

WHO'S MESSING WITH MY SCHEDULE

(Living With Divine Appointments in Perspective)

By Roger Shantz



Recently I was sitting at my desk and the phone rang. It was Park Nicollet Clinic calling to remind us of an impending appointment. It prodded me to think that daily as we plan our lives we set up schedules and establish appointments so we can maintain relative order in what otherwise could be a chaotic existence. But once in a while our schedule changes, something happens and we realize we are in the presence of a person we don't know or didn't anticipate talking to.

This gives rise a question: **“Who’s messing with my schedule”?** We often acknowledge that some encounters in life are unanticipated but we may not recognize them as **“Divine Appointments”**. I believe the challenge for us today is to understand there exists both **“natural appointments”** set by us and **“divine appointments”** set for us by God.

For some of you, the subject of **“Divine Appointments”** is not new. For years you have understood what they are and you daily ask for, watch for, and act upon them. For others, however, when you hear about taking the Kingdom of God and the Gospel outside the walls of the church and living our lives as Light in the midst of Darkness, you are a little intimidated. Perhaps you have felt uneasy during the day or guilty at night because you didn't “share with” or “pray for” someone. **I completely understand and I am writing to lift that burden off of you.**

The **purpose of this article** is to convey my thoughts about subject of Divine Appointments. This involves us being activated ministers of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. It is important we recognize that we **possess the “Light of Life” and we are to allow the Light to emanate from us at all times.** We have been called and empowered, by Jesus, as his disciples, to not simply declare the gospel but to demonstrate it. In **Luke 9:1,2** we read that Jesus “called the Twelve disciples together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

LIVING AN OBEDIENT LIFE WITH EXCLAMATION POINTS

Before addressing the matter of Divine Appointments I would like to distinguish between living an **“obedient Christian life”** and living an **“obedient life with exclamation points”**. Let me explain.

I believe there are several things set forth in the Word of God that we are commissioned to do. Here are a few that come to mind: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mk.16:15); “Go and make disciples of all nations...” (Mt. 28:18); “...look after

orphans and widows in their distress and keep *yourself* from being polluted by the world.” (James 1:27). These things are to be **done by all Christians and they do not require a divine appointment**...however divine appointments are seen in and through these activities. They are aspects of the normal “obedient Christian life”.

Periodically throughout our days, weeks, and months we are going to have Divine Appointments, interruptions in our schedules when God say... “This person has a need (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) and I have brought them into your life at this moment because I want to minister life into them.” When we respond by faith and speak the word of life to them we have moved from “normal obedient Christian living” to “normal obedient Christian living with Exclamation Points”. Divine appointments are like Exclamation Points -- supernatural encounters in which God allows us the opportunity to speak, touch, or minister to someone in a special way. While we are always to fulfill the general mandates of scripture, there are specific encounters that arise when God supernaturally shows up. Those are the “appointments” I am writing about.

MANY BALLS ARE THROWN BUT ONLY SWING AT THE STRIKES

A couple of weeks ago I was speaking with Rick Barnhart. Over my 20 years of knowing Rick I have been aware that he has always wanted to be more bold in speaking to others about Christ and related issues. He shared with me this has always been a bit difficult for him but that God showed him something which brought a release to his spirit. We visited awhile about an analogy revealed by the Spirit and with Rick’s approval I have taken the liberty to flesh it out a bit.

Rick said the Lord showed him that Divine Appointments are like pitches thrown to a batter. As a batter we only have a few things we are obligated to do:

- 1) Stand in the batter’s box and get ready
- 2) Watch the pitcher
- 3) Look for the ball coming out of the pitcher’s hand
- 4) Determine which throws are balls and which are strikes
- 5) Swing at the strikes and let the balls go

Sounds easy enough! Having played baseball as a young boy and again in college, I know the challenge every player faces when standing in the batter’s box. A batter must understand that a pitcher can deliver many different types of pitches but not all balls thrown are hittable, nor should they be swung at. The player’s challenge is to determine what type of pitch is being thrown and then decide if he should swing or not. Because balls travel between 80 and 100 mph, a player needs to learn to read the balls and respond quickly.

Determine the strike and balls and only swing at the strikes
because not every ball thrown is a hittable ball

Divine Appointments are like pitched balls. When it comes to “Divine Appointments” we must keep in mind that as we daily stand in the batter’s box of life, people like balls, come into

our life, not everyone is a strike...not every person is a divine appointment but **EVERY PERSON HAS THE POTENTIAL of becoming one.**

I could draw **a number of parallel's between** the type of **pitches** (curves, sinkers, sliders, knuckleball, screwball, fast ball) and the types of **people** that God allows into our lives everyday...but I won't. I want to emphasize, however, that not everyone who comes into your life is a fast ball down the middle. So we have to learn to **ask** the Father for divine appointments, **hear the voice** of the Father, **discern** if the encounter is a divine appointment, and if it is **be ready to obey** the voice of the Spirit and **swing the bat.**

Our chances of getting on base are greatly reduced if we don't swing the bat. There are three ways to get on base without swinging the bat: the pitcher baulks, the batter is hit by pitched ball, or he gets a walk (base on balls). Those don't apply to the analogy so I won't spend any time on them. Basically we need to **remember we get** in the batter's box with one **primary objective...swing the bat and connect with the ball.**

YOU HAVE TO SWING THE BAT

The late Minnesota Twin icon, Kirby Puckett, was known as a good power hitter, but what people often fail to realize is that he swung his bat, missed the ball and struck out many times. If you and I are afraid of missing divine appointments because we don't want to fail, then we'll never be known as "**spiritual power hitters**" in the kingdom of God. We must learn to discern which people have been sent into our lives by God and which ones have not. The best way to learn how to pick the right pitches and how to swing through a ball is not through watching a video or going to a conference where someone else demonstrates it for you. We learn to "hit the ball" by swinging the bat, missing the ball, striking out, but **getting up again** and **standing in the batter's box until we learn to hit. Successful batters don't give up.**

It's interesting how often we think that we must knock every "divine appointment" out of the park. If we don't we often feel bad. Stop and think for a moment about professional baseball. Do you realize that if a player ends the season with a batting average of .400 (4 hits out of every 10 at bats) he is considered a very strong and successful batter. **So if you miss an opportunity to minister to what is clearly a divine appointment, don't get discouraged, simply learn from it and stand back in the batter's box.**

LISTEN TO THE COACH AND WATCH THE SIGNALS

If you have ever watched or played organized baseball you know how important it is for a player to listen to the coach. Before entering the batter's box the batter stares down the third base line and looks for the coach's signal. He might see the sign to bunt, swing, or take (don't swing even if it's down the middle) the ball. **What's critical is that the coach gives the signal and the player responds. So it is with God.** We need to **look to him daily to provide the signal** for how we interact with people around us. A coach sometimes signals the player to "swing if he wants to" which gives the player complete freedom to go with what he feels. At times God will do the same with us and we are free to speak or not. **It is essential to learn to hear the voice of God, to read the signals, and to respond to the Coach.**

I know there are many more analogies that could be drawn with regard to this but I don't have the time or space to delineate them. I would encourage you to think of some of your own and then ask God to make them a living reality in your life.

I want to conclude by making just a few summary comments;

- 1) **“There is no such thing as a ‘small divine appointment’.** If the supernatural God gives us a divine appointment and we bless a person in Jesus' name, or give them a cold pop or hot cup of coffee in Jesus' name, or we change their flat tire in Jesus' name, or pray for them or their sick child in Jesus' name, etc.... then **we have brought the Super-Natural into the realm of the Natural... so it is not a “small divine appointment” but a “supernatural divine appointment”.** Let's never call anything God does “a small thing”.

- 2) **Divine Appointments are about the ultimate harvest.** It always intrigue's me to think that any encounter I have with a person is fitting into God super-plan for their life. I think at times that I'm planting a seed, and with another person I'm watering or cultivating, and still at other times I've been asked by God to harvest. What is important to remember is that regardless what aspect we are involved in, in terms of the process, in the end it's all about harvest but as Bob Jones used to say, “The pay is the same”. **Also, remember this: No seed = No harvest; No Water = No Harvest; No Pruning = No harvest.**
Please keep in mind that whether you speak a blessing over a person or pray and they are healed or you witness and they are made a new creation in Christ...it's all important because ultimately God is glorified.

- 3) **Sometimes the Fruit of a Divine Appointment is Delayed.** Let me give you an example of what I mean. Several months ago Jimmy Shabaz listed a house for a young man who he did not know. This client was referred to Jimmy by a third party. Over time the house was prepared for sale. Two or three other real estate agents had told the seller that the house wouldn't sell very fast and needed quite a bit of work. Jimmy disagreed and said if a few things would be done the house could be marketed. Jimmy prayed that the house would sell fast and with the blessing and favor of God the house sold in less than a month.
During the transaction process, Jimmy and the client talked about the house, the seller's life and some of his concerns. Faithfully, Jimmy would speak here and there about the Lord and his desires for us. After the closing on the house, Jimmy tried to stay in touch with the client. He would email, leave text and voice messages for the client and would invite him to church. There was no response. Then one day Jimmy called and the client answered. Jimmy invited him to come to the Shabaz's home to play poker. The client came and found out he actually knew some of the people he was playing with.

Following that event little contact was experienced. Then Jimmy invited the client to come to their home for a New Year's Eve party (12-31-06). The seller went and had a good time. One night in February Jimmy's phone rang and the client asked if he could come over to the Shabaz's home. He did and later that night Jadon McDowell, who many of us know and love at RCF accepted Christ as his Savior and Lord.

I asked Jimmy today if he viewed, at the time, those initial contacts as “divine appointments”. He said it never crossed his mind. But today, in retrospect, he sees the finger prints of God all over their relationship. (Actually the entire story is filled with God orchestrated things)

The point you ask? Sometimes the Fruit of a Divine Appointment (s) is delayed but it never negates the fact that God is always working.

- 4) **A Divine Appointments is God’s way of allowing us to serve as His hand’s and feet** Again, an illustration. On Tuesday, March 3, Deb Shantz was out and about. She “happened” to come across an old man who had a doctor’s appointment but was a little disoriented and couldn’t locate the right building. Realizing he was a bit distressed Deb asked if she could help him. She, herself, had an appointment to meet someone but it just seemed that this was important. Though responding to this divine appointment was a bit of an interruption and inconvenience, Deb embraced it believing that in so doing she would bring glory to God.

The point you ask? Sometimes God allows our natural schedule to be interrupted and adjusted so His Divine Schedule can be accommodated and his name be Glorified.

So, with that said, ask the Father daily to download his appointment book into your life. As He does and you see unanticipated appointment changes taking place **you will not say, “Who’s messing with my schedule” but rather, “Wow, God just gave me a Divine Appointment”.**

God Bless You and Keep Swinging the Bat,

Roger Shantz