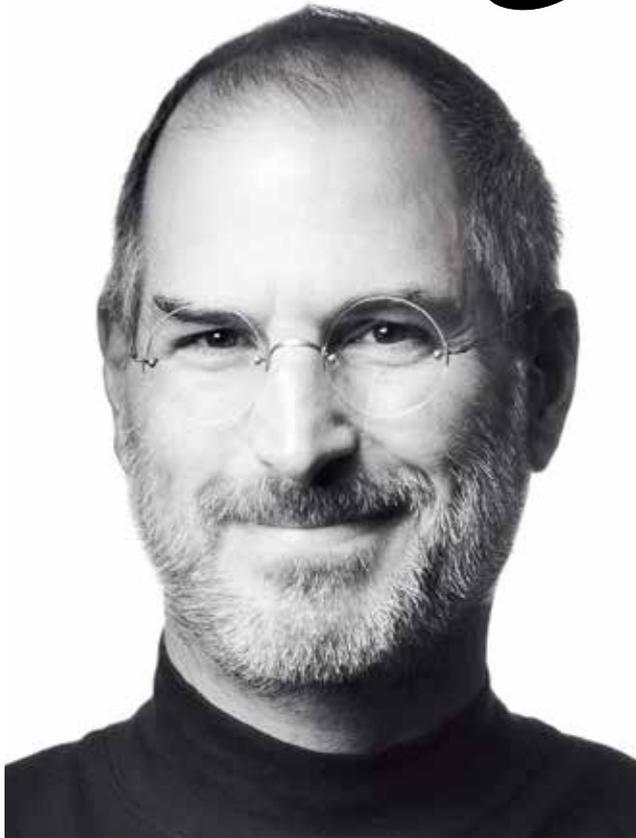


A lesson from Steve Jobs...

Joining the dots



By Gary Nichols

Life can be good and not so good. You may be in a not-so-good place right now. But I would like to share with you why there is hope.

At college in the 1970s my instructor drew a graph to represent life. It had many peaks and troughs. When pointing to the troughs of life, he counselled us that we rarely stay there, even though, at the time, it may seem like forever and we may not see any purpose in being there. Equally, when life is at a peak and everything seems wonderful, he counselled us to be circumspect: you never know what lies ahead.

Steve Jobs, the legendary co-founder of Apple, had his own ups and downs in life—some that you may be surprised at. He shared some of these experiences in a speech at Stamford University. One experience shows how the downs can be part of the same story as the ups.

When he was at college, he dropped out of his class and as a result he had to sleep on the floors of his friends.

He only got one good meal a week, by walking seven miles to the Hari Krishna temple.

He then stumbled across a calligraphy class and learned about serif and sans serif typefaces. It appeared random and unimportant, without any real purpose. This is what he said in his speech:

None of this had even a hope of any practical application in my life. But ten years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful typography...¹

He then went on to say something we all need to remember when going through hard times: 'Of course, it was impossible to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backward ten years later'.¹

We can't always connect the dots of our life looking forward; we can only connect the dots looking back.

The problem is that when the dark times descend upon us—when we're in a bad place—it is often impossible to understand. But just because we are unable to make sense of it, this doesn't mean there is no sense to be made out of it.



Macintosh was the first computer with beautiful typography.

Selwyn Hughes, a popular Christian writer, used an analogy based on characters in a novel. Pretend you pick up a novel and become engrossed in the characters who appear early in the book, let's say at page 29, and you then have an imaginary conversation with one of them. They tell you about the mess they're in, and you ask how the author is going to get them out of that mess. Then, as you read on, you see how, much later, the author rescues them from distress and turns the whole situation around.

Hughes explains something about this page-29 character in the mess: 'See, it didn't make any



Just because we are unable to make sense of dark times doesn't mean that there is no sense to be made of them.

sense at the time but you were in good hands: your creator had the way out already planned'.²

The page-29 character, if he or she could have talked back, wouldn't have made sense of what was happening at that point, because he or she was unaware that a bigger story was being written.

Life is like this and maybe you feel this right now: things are happening, or not happening, that don't make sense. So how are you to understand?

You must remember that you may only be on page 29. Take courage and encouragement, because the divine author is going to show you the significance of what is happening to you. It might take ten years, like it did with Steve Jobs, or it may take longer. But if you're at a low point, be confident that one day you'll see how the dots join up in a wonderful conclusion.

Notes

¹ news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/

² 'Every Day with Jesus', Selwyn Hughes, 2009.

This article was first published in the December 2017 issue of *Because* magazine (www.because.uk.com). Reprinted with permission.