

SERMON STARTER

Have you ever wondered why you were born at this time into your family of origin? Why are you here today (date) in this place (location) living in the abundance of fresh water, adequate shelter, plenty of food, a free society, a caring community and hopefully a loving family? Why now, rather than 100 or 500 years ago, or 50 into the future? Why here rather than in Nairobi, Kenya, Port Prince, Haiti, or West Timor, Indonesia?

There was a popular book a few years ago entitled *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. It was the rage, making the *New York Times* best seller list for months. Many religious people studied it, Bible study gatherings, youth groups, Sunday School classes and devotional curriculum was created. In many ways it tried to address the same question: Why are you here now and in this place?

I suggest that we have been placed here to live a life of gratitude that radiates with generosity. As we consider the simple, yet profound, blessings of life (ie. food, water, shelter, friends, family, good health, etc), we become overwhelmed with gratitude, a sense of awe for the gifts we have received. And from this posture of gratefulness, comes open hearts and hands to share the bounty of God's goodness. In II Corinthians, Paul says, "the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows generously will also reap generously." (II Corinthians 9:6) In Genesis, the Abrahamic Covenant is "you will be blessed to be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2). The preacher in Ecclesiastes reminds us "Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later. Divide your gifts among many, for in the days ahead you yourself may need much help." (Ecclesiastes 11:1) In the parable of the faithful servant, Jesus reminds us that "to whom much is given, much is also required." (Luke 12:48) As we are astounded by the plenty of our lives, we thankfully respond through a generous life, sowing seeds bountifully for those placed in our path.

Let me introduce you to Yabes and her daughter Sifralili. They live in an isolated and vulnerable community in West Timor, Indonesia. Yabes had struggled to keep her little girl, Sifralili, healthy. As part of the CWS Zero Hunger initiative, Yabes now has a protected clean water source. She received seeds and training to build a home garden. She and other members of her farmer's group received chickens and training on how to build chicken coops, hatch chickens in incubators and feed the birds properly. She's now collecting eggs and raising enough chickens to turn a profit. Her family has a new vegetable garden and more than 50 chickens! She has saved almost enough to build a latrine for her family.

When you support a CROP Hunger Walk, you are sowing seeds bountifully so that our global neighbors like Yabes may reap bountifully. More mothers like Yabes need your kind support. Through your generosity, together we can bountifully sow seeds that will continue to transform communities in Indonesia and around the world.

Thank you for generously sowing seeds of mercy and compassion, that many may reap bountifully to meet their basic needs. A life of gratitude is a beautiful reflection of purposeful living!

VEGGIES, EGGS AND A SIDE OF HOPE.

