adventure.

To climb a mountain can take months of preparation to be physically fit to endure the hike. You need some tools and equipment to make it to the top. The only reason I was confident I could climb the mountain is because I had been working out a lot harder in the previous year than I ever had before. I know this was a little mountain—only 1.2 miles up—but it was my first mountain. I was very excited to make the climb.

Part of being prepared was to have the right clothing. My boss and I both had workout clothes. Our friend had tennis shoes but no workout clothes. He also had an issue with his knee, so after the first five minutes into the trip, our friend decided to go to the side and enjoy the view and the restful time. He encouraged us to continue the journey without him. I had also brought a bottle of water, but my boss had to carry it for me in his shorts’ pocket because I needed both hands to climb up. He didn’t bring water, which he regretted later.

As we continued to climb up the one- and two-foot high rocks, we started to sweat and needed the water. But guess what? I was the only one with the water bottle. No matter how many times I offered to share my water, my boss said no, that he was fine. At one point, he was lightheaded and told me to say good-bye to his wife and kids for him (kiddingly).

Several times he wanted to go back because he felt bad that our friend was alone waiting for us at the bottom of the mountain. I gave him a hard time and told him, “Are you using that as an excuse so you can stop and go back?” Before he had time to respond, I said, “No way, we’re climbing up and are going all the way up to the top!” And we did.

We stopped a couple of times to enjoy the view (and catch our breath). When we finally made it to the top, we had a 360-degree view of the city. It was an amazing and unforgettable experience. When it was time to come down—the descent was scarier than going up. If I missed a step, I was going down! When we reached the bottom, I felt a huge sense of accomplishment that I’ve never felt before.

So here is what I learned from this experience:

During our lives we will have a mountain or mountains to climb, and we need to be ready when the moment comes. These mountains are the job opportunities that come our way, struggles we encounter, and experiences we live through during the course of our lives. God will open up opportunities for each of us, and we need to be ready to jump with both feet and take the step in faith.

The preparation needed is threefold: physical, mental, and spiritual. If you follow the analogy of climbing the mountain, physically you need to be in good cardio shape so you can climb. It takes a lot of effort and training to go up and actually make it to the top. Right there on Camelback they told us that, on average, three people die per year—one of a heart attack and two others get off the trail and fall off a cliff. Part of the physical preparation you need is to acquire knowledge, which starts in school. Formal education is key to succeed in the business world.

You will also need to study the mountain you decide to climb. Learn what the dangers are, what the opportunities are, and the challenges you may encounter. You need to do your homework. Then you will need to create a plan and follow it, but be flexible for unforeseen circumstances that will require a change in course. However, don't get so off course that you lose sight of where you were going in the first place and end up falling off a cliff. Get used to asking yourself the questions, *Why am I here? What does God want me to learn from this situation (good or bad)? What am I afraid of? Am I having fun?* Being aware of your circumstances can help you make decisions down the road or even save your life.

You need to prepare and train yourself mentally to stay focused, dedicated, and disciplined enough to not quit. You need to be prepared to make tough decisions when you are presented with more than one way to climb the mountain but both are difficult. You need to be okay when one of your friends is left behind. You need to accept the fact that not everyone will make it to the top. Many will choose to go back. Others will simply stop at a certain level and stay there. Yet others will follow you to the top and be right there with you. You need to know if you are ready and willing to take the responsibility to lead the team, which means you need additional training and strength. You also need to be okay following others. During the journey, you may start following the leader, but during the hike, he or she may turn the leadership to you for whatever reason. You need to be ready to help others, share your resources, and help coworkers when they are tired and need a hand to climb over that hard spot.

When you follow, make sure you follow by choice. Look where your leader is going, make an assessment of his or her route and then choose to follow him or her. Sometimes you may choose to go another route that will get you to your goal as well but was easier for you. Sometimes you will make a mistake and what you thought was best turned out to be worst. Be ready in those times to admit you made a mistake and apologize, if necessary. Share what you learned with others who come after you.

During your working life you will likely work with the four generations: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials or Gen Y. Some of your coworkers will be from the Traditionalist generation who already climbed their mountain and will be happy to stay at the bottom and watch you go up your own mountain. They will mentor you, cheer you up, and encourage you to finish your journey. Respect them, ask them questions, and learn all you can from them. They want to help you succeed. Don't see them as an obstacle but as an opportunity to learn and grow.

You will also work with Baby Boomers who are probably the ones at the top of the mountain right now and are thinking on how to get down without hurting themselves. They can also help you get to the top and will provide you with opportunities to take over their leadership. You will be climbing your mountain with Generation X coworkers who will work hard alongside you. Gen X coworkers have great opportunities to work together and climb even higher than their Baby Boomer colleagues. If you are a Gen X, then you can help those behind you, the Gen Y's, and you can also help the Baby Boomers reach their goals to get to the top or start their descent, depending on their situation.

Lastly, you will also work with the younger generation or Gen Y. They will help you with new ideas and can teach you new technologies that you have not used in the past. If you are a Gen Y, then you have a lot of opportunities to climb up your mountain. Don't be afraid to ask for help and learn from all the other generations that went before you. Earn their respect by working hard and being humble, knowing you have a lot to learn from them.

We cannot forget that most of the time, no matter how long we stay at the top of the mountain, at some point, we will come down. I envision that in a couple of ways: There may be smaller mountains we will need to climb early in our careers, and they will be preparation for bigger mountains, larger assignments that God has in store for us. We'll need to come down the smaller mountains and embark in the journey to climb the bigger mountain. Then we will have the experience and knowledge to conquer larger mountains. We will be more careful to not make the

same mistakes and will do some things differently. There will be the time to step down and let the younger generation take over. We need to take the time to mentor them and teach them what we've learned without feeling threatened. We need to enjoy the journey coming down, enjoy the views, and know that at the bottom lies rest and the satisfaction of knowing we accomplished much in our lives. We finished our race.

Spiritually, the journey starts with an open heart to God, allowing Him to fill us up with his Holy Spirit and wisdom. Spiritual training means we spend time with God, just in His presence, enjoying His love for us. It also means we read His Word so we can acquire the real wisdom we need to be successful in the world. We also need to spend time meditating, reflecting on our actions, our experiences, and thinking through plans for our future. We plan and then we let God act and help us achieve those plans.

On your journey, don't forget to bring Jesus along as your companion. He will be there for you when you have to make the tough decisions, when you're tired and think you can't go on anymore. He will be your inner source of strength and encouragement. He will be there for you when no one else is. He will give you ideas, brilliant ideas on how to solve problems, how to create new things, how to mend a broken relationship, how to build teams, how to follow your leader, and how to lead your team. When you have a daily relationship with God, He will show you His vision for your life. He will show you the way and let you know when your mission is complete at every stage of the journey.

Final tips to be successful in the business world:

- Be prepared—physically, mentally, and spiritually—so when opportunities come you don't miss them.
- Continue to learn always—each job, every new responsibility you get, learn so you are ready for the next step.
- Have faith—believe in God and trust Him. Make the step. He will be there for you and with you along the way.
- Take others with you so you can enjoy the journey. Always include Jesus in your team!
- Plan ahead—you plan and God helps you get there. Without a plan you will get nowhere because you won't even know where you're going.

- Be a good follower and choose the mountain you want to climb. If you don't believe in the mission and vision of a company, don't join that company. Find one where your beliefs align with the organization. Otherwise, you'll have a hard time following.
- Climb your own mountain—you will always have choices. Ask God for the wisdom to discern which mountain to climb. Don't climb a mountain just because somebody else is doing it. Choose your own. Choose wisely and enjoy the journey!

Isaiah 55: 8-9 (NLT): *“My thoughts are completely different from yours,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”*

Questions to ponder

1. What does your mountain look like?
2. How are you allowing God to help you climb your mountain?
3. What are you doing to help others climb their mountains?

Action items

1. If you are already climbing your mountain, make sure you have all the tools (i.e., education, special skills, etc.)
2. Allow God to help you along the way. You are not alone in your journey.
3. Help one person climb their mountain and you will be blessed.

Part II

Your Calling

How to Connect the Two

Chapter 16

What Will Your Legacy Be?

Webster's Dictionary describes legacy as anything handed down from the past from an ancestor or predecessor. Synonyms are inheritance and heritage. Inheritance usually refers to something material, such as a piece of property, passed down from parents to their children. Heritage refers to other, nonmaterial things passed down from generation to generation, such as culture, moral and ethical standards, and beliefs. I believe we all leave a legacy, whether we intend to or not. Just as we influence people during the course of our lives, and that influence can be positive or negative, we leave a legacy that will be remembered in a positive or negative way. We create our legacy with what we do every day of our lives here on earth. We leave a legacy also through our children. They inherit not only our material possessions, if any, but also our morals, some characteristics, and what they learned from us by our examples.

You have a choice to make every day that you go to work. Will what you do today help you create a legacy you will be proud of leaving some day? Even if you don't think of staying with a company for the rest of your life, you still need to consider what legacy you will leave behind when you leave that company. That's why it's so important not to burn bridges when you leave a company. You never know if you will be working with some of those same people again, or if they will buy the next company you will be working for. When you get a promotion to a new department within your company, don't leave your friendships behind. Keep your network of friends and acquaintances. Someone from your old department may later become your boss or your employee. If you switch companies within the same industry, you, for sure, want to keep your network, because people within the same industry tend to move around and work at the same companies. If you move to a new industry, you may still need your old connections, in case you don't like the new field you moved into.

The main question to answer is: do you really want to leave a positive legacy? Most people would say, "of course." So then, how do you want to be remembered? This doesn't necessarily mean being remembered only when you die, but during the course of your life, throughout your career, and during your working life. When you leave a company or a previous job within the same company, what do you want people to say when they talk about you? Do you want people to say, "Oh yes, that was a person who cared about others"? Or do you want them to say, "Oh, I don't even want to think about that person! That was the worst manager I ever had"?

I believe when we think of others first and find purpose in our work, the positive legacy we leave behind will happen naturally. We don't have to worry about what to do or what to say when. We simply care for and about others, and people notice. When we walk in God's will for our lives, He will make sure our legacy is written following our path of life so others can read it as they follow. Our legacy when we are alive is our reputation. Our reputation is simply what others think of us. We build our reputation by our actions—what we say and do—every day. Unfortunately, once we build a bad reputation, it is very hard to change it, so we need to be careful to build and keep a good reputation for ourselves.

How do you leave a legacy or create a good reputation while you are in the job you are right now? Think daily of how you can improve the way you do your work. Think of new ways to carry out the processes you're involved with. Help others succeed in their jobs by helping them in any way you can. Develop new alliances between departments so your company works internally together more efficiently.

Establish good relationships with leadership and sincerely care for them and the company you work for. Those leaders are the ones who first believed in you to do the job you were hired to do. Find the reason you are in your current job right now. Learn new things so you become a more informed employee and knowledgeable team member. Be an instrument of unity rather than division amongst your coworkers. Respect your employees, your coworkers, and your leaders. As you do all these things, you are establishing a good reputation for yourself and an environment of trust where people can flourish.

Take ownership in the company you work for and appropriate the company's future. Learn the vision and mission of your company. If you are the founder, write the vision and mission of your company, if you have not done so yet. Ask yourself the question, what am I doing to fulfill the vision of this company? Treat the company and everything in it (the employees, vendors, assets, and liabilities) as your own. When you do, you will start to see a difference on how you behave toward the people in the company you work for. You will start defending your workplace when others say bad things about it. You will stop complaining about the things you don't like (and actually start doing something about those things you want to change), and you will start feeling like you belong. The tasks you do in your job will suddenly make sense, and you will see how they fit in the big picture. Understanding how all the pieces come together and how what you do integrates into the entire company is easier to do in a small organization, but it can be done in a big company as well.

The main points to understand include the concept of caring about the company you work for, taking ownership of the company that hired you, and having a feeling of belonging once you take ownership. It is crucial to have an understanding of how important your job is, no matter what it is. Understanding the concept of ownership means being thankful for the job you have, thanking God for it, and giving Him all the glory for what you do—working as unto the Lord. These are all ways you leave a positive legacy wherever you go and at the end of your life.

Psalm 16:5 (NLT) *Lord, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing. You guard all that is mine.*

Questions to ponder

1. What is your legacy?
2. What bridges do you have to repair or relationships to fix?
3. What part do you play in your company? What ownership do you feel?

Action items

1. Start taking ownership of the company you work for today.
2. Make a new connection to improve relationships between two areas of your company.
3. Thank God for your job, and ask Him to help you understand your importance in that company.