

Seeds of My Calling started in College

*Common denominators for doing our best
should be taught, planned for, and rewarded at home, school, church, and in professional organizations....*

Burdens can become blessings. Written choices create clarity for callings. Persisting through pressure can help you develop into a *diamond* of a person—stronger and more valuable.

As a college student at Auburn, I had to admit the reality that if I kept doing the same jobs as I had been doing in the summer, I would not earn enough money to complete school—and I still did not own a car! I did the math. Income from working as a construction laborer during the week plus weekend work as a lifeguard, golf course laborer, or cutting lawns would not be enough.

Another motivation was stirring. Neither of my parents had a chance to go to college. I felt grateful for their support of my education, though I had no first-hand knowledge of whether a college education would help me succeed. I had seen graduates with good grades fall short of success. Deep down, I wanted to prove to myself I could “make it” on my own.

Doing something “outside the box” seemed necessary. I sought a job selling Bibles because it seemed meaningful and I had heard you could earn much more than with hourly wages. Plus, I figured, if I could follow the program of working 70 hours per week running my own business selling to strangers, I likely could do most anything else needed to survive—and hopefully succeed.

With my first bank loan, I bought my first car. After leaving home in Birmingham, I drove to Nashville for five days of school with The Varsity Company of Thomas Nelson Publishers. The last day, we were assigned roommates and instructed to drive to a territory 500 miles away from home, find a place to live, and work 12 hours per day, six days per week, knocking on doors to sell or take orders for Bibles. The guy with the greatest potential of anyone in the school was assigned as my roommate. We drove all day to Virginia and rented a room in a boarding house. The first day we went to our territories charged to work 12 hours and make 20 presentations. The second night, my roommate, the guy with the greatest potential, came home and said, “This is too hard; I am going back to Florida!”

After the summer, when the “Top 20” in the nation were invited back to Nashville, I noticed faces of people who had not stood out at the school. The experience of seeing *great potential* fail to try long enough to succeed and seeing ordinary people do extraordinary things internalized for me that *plans and persistence are more powerful than personality. We have to be willing to be bad at something long enough to have a chance to get good at it.* I failed for days, though by the end of two weeks I was succeeding. *Writing goals and making promises to prove something to ourselves and others helps us persist through adversity and rejection.*

In defense of *potential who quit*, the job was tough: 12 hours per day, 6 days per week, making 100+ presentations per week to strangers. Like an Olympic athlete, success required dedication and dealing with paradoxes. Some people slammed doors in my face, others invited me to church. School about our books and sales did not tell us about threats. One Saturday night, after my last presentation, a group of “drunk” men surrounded me wanting to fight; another time a man in the “hills of Kentucky” put a pistol to my forehead. Ambushes come in civilian life, too!

A blessing that summer came from reading books by or about Andrew Carnegie and Napoleon Hill, [The Law of Success](#) and [Think and Grow Rich](#), which advocate a common denominator set of “success formula” principles that should be taught in every home and school. Realizing that many homes, schools, and churches do not teach or help people to write plans for life and learn key life leadership lessons, a sense of calling grew that I should help make that happen. After completing college, I learned many professional organizations need teachings and systems in place to help people plan and lead in life as good stewards of our callings and talents. Without plans, we may succeed though not at our best. –David [from [Professionalism Under Stress](#)]