

# SIGNIFICANT LIVING



Jerry & Shirley Rose

  
WHITAKER  
HOUSE

## *You're Never Too Old to Live Significantly*

1. Actor George Burns won his first Oscar at age eighty.
2. Golda Meir was seventy-one when she became prime minister of Israel.
3. At age ninety-six, playwright George Bernard Shaw broke his leg when he fell out of a tree he was trimming in his backyard.
4. Grandma Moses started painting at eighty years old. She completed more than 1,500 paintings after that; 25 percent of those were produced when she was past one hundred.
5. Michelangelo was seventy-one when he painted the Sistine Chapel.
6. Albert Schweitzer was still performing operations in his African hospital at age eighty-nine.
7. Doc Counsilman, at age fifty-eight, became the oldest person ever to swim the English Channel.
8. S. I. Hayakawa retired as president of San Francisco State University at seventy, then was elected to the U.S. Senate.
9. Casey Stengel didn't retire from managing the New York Mets until he was seventy-five.
10. Claude Monet, the greatest Impressionist painter, was still painting masterpieces in his eighties.
11. Pablo Picasso invented a new painting style in his seventies and painted until he died in his nineties.
12. Spanish cellist Pablo Casals planned to perform a new piece of music and practiced it on the very day he died at age ninety-seven.
13. James Michener wrote some of his best epic books after the age of sixty.
14. Ronald Reagan became president at the age of seventy.





# THE SEARCH FOR SIGNIFICANCE

## *A GPS to Guide You*

*You will keep on guiding me all my life with your wisdom and counsel,  
and afterwards receive me into the glories of heaven!*

—Psalm 73:24 (TLB)

### Jerry<sup>1</sup>

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The average college freshman today was born in the 1990s. This means that for his entire life, this has been his mind-set:

- ✦ The Soviet Union has never existed and therefore is about as threatening as the student union.
- ✦ There has always been only one Germany (not East and West).
- ✦ A coffee has always taken longer to make than a milkshake.
- ✦ Smoking has never been permitted on U.S. airlines.
- ✦ “Google” has always been a verb.

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1. For clarity, we have noted which portions of the book are written by Jerry and which are written by Shirley.

- Mr. Rogers, not Walter Cronkite, has always been the most trusted man in America.
- Bar codes have always been on everything, from library cards and snail mail to retail items.
- They have rarely mailed anything using a stamp.
- Reality shows have always been on television.
- GPS satellite navigation systems have always been available.
- Coke and Pepsi have always used recycled plastic bottles.
- Gas stations have never fixed flats, but most serve cappuccino.
- Grandma has always had wheels on her walker.
- *Martha Stewart Living* has always been setting the style.
- IBM has never made typewriters.
- *The Tonight Show* has always been hosted by Jay Leno.
- They may have been given a Nintendo Game Boy to play with in the crib.
- Caller ID has always been available on phones.
- They never heard an attendant ask “Want me to check under the hood?”
- Iced tea has always come in cans and bottles.<sup>1</sup>

If you didn't feel “old” when you started reading, I'm sure you do now. Someone once said, “Inside every older person is a younger person wondering what in the world happened.” I can relate to that sentiment.

Shirley and I recently celebrated thirty years of ministry in Chicago. Oh, what a difference thirty years can make. Check out these comparisons:

1970s	2000s
Long hair	Longing for Hair
Acid rock	Acid reflux
Moving to California because it's cool	Moving to California because it's warm
Hoping for a BMW	Hoping for a BM
Getting out to a new, hip joint	Getting a new hip joint
The Rolling Stones	Kidney stones
Passing the driver's test	Passing the vision test <sup>2</sup>

I'm kidding, of course. But, seriously, thirty years is a long time to spend in a job or ministry. I feel privileged to have been doing what God has called me to do. Yet many others look back on their careers as "merely making a living." They are looking to the second half of life as a time to do something significant.

## The Search for Significance

Though I have been blessed to live out my passion and calling through my job, I have met many people who spend their entire careers making money but never get the opportunity to do something really meaningful until retirement. Shirley and I met some young men who had made hundreds of millions of dollars during the dot-



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com craze. Even though they eventually lost some of their fortunes, they were attending a gathering of people who were meeting specifically to explore ways to use their money to make a difference in the world and to leave a meaningful legacy to their children.

This desire for significance is not unusual. Even though many men and women have successful careers and some make a lot of money, as they begin to age, they develop a passionate desire not to

retire, but to change direction and do something *significant* with the rest of their lives. They look at their final decades as a time for repurposing. The bottom line: status and power and money do not bring lasting satisfaction.

The problem is that many do not know how to redirect their lives toward significance. They need guidance. They need a road map. You might say that they could use a Global Positioning System, or GPS, to give them direction for finding their own significance.

## Global Positioning System

Until just recently, I had not owned a vehicle equipped with a GPS, but I certainly had wished for one many times. With all the traveling I do, I have often found myself profoundly lost. If you are fortunate enough to have one of these amazing instruments, you may have wondered how it works.

Twenty-four satellites are continuously circling the earth, providing a signal by which people can electronically fix their locations and their directions from anywhere on the planet. The first satellite was launched in 1978. The current system is composed of a second generation of satellites started in 1989, called Block II. It is truly a marvel of modern technology. For less than \$100, anyone can buy a pocket-sized gadget that will tell you exactly where you are and how to get to any other point on the globe. As long as you have a GPS receiver and a clear view of the sky, you'll never be lost again.

The GPS system works on the principle of trilateration. A signal from three satellites is needed to fix your position. Let's say one signal tells you that you are 625 miles from Boise, Idaho. You could be anywhere on a circle with a 625-mile radius whose center is Boise. Then, another signal tells you that you are 690 miles from Minneapolis, Minnesota. These two circles will intersect each other at two points, one of which will be your location. Now, a third signal tells you that you are 615 miles from Tucson, Arizona. Those three circles will all


intersect at only one point: Denver, Colorado. Three signals from three satellites can be used to identify your exact location on planet earth. That's pretty amazing stuff!

## God's Plan for Significance

In later chapters of this book, we will be looking at our own GPS. We call it "God's Plan for Significance." Interestingly, it works in a fashion similar to the three satellites. Three critical issues help to define exactly where you are in life right now:

- Your spiritual health
- Your financial health
- Your physical health

When these three spheres of life are in proper alignment, you can pinpoint your current position on your journey and chart your course for the rest of your life with a remarkable degree of accuracy. This is done by identifying specific "coordinates" that serve as milestones and markers to direct your pathway into the future.

  
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With traditional GPS equipment, the coordinates you use are longitude and latitude numbers, cities, buildings, cross streets, natural markers like rivers, and even addresses. "Life coordinates" work in the same way. Certain principles, perspectives, and behaviors become the coordinates for directing our lives toward the destinations we desire. Like the satellites in space, God has provided His revealed Word, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit to be continuous sources of communication to us so that we can plot our positions and our future courses.

These life coordinates must be applied if we are to head in a productive and satisfying direction.

They are the markers and the milestones that keep us on the right course. Even your ultimate destination in eternity can be determined by using the signal sent from God for the benefit of finding your place and your way. If you love God and want to honor Him, God's plan can provide the global positioning for your own personal significance. This book is designed to identify nine life coordinates that are critical to keeping you on the right pathway into your second half of life.

Shirley and I do not come to you as experts on aging but rather as fellow travelers. As I write this chapter, my sixty-fifth birthday is just days away. (I know better than to mention Shirley's age.) For many, reaching retirement age is a milestone to look forward to. They anticipate retirement—a time to enjoy some well-deserved leisure, move to a warmer climate, take up a new hobby. For others, their careers have been the primary focus of life, and they approach retirement with something akin to panic—wondering what possible purposes their lives will serve now that their careers have come to a close. Then again, many are considering delaying or forgoing retirement in the traditional sense.

In a recent poll conducted by AARP, 70 percent of baby-boomer participants said they intend to keep working part-time or never retire. If our generation carries out those intentions, we could redefine traditional retirement—from a time of leisure to a new phase of life that involves work in one way or another.<sup>3</sup>

As for me, I feel blessed to look upon my sixty-fifth birthday with some ambivalence and even indifference. I not only love my job, but I also consider it my calling and ministry. I don't intend to "retire" anytime soon. That is, if retirement means stopping work. However, I do look forward to some positive transitions in the years ahead—a readjustment of responsibilities and of my job description.

The following is a brief overview of my journey to this milestone and how my current ministry and calling could impact *your* future.

## A Brief History

I have been an ordained minister for thirty years and a “preacher” since my teen years. During college, I felt a strong calling into Christian communications—television, in particular. For more than forty years, God has allowed me the privilege of combining pulpit ministry with television. From a novice cameraman to set designer, to director, producer, lighting director, general manager, and finally president and CEO, I have loved every moment I’ve spent in the industry. Studios and sound stages have always fascinated me, and even today, when I walk into our television studios near Chicago, my pulse quickens and I feel a sense of excitement. I guess you might say television is in my blood. Not only has television been my career for more than forty-five years, but also, I have spent the last thirty-three years in Christian television. What a blessing it has been to marry this career I love with the advancement of God’s kingdom.

Thirty years ago, Shirley and I came to Chicago to put a fledgling television station on the air. A local pastor, Owen Carr, felt called by God to begin a TV station to reach the millions of people living in the vast Chicagoland area. Through his great faith and the generosity of his congregation, Channel 38 was purchased. Yet not only did the infant TV station have no license, almost no money, and no employees, but also, Owen knew nothing about television. So



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he contacted me in Virginia, where I was working with Pat Robertson at CBN, and asked if I would come and put TV38 on the air. Shirley and I felt strongly that God was leading us to Chicago, but we never could have imagined the amazing journey that awaited us.

We left a comfortable and familiar life in the South to embark on the biggest faith venture of our lives in the concrete jungle of Chicago, with its bitterly cold weather, strange-sounding people, and

high-rise condos with locked doors. We also had a job with no guarantees. Through a series of small and not-so-small miracles, TV38 signed on the air in 1976. I served as vice president and general manager until 1979, when Owen moved on to other areas of ministry and I became president.

For twenty-two years, we were a local broadcast station that served primarily the Chicagoland area. In order to expand our ministry and focus more on developing relevant programming that would reach our postmodern culture, we eventually sold the local station and became the Total Living Network. The details of the remarkable history of TV38 and TLN are recorded in my book *Deep Faith for Dark Valleys*.

God has blessed TV38 and later TLN throughout these past three decades. Today, we have a cable channel in Chicago and broadcast stations in San Francisco and Las Vegas, and a twenty-four-hour satellite channel. Most important, we have become content providers. We produce documentaries, series, specials, Shirley's women's show, and other programs and films. These productions minister to and educate the community not only on our stations, but also on others around the country and even internationally. Our outreach has expanded from a relatively small, local audience to a global market.

Thirty years ago—before the explosion of technology—broadcast television and movie theaters were the only ways to see a video image. Today, along with broadcast, our options include cable, satellites, the Internet, Direct TV, videos, DVDs, video games, iPods, and cell phones. And I have been right in the middle of it all—heart racing, eyes wide with wonder—running to keep up.

It has been an incredible journey of faith, adversity, mountain-tops and valleys, victories, mistakes, and joyful fulfillment. God has been very good to me. My wife, Shirley, has been my partner and encourager through four decades of marriage and has shared every exciting moment of our Chicago experience. She is a prime example

of someone who blossomed later in life and who is maximizing her “second half.” Here is a little of her story.

## *Aspiring Women* and Other Surprises

### Shirley

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Recently, as I sat on the beautiful *Aspiring Women* television set, I had one of life’s “defining moments.” The full impact of what I was doing hit me. I thought, *Am I awake? Is this real?*

Each week, I appear on television with my two friends and co-hosts Chonda Pierce and Valorie Burton. TLN produces *Aspiring Women*, a program that features women who have overcome some of life’s most devastating setbacks to live lives of triumph. Our women’s stories send a message of encouragement to those in every state across the U.S. and in many countries overseas. And to top it off, we have a great time doing it! I asked myself, *Does it get any better than this?*

I give God all the glory for the success of this show because *Aspiring Women* came as rather a surprise to me when I was fifty years old! A production committee at TLN was revamping our program schedule and wanted several new programs. They asked anyone who had an idea to submit it. I had worked on air with Jerry from time to time but never had any strong aspirations to be an on-air personality. I spoke to women’s groups frequently, and this was enough “onstage” time for me. However, I secretly had an idea rolling around in my head for a woman’s show, so I turned in my idea to the committee. To my (and Jerry’s) surprise, they decided to produce the show and asked me to be one of the cohosts. God has blessed this program beyond my wildest expectations. ***Aspiring Women* has won numerous awards and, in 2007, received two Emmy Awards from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.** The program is still going strong. And perhaps the greatest blessing is that it is

broadcast all over the Middle East, Europe, and even into the Far East through SAT-7 satellites.

My next milestone came when I decided to write my first book at age fifty-three. I had written many articles and edited some books, but I never had the courage to try writing a book of my own. I decided to take many of the teachings and messages I had presented to women over the years and compile a teaching book. *Growing Your Dreams* was accepted by a small, but wonderful, publishing company, and though the writing was not that good, it was my entrée into a very difficult field.

Now on my fifth book, I know without a doubt that writing is one of my principal callings in the second half of my life. I plan to write as long as I can. As anyone in the industry can tell you, writing is great, but publishing books can be the most painful, heartrending roller coaster of any job I know. Publishing keeps me humble and totally dependent on the Lord. Through its many frustrations, it has stretched me and caused me to grow. But it gives me joy, fulfillment, and purpose, too. My books and TV program are great examples of what can happen in the second half of life if we have faith in God and the courage to pursue our dreams.

## Jerry

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All these years, I have focused on the combination of ministry and television, and little else has excited me. But when I heard about an association called Significant Living, the lights went on. I saw not only the answer to my own concerns about aging, but also how this membership organization could help others to find their way to personal significance.

While the concept of Significant Living (SL) held great interest, the potential of *combining* TLN and Significant Living excited me even more. The synergy was perfect. SL offers a vitally important message to the huge group of Americans in the second half of life.

With TLN's state-of-the-art television studios, broadcast and satellite capabilities, cable channels, national and international teleconferencing capability, program syndication, and distribution network, we have the ability to get that vital message to the aging community worldwide. I am convinced that God has brought Significant Living and TLN together for this time in history to serve the dominant, over-fifty population and direct them to their greatest personal potential in Christ. Working together, we truly have the opportunity to impact our world.

Shirley and I, along with TLN, have launched this organization and written this book to help you enjoy and maximize the second half of your life. Through books such as this one, speaking engagements, conferences, a video library, missions trips, TV programs, and more, we want to provide resources to help you meet the inevitable challenges and opportunities that come with aging. But more important, we seek to help you discover your own significance in light of God's plan for you.

Yes, this book is definitely for you baby boomers, those of you born between 1946 and 1964. But it is also for those of us who are well past our sixtieth birthdays. With unprecedented good health and longevity, we can expect to live two to three more decades. All of us must come to grips with what we will do with the rest of our lives. We have tried to provide *information* and *inspiration* that you can turn to, again and again, in your quest for true significance. It is our prayer that this book will become a tool in God's hand, a road map—or, better yet, a positioning system, a GPS—to guide you to your destination. Your journey is not over; for many, it's just beginning.

You cannot fully appreciate the importance of this message at this unique moment in history unless you understand the changing era in which we live. Something massive is on the horizon—a phenomenon unprecedented in history. And it presents an enormous opportunity to minister to a huge demographic of people—the aging American. Let's take a look at what's happening in this world of ours.

**Suggested Reading**

**Rose, Jerry.** *Deep Faith for Dark Valleys.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999.

**Larry Crabb.** *Shattered Dreams.* Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001.