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MATT CARVEL

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I

Your Life and God's Plan

I'm writing this on A-level results day. Around the country there are thousands of young men and women who are celebrating getting into their first choice of university. There are thousands more who are frantically trying to find out whether they got in somewhere even though they haven't got the grades they hoped for. And there are many too who have missed out on their top choice or even their second choice and are going through clearing in order to get on to a course they want to do.

Whatever category you've been in, it's tempting to think that which uni you end up at is all down

to you. *But God sees things a little differently.*

There's a proverb in the Bible (Proverbs 19:21) that says although we can make many plans, ultimately it's God's plan that prevails. Your results may have been a surprise to you, but they weren't a surprise to God. He knew which uni you were going to end up in. Not only that, but He's put you there.

Acts 17 explains that God determines the times and places that people live (vv. 26–27). Things like this don't just happen randomly or by accident; God's hand is in all of it.

One of the most encouraging verses in the entire Bible is where God promises that in every situation He is working for our good (Romans 8:28).

Maybe you feel discouraged or deflated because you've ended up somewhere you never really wanted to go. Maybe you're ecstatic because you achieved your first choice. You must understand that either way God has been directing your steps. To Him you're exactly where you need to be right now and He's working for good in your situation.

A VERY ACTIVE GOD

God has got a purpose for you to fulfil. Not only does God determine where we live, but when we look closely at Acts 17 we read that God's reason

for placing us where we are is so people might get to know Him for themselves. God has placed you at university for the purpose of His mission.

We make a big mistake if we imagine that God is inactive in the world today. He's not just up there somewhere in the clouds, biding his time, listening to prayers and occasionally answering them. He's committed to His mission and purpose and is actively bringing it about.

What is that mission? It's all about building His church through spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I'm sure you know this, but it bears repeating. Jesus said, 'I will build my church' (Matthew 16:18). That's what He's promised to do. His last instruction to His disciples was 'go and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19) and then He sent the Holy Spirit to empower them in this mission. This radical movement that started with the eleven remaining disciples has now spread to millions worldwide.

Every day thousands of people become Christians. The Bible says the Good News of Jesus will keep on spreading until all the nations and people groups have heard it, and then Jesus will return.

God is working towards this end through the

Holy Spirit today. He's got a lot of work to do, but He's committed to it. Yet it won't last forever. One day, when Jesus returns, the time for mission will be over. Until that day, though, there's a lot to be getting on with. The amazing thing is that God has chosen to work through ordinary Christians like me and you.

Maybe you've never thought of yourself as part of an international people movement spanning thousands of years. Maybe you haven't ever looked beyond your own Sunday church experience to realise the world-changing revolution that you're part of. But if you're a Christian, you are part of it.

God's put the Gospel of Jesus Christ in your life and He's put His Holy Spirit in you too. He's given you gifts and talents, energy and faith; and He's put a calling on your life to be a light in a dark place and to live and speak for Him.

ME, A MISSIONARY?

Jesus was the first missionary, sent by God the Father to show the way to salvation and eternal life. At the start of the book of Acts, He hands on that task to His disciples; they are to finish the work He started.

Every disciple, therefore, is a missionary. If you