

Building with Purpose

Earlier this summer - over the 4th of July weekend, to be exact - my wife Krista and I met my brother and his family in Nashville, Tennessee. Due to COVID restrictions, my brother, Philipp, and his family had been confined to the east coast since being transferred 18 months earlier, and this was the first opportunity for us to meet since their arrival State-side. It was also my first time in Nashville, and I was looking forward to seeing the sights, in particular, Ryman Auditorium, known as one of the most iconic music performance venues in the world. The building's rich history, unmatched acoustics, and impact on music and on the city of Nashville make the Ryman a destination for musicians and music enthusiasts alike.

Intended for hosting church services, the Ryman was originally named the Union Gospel Tabernacle. Evangelists like Sam Jones, Billy Sunday, and Dwight L. Moody all spoke at the church. However, as the revival era waned across the country so did the ministry of Union Gospel Tabernacle. Finally, after the passing of its founder, Thomas G. Ryman, the building was renamed in his honor and repurposed to host the Grand Ole Opry and performers like Harry Houdini, Bob Hope, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Bruce Springsteen.

In contrast to the Ryman, a believer's purpose springs from God's sovereign intent and is not left to chance. We are to become like Jesus in our character, attitudes, and values while God will be faithful in accomplishing this transformation (2 Cor 3:18; Phil 2:13; 1 Thess 5:24). The biblical term for this is **sanctification**, which can formally be defined as God - the Designer and Creator - setting believers apart for His intended purpose. While every human being is created in God's image, the believer is created for something bigger - to become like Jesus. This is done through what is often called **edification**. Vine's Dictionary of the Old and New Testament says the word points to the advancement of "spiritual growth and development of character of believers, by teaching or by example, suggesting such spiritual progress as the result of patient labor." Edification's aim is for believers to be transformed and built into a glorious, living tribute:

We are members of one household "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Eph 2:20-22, ESV).

This life-long transformation takes personal commitment, submission to God's will as well as the Spirit's work, and the involvement of Christian brothers and sisters. So, don't get discouraged! Rather, steadfastly take off the old and put on the new. Listen to God's voice as you read His Word, seek His ear as you pray, and receive support as you gather with His people.

***Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)** - "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off your old self**, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to **put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**"*