

Wes Davis  
“Here For a Reason”

They told us to dream. They told us we could do anything we want. But at some point, everything changed. I came home today and my mom said she hated her job. But she says she does it because she has to. How do I keep that from happening to me?

I hear people talk about making a difference all the time. I want to leave a mark on this world, but I just don't know how. There are so many things I could do, but I don't know what to choose. Sometimes it seems easier to go through life being normal instead of trying to change the world.

I wonder all the time why I was put on this earth. What am I meant to do? It's one of those philosophical questions, but I want to find an answer. I really have no idea where to start. I know everyone is here for a reason, but how do I find mine? Where do I even begin? There has to be something I'm missing...

Growing up, these were questions that crossed my mind so many times. What do you want to be when you grow up? How will you change the world? Why were you put on this earth? I would sit for hours and hours thinking, pondering, and worrying about them. And as high school students, these are the most frustrating questions asked at every family reunion, graduation party, and holiday get-together, right as we are trying to find our path in life. And I can't help but wonder if you, too, are chained to the same questions.

But what if there was a way to answer them? How to find a career we love. How to make a difference in the world. How to find the reason we are put on this earth.

I think if we do a bit of searching, we can find an answer to these questions – and those answers could just change our lives.

This year has been one crazy journey - filled with countless airports, road-trips, and unforgettable memories. Like bowling with the Anderson County FFA Chapter at the Kansas State Convention. Or swing dancing the night away with the McCool Junction FFA in Nebraska. Even facing the infamous Polar Vortex this January with the Wisconsin FFA members.

But there was one experience that really stands out – spending a few days at Camp Couchdale for the Arkansas State Convention. Little did I know this would be ground zero for one of the coolest conversations I'd have this year.

Now at every FFA event, there's always that one person everybody knows – the social butterfly, so to speak. They're the person who dances every dance, knows everyone's name, and anyone can recognize them right off the bat. If you know a social butterfly, let me hear it! If you have no idea what I mean, that person may be you.

Now at the Arkansas state convention, there were two social butterflies: twins Mark and James Dement. I'm telling you, these two guys were an absolute hoot! You would often see

them dancing, cracking jokes, or jamming out on their guitars. They were always enjoying themselves.

One evening, after the last session had ended, I was walking back to my cabin when I saw Mark, James, and several others. They were on the assembly hall patio playing their instruments and singing quite a tune. As they saw me walking by, they motioned for me to come on over and join in the fun. So I walked over, sat down, and listened as they played. We cracked jokes, played cards, and enjoyed the nice summer evening.

As the night grew longer, the music began to die down, and people started to make their way back to the cabin. Finally there were just a few of us around. So we started talking about all kinds of things. Life, family, what we enjoy. And then, our conversation turned to what we wanted to do later in life. I said, “James, Mark, what do you all want to do?” I was expecting something humorous from these guys.

James looked at me and said, “Well, I want to be an agriculture teacher. I want to give others the life-changing experience I have had.”

Mark said, “Yeah, me too. Teaching is what I’m passionate about.” I was a bit surprised. “So, how did you know agricultural education was right for you?” What Mark said next hit me like a ton of bricks. “I think everyone has to do what they love. For me, it’s being an ag teacher.”

For Mark and James, educating students is what they love.

See, I believe the first step to finding our path in life is finding what we love.

Have you ever had one of those moments where you found something you love? It's a feeling like no other. It's like watching Forrest Gump's braces fly off as Jenny yells, "Run Forrest, run!". Or proudly walking across stage at your first chapter banquet. Or watching a young kid see a farm for the first time.

That feeling is epic because you have found what you love. And that feeling is not an accident. You have found what you were specifically born to do.

What is it you're passionate about? What makes you come alive? Maybe like Mark and James, you want to be an educator. Or maybe start your own business. Become a farmer, a pastor, a politician, a scientist, or maybe a million other things. The key is to ask: what do I love?

Find what you love.

Nestled away deep in the Rocky Mountains is the Wyoming FFA Camp. With absolutely no cell phone service, volleyball games that would give Olympians a run for their money, and incredible people, I'll never forget the time I spent there. But what really sticks in my mind most is a special person I met there.

It was the last night of camp, and we had just devoured a feast made especially for the camp-wide banquet. It was a blast – great food, great people, and tons of talented Wyoming FFA members showing what they’re made of.

Finally we approached the end of the banquet when Lindsey, one of the camp directors, stepped forward to take the microphone. She gave it a few good taps and began to speak. “There’s someone special we would like to recognize before this evening is over. He has volunteered at this camp for 30+ years since he first brought his own FFA members.”

Lindsey continued, “And even though he is no longer an advisor, he still volunteers to work the camp every year. He comes because he cares about each of you.” Lindsey looked to the back of the room and said, “Chord, would you come up here.” A man I had seen several times began to step forward. And as that happened, the entire room erupted into applause.

See, every time I saw Chord, he was talking to a camper one-on-one, mentoring one of the counselors, or diligently managing the camp sound system. Everyone at the camp had a deep respect for this man.

As the applause died down, Lindsey said, “Would you like to say a few words?” Without hesitation, Chord responded, “Sure, why not?!” What happened next, I’ll never forget.

Chord began to tell us how much the camp meant to him. It meant tradition. It meant service. It meant doing something

bigger than himself. But most of all, it meant he was doing what he loves by making a difference in the lives of others.

Chord has worked at camp for 30+ years because he is doing what he loves.

I think our second step to finding direction in life is doing what we love.

Choosing to do what we love isn't always easy. It takes courage and guts to follow that inner passion. But when we do what we love, that is when we maximize our ability to change this world and make a difference.

Are you spending time doing the things you love? Are you spending time where you need to be?

Everyone has something they love. But not everyone makes the choice to pursue it. And the biggest injustice to ourselves and this world is not doing what we love. Have courage and choose to do what you love.

When we find what we love and do what we love, it gives us a feeling like no other. And there's one person I know who shows that feeling better than anyone else.

Call me a nerd, but I've always loved school. Ask anyone who knows me, and they'll tell you I love to learn. But there are a few days of school that stick out in my mind – especially the first day I met Papa Stephens.

As we walked to our first-grade classroom, my classmates and I hung up our backpacks, and sat in our desks waiting for Mrs. Sayre, our first grade teacher. After about five minutes, she was nowhere to be found.

As the first bell began to ring, everything changed like that. As we sat in our desks, the classroom door flies open, and in skips this older guy, whistling and swinging his briefcase. As he got to the center of the room, he stopped, looked at us all with excitement.

Do you all know The Bowler Hat Guy from Meet the Robinsons? Well, he's this tall lanky guy, with this creepy little mustache, bad smile, and he wears these boots that you'd think he stole from your grandma's closet.

So maybe Papa Stephens didn't look exactly like The Bowler Hat Guy but in my first grade mind, he was pretty darn close!

He stood in the middle of the room and said, "Hello! I'm Mr. Stephens! But you can call me Papa Stephens! I'm sorry, but my magic briefcase slowed me down a bit!"

And now all my little first grade mind can think is: "Magic suitcase?! Best sub eva!!"

Papa Stephens straightened up and said, "Alright, time for my first trick of the day!" And then, it happened in an instant. The magic began. Papa Stephens was pulling cards from behind

posters, quarters from our ears, and making things disappear - like our natural lack of attention.

From this point forward, Papa Stephens had our attention and respect. All throughout the day, him and the magic briefcase would ooh and ahh us - all the way to the day's final bell.

And that's how it was every time Papa Stephens was our substitute teacher. Every day was an adventure.

Since meeting Papa Stephens, I've gotten to know him pretty well. And, since my mom was the school secretary, I've had a lot of chats with him outside the classroom.

Papa Stephens tells everyone he loves what he does. He finds joy in making students laugh, smile, and enjoy school. That's not something you see every day.

That feeling I mentioned earlier – when you find what you love and do what you love? That feeling is joy. And it's what Papa Stephens shows every day in the classroom.

I don't know about you, but I'd love to live that life. Waking up every day, knowing I was doing what I love, and sharing joy with others.

Imagine if we could all show that same joy. What a world we would live in if we all did what we love.

So how can we find and do what we love to have that kind of joy?



I think what we want right off the bat is a map of some kind, a path to begin walking down. We want to know what college we should attend, what classes to take, what extra curriculars we should participate in. We want a path and answers. And trust me, I'm right there with you.

But without knowing what we love, making that plan... it's not possible. It would be like trying to use Google maps to take us to a destination we can't name. We cannot make a plan if we do not know where we are going. Life will help you determine the path, but it's up to you to determine the direction you are meant to go.

Ask yourself: What am I passionate about? What do I love?  
What ignites a passion in my soul to do something incredible?

Those answers, they aren't something fluffy or meaningless. No, they're answers to how we are each designed to live.

I can't help but wonder what our generation will do if we pursue our passions. Maybe eradicate hunger in America. Feed nine billion by 2050. Return our economy to prosperity. Or even make discoveries that perpetuate our society forward. Imagine what a world we would have if we each did what we were designed specifically to do – realizing we are each here for a reason.

At the end of the day, we have to find what we love by asking what ignites a fire in our soul. Pursue what we love with courage

and passion. And by doing those things, find joy in doing what we are put on this earth to do.

Our time here is far too valuable and our lives too short for us to do anything less than what we were put on this earth to do.

Choose to find what you love. Choose to do what you love. Choose to have joy. Because then, you will find, you are here for a reason!