

## Chapter 18. Making a Difference and Leaving a Legacy



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## MAKING A DIFFERENCE, LEAVING A LEGACY

**WHAT WILL BE THE RESULTS OF YOUR LIFE AND WORK?**

*“We’ve gone too far down the road we’re traveling.  
The time has come to search the map for better  
possibilities, to strike out in new directions.”*

– Bill McKibben, *Deep Economy*

## Making a Difference, Leaving a Legacy

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If you have been floating along in your life, perhaps raising your children, doing your work, being a good neighbor, running your business, or trying to be a good community member, you may begin to think that your life is nothing special and never will be... but that just isn't true. It may be time to ask yourself what kind of difference you would like to make in the world. What are the stories you would like to have told about you? What are the gifts you would like to be remembered for?

Most of us are so busy we only think about getting through the day or the week. However, we all have moments – in the car, on the plane, in the shower, doing dishes, brushing our teeth – when we could ask ourselves, “What is it all about? What is the point?”

When you find yourself thinking like this, it's time to survey your natural qualities and gifts, then think about what you could do to make a difference using these qualities and gifts. You don't have to create a global event; you can begin in small ways to make a difference in one individual's life – a human, or even an animal – and decide you're going to do something to make a difference every week.

Perhaps you could start with a big, warm smile. Or the decision to lend a hand the next time you see someone trying to lift something heavy. You could listen for signs of distress – the battery in

someone's car is dead and you are parked in the same lot, or they need a good plumber and you know one you could recommend.

Maybe you want to do something bigger, like invite your crew to dinner, or sponsor and organize a neighborhood cookout. If you have the resources, you might offer to buy a ticket for someone who really wants to visit their sister in another city, or offer your cottage to a colleague who needs to get away for a while. If you're a craftsman you could offer to repair the swings at the local school.

If you're a farmer, you could donate eggs to a local church breakfast or invite schoolchildren to visit for a morning. If you have a considerable amount of money, you might want to organize a repair team to go in and fix up the houses in a neighborhood, making arrangements for any teenagers who live there to help out and learn while doing.

Surprisingly, some people don't think about making a difference because they worry others will see them as a "big-shot-wanna-be." Let go of this and just be humble. If you worry about how others will judge you, you'll never accomplish anything. Only you can honestly gauge your reasons for doing something. If it brings you attention, be gracious. If it brings more requests for your time and energy, be honest about what you can do, and be gracious in that honesty.

If you have the time, money, and connections to create a global event, don't hesitate to do so. Even if it's just a dream at this point, start talking about it. There is an old saying that goes, "In the

beginning was the word...!!” As people hear you talk about your dream, you will be surprised at who responds, how the energy builds, and how the people and resources suddenly come together. Before you know it, the event can become a reality.

Perhaps you are putting together a will and have a bit of money you want to do something good with. If this is the case, think both about the people who might benefit from your gift and the organizations that might be helped.

We are at a time and place in this world where a great deal of help will be needed to bring people together in new ways in order to make the changes needed to resolve the growing crises of energy, food, climate changes, and numerous other issues. You could organize some of the collaborative work that is needed, find someone else who wants to do the work and support them, or leave money to an individual, group, or organization that is working hard to bring about the needed changes.

There are many creative ways to make a difference in our world and in the lives of people around you. If you have some money and time, but feel like you don't have enough resources to do what you'd like or what you think is necessary, get online and find a partner or two in the same position. Together you could make a huge difference.

Sometimes joining a group of like-minded people is the spark that ignites a passion for service. It's in the coming together, the conversations, the laughter, the problem-solving, and the feeling that

we are not alone that magic happens. If you can't find a group, start one, and use *Making a Difference, Leaving a Legacy* as a tool to explore what you can do – together or separately. ♦

The next section of *Solving Your Ultimate Destiny Success Puzzle* calls for a look at obstacles and how to anticipate them in order to minimize their disruptive effects. If you are going to succeed in reaching your Ultimate Destiny you have to think “outside of the box” and not be tripped up by the usual challenges, complaints, and difficulties.

You must learn to take pre-existing responsibilities and turn them into resources, keep your goals first on your To Do List, and develop new habits. If you can make a new habit a permanent habit, you will have a foundation upon which you can build other habits that eventually will add up to a new you. When you have learned how easy it is to set goals goals and create systems of behavior to cement them in place, you will then be able to share your accomplishments with the world and have no regrets!

*“Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men of talent. Genius will not, unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not, the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”*

—Calvin Coolidge

## Self-Assessment Exercise

Complete this self-assessment quiz to discover how well you are fulfilling your ultimate destiny in this area of life. The exercise will also help you discover which of our programs would be of greatest value to you, your family and your work. Select the number that best describes you and then calculate the total. The number 1 means that this pertains to you very little of the time and 5 means that this is always in your life. If a statement doesn't apply to you, circle N/A and count it as a 3.

### Making A Difference and Leaving A Legacy

My life is heavily oriented to serving others, and I think constantly about ways of doing that better, while taking care of my own needs as well.	<input type="radio"/> NA <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
I have invested the time and energy needed to be an effective steward over resources entrusted to me, using them to bring sustenance and joy to those close to me, and proportionately to others in more distant circles.	<input type="radio"/> NA <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
My life and activities are closely tied to making a difference in lives around me and the world in general.	<input type="radio"/> NA <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
I regularly revisit my stewardship of resources which I may suddenly no longer have control over, in terms of updating insurance policies, my will, medical directives, my living trust, or other pertinent instruments.	<input type="radio"/> NA <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
I intend that at the end of my life, I will have done all I could to reach my highest potential and leave a legacy of positive actions, attitudes and impact on as many people as possible, as well as on the earth and the environment.	<input type="radio"/> NA <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
I am careful to follow practical sequencing toward leaving a legacy, first achieving personal and family stability, building on that to strong success, and finally attaining real significance in impact and/or resources, rather than trying to "change the world" immediately, without a proper foundation upon which to manage resources, influence, etc.	<input type="radio"/> NA <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
I have made careful inventory of my skills, attitudes, accomplishments and resources and have written goals with time frames to guide my progression toward leaving the most positive, impacting legacy I can.	<input type="radio"/> NA <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
I approach every day with the attitude of seeing how I can best serve others and improve the planet.	<input type="radio"/> NA <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
The legacy I am building is oriented to the <i>way</i> I have conducted myself and positively impacted people (my <i>character</i> ), more than pure accomplishments or leaving of material wealth.	<input type="radio"/> NA <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
If my life should end suddenly, I feel prepared in the sense that I "have my affairs in order" and am currently giving fully of myself to the people and causes of highest priority to me.	<input type="radio"/> NA <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5

Total Score \_\_\_\_\_

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