

This could not have been clearer in high school, where I quickly learned that I had no idea what I wanted to do with myself, or how to apply myself in a meaningful way.



For most of my life, I have lacked direction.

I was passionate about making a legacy for myself, that much I knew. I wanted to be remembered, have my accomplishments stand out among those of seven billion others on Earth.



However, despite my freedom as a young person, I felt very limited.



I had vast resources at my disposal: modern technology, a good education, and supportive friends and family to guide me.



But the world had too many problems to tackle. Even if I wanted to do something, I knew I wouldn't make a difference.

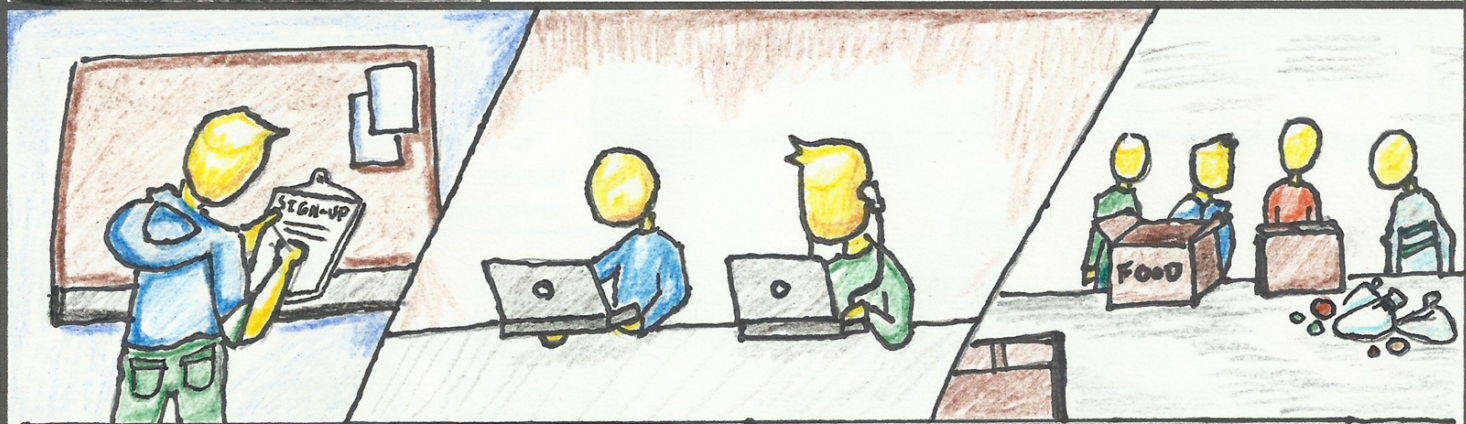


I felt overwhelmed. I had no clear direction to go in. I discovered that wanting to accomplish something meaningful was miles away from knowing what that something would be.

The only thing that remained understandable was my faith. "Faith is certain", as the Catechism explains. "It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie ... ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt."



So, therefore, I wouldn't let the world's ten thousand difficulties stop me from pursuing a goal. Now, I just had to find out what that goal would be

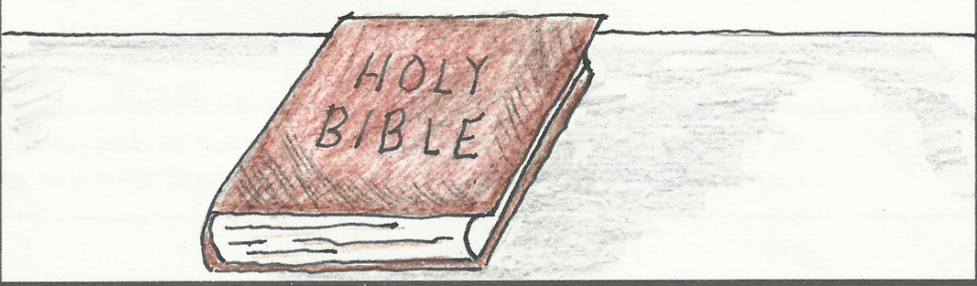


I started out volunteering for community organizations. I listened to TED Talks and speeches from well-known activists. I wouldn't say that I had found my purpose yet, but I knew I was heading in the right direction.



When I talked to people within my community, I felt a connection with them. I was reminded of one particular scripture passage:

Matthew 25:37-40:
"Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"



This was a personal revelation for me. Through exegesis, I was reminded that, by helping others around me, I was serving God as well. I began to think that maybe my contributions to the world didn't have to be big or extravagant. I was clearly making a difference just by serving my own community.

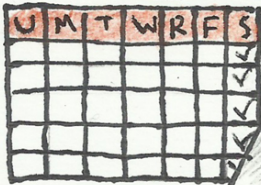


*I started to take interest in a particular organization, one that reaches out to less fortunate communities through the arts, to develop educated and internationally-minded youth and help them find purpose in their lives. **



I signed up to volunteer, and soon I began volunteering every week. I finally found something I was interested in, and something that gave me a sense of accomplishment, like I was truly serving God, and making the world a better place.

VOLUNTEER



Now, at the time of writing this, nearly two decades later, I have become head of that organization, making me the youngest to do so.



With this story, I hope to show that it is possible to make a mark on the world, even as a young person. All you need is persistence, a strong desire for change, and, most importantly, a direction to go in.

*There are many organizations that share this goal, all of which I am personally interested in and many of which I have volunteered for. I think the arts are a powerful means to reach out to my community, and providing access to arts education for kids in struggling communities can be greatly beneficial. Art allows people to broaden their perspectives and become internationally minded through creative expression, and can also be empowering and confidence-building to many. Art, much like faith, can lead individuals to find their passion and their voice, and through my faith I have found that helping others through art making contributes to a more open-minded, expressive community. I have already volunteered for many of these organizations and will continue to, since this is a topic that greatly interests me personally as someone from an arts background.

Below are a list of organizations that are making a difference in the community, many of which I have volunteered for or plan to volunteer for:

- SPACES Gallery <http://www.spacesgallery.org/> (volunteered)
- The Cleveland Print Room <https://www.clevelandprintroom.com/new-index/> (volunteered)
- Zygote Press <https://zygotepress.com/> (volunteered)
- Waterloo Center for the Arts <https://waterloocenterforthearts.org/>
- Praxis Fiber Workshop <https://praxisfiberworkshop.com/>
- Brick Ceramic and Design Studio <http://www.brickceramics.com/>