

1 **Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Message to Barratt Junior High 1967**

2 I want to ask you a question, and that is: What is your life's blueprint?

3 Whenever a building is constructed, you usually have an architect who draws a blueprint, and that
4 blueprint serves as the pattern, as the guide, and a building is not well erected without a good, solid
5 blueprint. Now each of you is in the process of building the structure of your lives, and the question is
6 whether you have a proper, a solid and a sound blueprint.

7 I want to suggest some of the things that should begin your life's blueprint. Number one in your life's
8 blueprint, should be a deep belief in your own dignity, your worth and your own somebodiness. Don't
9 allow anybody to make you feel that you're nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you
10 have worth, and always feel that your life has ultimate significance.

11 Secondly, in your life's blueprint you must have as the basic principle the determination to achieve
12 excellence in your various fields of endeavor. You're going to be deciding as the days, as the years unfold
13 what you will do in life — what your life's work will be. Set out to do it well.

14 And I say to you, my young friends, doors are opening to you—doors of opportunities that were not open
15 to your mothers and your fathers — and the great challenge facing you is to be ready to face these
16 doors as they open.

17 Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great essayist, said in a lecture in 1871, "If a man can write a better book or
18 preach a better sermon or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, even if he builds his house in the
19 woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door."

20 This hasn't always been true — but it will become increasingly true, and so I would urge you to study
21 hard, to burn the midnight oil; I would say to you, don't drop out of school. I understand all the
22 sociological reasons, but I urge you that in spite of your economic plight, in spite of the situation that
23 you're forced to live in — stay in school.

24 And when you discover what you will be in your life, set out to do it as if God Almighty called you at this
25 particular moment in history to do it. don't just set out to do a good job. Set out to do such a good job
26 that the living, the dead or the unborn couldn't do it any better.

27 If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets
28 like Beethoven composed music, sweep streets like Leontyne Price sings before the Metropolitan Opera.
29 Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and
30 earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well. If you can't
31 be a pine at the top of the hill, be a shrub in the valley. Be the best little shrub on the side of the hill.

32 Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be a sun, be a star.
33 For it isn't by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are.

*For this activity, read the primary source excerpt of his speech and answer the questions.
Highlighters will be provided in order to find answers.*

SOURCE: King, Martin L. "Speech." Barratt Junior High School, 26 Oct. 1967, Philadelphia,
www.drmartinlutherkingjr.com/whatisyourlifefblueprint.htm.

