

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1484 When You Realize You've Found Your Calling

Guam celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday yesterday, and the rest of America does so today. Yesterday, I read something about Dr. King's beginning in civil rights that I hadn't previously known, and I realized that I shared something with him, and you might, too. I'm Jerry Roberts and I'll have details of that, next on The Extra Point.

Most people who are familiar with Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech, would likely select that as the key moment in his civil rights leadership.

However, there was another day and another speech that marked the real turning point in his career. It was eight years earlier when he was just 26, and the pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

King had been a pastor for just one year when Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old black woman, was arrested for refusing to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger.

As support for a bus boycott in Montgomery gained momentum, King was elected president of the organization formed to oversee the boycott. His election took place at 6 p.m. and just one hour later, he had to deliver a speech in front of a crowd of 5,000 people.

Realizing he had only 20 minutes to write his speech, King hurried home to inform his wife. He later admitted losing five minutes due to a panic attack. He delivered his speech with the familiar poetic flair he came to be known for.

The bus boycott persisted for 381 days, severely impacting the city's bus system finances. Black individuals either walked or utilized Black-owned taxi services (which adjusted their fares to match bus prices).

When the city authorities cracked down on taxi drivers, carpool were organized. Violence followed and King's house was firebombed two months after the speech. Eventually, the city indicted King and the carpool drivers for

interfering with the bus system, leading to King's two-week imprisonment.

In November 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation was unconstitutional.

As it turned out, that 15-minute speech set the trajectory for the remainder of King's life. In a 2018 article in New Yorker magazine, writer Louis Menard related, "King not only inspired his listeners that day but also inspired himself. When he stepped down from the pulpit, he must have realized that he had found his calling."

Martin Luther King wasn't looking for a calling. He was a church pastor, and no doubt felt he already had one. Fate intervened and King pivoted in a new direction.

I don't compare myself to Dr. King in any way, but I understand the pivot. In my life I've done it three times.

I once felt radio was my calling and I couldn't imagine leaving it, but I did. Several years later, I published a business magazine and it seemed like I had discovered my calling, doing what I was supposed to do.

I started a training company at the same time as the magazine, and when the decision came to stop publishing, the training company was my only activity.

I had a scheduled date to start a training series with Atkins Kroll, on a Thursday. I would see every member of their team in that series, and it was the first time I would deliver the course they wanted. I was a bit nervous.

That Thursday was Sept. 13, 2001, and in Guam it was the day after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. I had fun, laugh-filled sessions planned, but when people showed up for the training, it was plain to see that they had other things on their mind.

(Con't.)

Rather than simply launch into the training, I decided it would be better to talk, giving people a chance to air out a little. Some did.

Seeing the mood of the room change and having AK employees come up to me afterwards to thank me, saying that they needed what we did, it was clear to me that I had found a new calling. I still get that same feeling, well over 20 years later.

How about you? Have you found your calling? When did you know? Can you remember the moment? Have you ever told your kids or grandkids about it?

I strongly suggest you do that, because one day they'll wonder about that.

If you've got a story to tell, make sure that you tell your story.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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