

The Purpose Driven Life: Small Group: Week 1

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the Water that sends out its roots to the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

Jeremiah 17:7-8



The Purpose Driven Life

Since Life is preparation for eternity, I want to use my time on earth discovering and fulfilling God's purposes for me:

*I was planned for God's pleasure (**worship**),
so I will use this day to get to know and love God better.*
*I was formed for God's family (**fellowship**),
so I will use this day to show love to other believers.*
*I was created to be like Christ (**discipleship**),
so I will use this day to make choices that grow my character.*
*I was shaped to serve God (**ministry**),
so I will use this day to serve God by serving others.*
*I was made for a mission (**evangelism**),
so I will use this day to share the Good News of salvation.*

Rick Warren says most of the time we Christians are answering the wrong questions. Bottom line is, that the central question for ourselves and the world should be, "What on earth am I here for?" In other words, what is the purpose for my life?

The writer of Ecclesiastes describes three negative effects of not knowing the purpose of your life:

- Life seems **tiresome**, a treadmill that doesn't go anywhere;
- Life seems **unfulfilling**, with nothing new and satisfying;
- Life seems **uncontrollable**; we can't change what's crooked.

We have two options. We can make up our own purpose to life, perhaps by throwing ourselves into our work or a hobby (**speculation**). Or we can seek to discover what God created us for (**revelation**). To do so, we must begin with God. When we know God's purpose for us:

- Life has **focus**, with incredible power;
- Life is **simpler**; we have time to do what God designed us for;
- Life has **motivation**; we see need, which increases determination;
- Life is but **preparation for eternity**, a short prelude to forever!

Rev. Warren says, when our time on earth is over, God will ask us two questions:

1. "What did you do with my son Jesus Christ?"
2. "What did you do with your life?"

Only one life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.

Be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do.

Ephesians 5:15-17

Don't Waste Your Life

Preparing for 40 Days of Purpose

- **Introduction**

- **Day One : It All Starts With God**

- **Day Two: You are Not an Accident**

THREE BASIC QUESTIONS

1. WHAT DOES GOD WANT?

MY WHOLE LIFE

- **Give yourselves completely** to God since you have been given new life. And use your **whole body** as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God. Romans 6:13
- This is what the Lord your God wants you to do: Respect the Lord and do what he has told you to do. Love him. Serve the Lord your God **with your whole being**. Deuteronomy 10:12
- "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You **cannot** serve both God and money." Matthew 6:24
- In everything you do, **put God first**, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success. Proverbs 3:6
- Read: Luke 9:59-62, Luke 14:16-21a

2. WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

DISCIPLINE

- Whoever practices discipline is on the way to life. Proverbs 10:17a
- **Discipline yourself** for the purpose of godliness. 1 Timothy 4:7
- Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit. 1 Timothy 4:7
- Let us strip off every **weight** that slows us down, especially the **sin** that so easily hinders our progress. Hebrews 12:1
- Martha was **distracted by her many tasks**; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, **you are worried and distracted** by many things; but there is need of only one thing and Mary **has chosen the better part**..." Luke 10:40-42
- God is always at work in you to make you **willing** and **able** to obey his own purpose. Philippians 2:13
- All our busy rushing ends in nothing. Psalm 39:6
- Reverence for the Lord adds hours to each day. Proverbs 10:27

3. WHY SHOULD I DO IT?

THE CROSS

- He **died for all**, that those who live **should no longer live for themselves** but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:15
- Through the blood of his Son, we are set free from our sins. God forgives our failures because of his overflowing kindness." Ephesians 1:7
- Brothers and sisters, in view of all we have just shared about God's compassion, I encourage you to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, dedicated to God and pleasing to him. Romans 12: 1
- We beg you, please don't squander one bit of this marvelous life God has given us!" 2 Corinthians 6:1
- Lord, I have heard the news about you; I am amazed at what you have done. Lord, do great things once again in our time; make those things happen again in our own days. Habakkuk 3:2

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER ABOUT

1. QUESTION OF EXISTENCE: WHY AM I ALIVE?

- *"Why was I born? Was it only to have trouble and sorrow, to end my life in disgrace?" Jer. 20:18*
- *"The Lord has made everything for His own purpose." Prvb 16:4a*
- *"Long before He laid down earth's foundations, He had us in mind, and settled on us as the focus of His love, to be made whole and holy by His love." Eph. 1:4*

"My life is a superb cast, but I can't figure out the plot." Arthur Ashley Brilliant

"I hope life isn't a joke, because I don't get it" Jack Hanley

"I don't know the meaning, the purpose of life, but it looks as if something were meant by it." Carl Jung

"As far as I can see, there is no purpose." Isaac Asimov

1. The _____ Approach:

"Look within and find your purpose within."

2. The _____ Approach:

"The purpose of life is just to stay alive."

3. The _____ Approach:

"The purpose of life is just to perpetuate itself."

4. The _____ Approach:

"The purpose of life is pleasure – have fun, party-hardy."

5. The _____ Approach:

"Life is all about the acquisition of things."

6. The _____ Approach:

"You've got to invent your purpose. Discover your dreams, go after your goals, have some ambitions, dream big dreams, aim high, believe you can achieve, have faith, figure out what you're good at, never give up, involve other people."

GOD: I WAS CREATED TO BE LOVED BY GOD.

2. QUESTION OF SIGNIFICANCE: DOES MY LIFE MATTER?

- *"My work all seems so useless! I have spent my strength for nothing and for no purpose at all." Isa. 49:4a*

1. You know the _____ of life – that gives Significance.

2. You know how much you _____ to God – that gives you Significance.

3. You know God's _____ for your life and you're living them out and that gives you Significance.

- "I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born." Isa. 44:2
- "You... scheduled each **day of my life** before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book!" PS. 139:16
- "His plans endure forever; his purposes **last eternally**." Ps. 33: 11

GOD: I WAS MADE TO LAST FOREVER.

- "When this tent we live in-our body here on earth-is torn down, God will have a house in heaven for us to live in, a home he himself has made, which will last forever." 2 Cor. 5: 1
- "Leave your impoverished confusion and live! Walk up the street to a life with meaning." Provo 9:6

3. QUESTION OF INTENTION: WHAT IS MY PURPOSE?

"Unless you assume the existence of God, the question of life's meaning and purpose is irrelevant."
Bertrand Russell

- "Why did you create us? For nothing?" Ps. 89:47
"Knowing God results in every other kind of understanding." Pro 9:10b

GOD: I FIND MY PURPOSE BY GETTING TO KNOW GOD.

- "For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible... everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him." Col 1:16
- "It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for... part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone." Eph. 1:11

- _____ life was transformed by 40 days of rain.
- _____ life was transformed by 40 days on Mount Sinai.
- The _____ were transformed by 40 days in the Promised Land.
- _____ was transformed by Goliath's 40-day challenge.
- The city of _____ was transformed in 40 days.
- _____ was empowered for ministry by spending 40 days in the desert.
- The _____ were transformed by 40 days with Jesus after the resurrection.

"It's never too late to be who you might have been." George Herbert

- "It makes no difference who you are or where you're from-if you want God and are ready to do as he says, the door is open." Acts 1 0:35

WORKSHEET

1. The wrong starting point: _____

"It is God who directs the lives of his creatures; everyone's life is in his power." Job 12:10

2. The right starting point: you must _____

3. Two options to discovering our life purpose:

- _____
- _____

"It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone." Ephesians 1:11

4. You discover your _____ and _____ through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

5. God was thinking of you _____ you ever thought about Him.

6. The purpose of your life fits into a much larger, _____ that God has designed for eternity.

"The only thing Christianity cannot be is moderately important."

C. S. Lewis



Quiet Nudges

By Philip Yancey

I have thought through some of the key events of my recent life, searching for threads of guidance. I refer to them not as examples of yet another technique, but as illustrations of the quiet nudges God can use to guide us without overwhelming us.

I have a confession to make. For me, at least, guidance only becomes evident when I look backward, months and years later. Then, the circuitous process falls into place and the hand of God seems clear. But at the moment of decision, I feel mainly confusion and uncertainty. Indeed, almost all the guidance in my life has been subtle and indirect.

I think, for example, of a major crossroad in my career. While working for *Campus Life* magazine, I felt the constant tug between two irreconcilable directions. One pulled me toward management, business, marketing, budgeting; the other toward editorial directing and writing. For many months, I tried both, unable to decide. Each field offered ministry opportunities, similar rewards, and equal appeal. I enjoyed both roles. Most advisors counseled me toward the management role because of the organization's needs. I often prayed about the decision but never received any concrete guidance.

Over time, I began to notice a trend, however: a battle with insomnia. Externally, I handled the pressures of management well and stayed healthy to all appearances. But often I would have bouts of insomnia, so severe that I would get only 1 or 2 hours of sleep at night. It took me almost a year to notice a further detail: I slept well when I worked on writing projects; I could not sleep when I

worked in management. I tried to ignore the signs for another few months, but they became almost comically evident (if insomnia can ever be considered comical).

For a time I would work one full week on writing projects, then one full week on management. It was true. I slept like a baby (truthfully, more like a colicky baby) during writing weeks and slept hardly at all during management weeks. Could this be divine guidance? I wondered. I had heard of God speaking through dreams, but through insomnia?

The situation never changed, and finally I concluded the message of insomnia was as direct a form of guidance as I would get. Now that I look back on it, it seems startlingly direct.

For me, guidance only becomes evident when I look back months and years later.

I also think of the circumstances that led to some of the books I have written. *Where Is God When It Hurts?* came out of a rejection. Back in 1975, I had what I thought to be a wonderful idea for a book. I had just discovered *Devotions*, by John Donne, a meditation in 23 parts, written while Donne lay with a terminal illness. The concepts were superb, but the King James-era English made the content impenetrable to many modern readers. I wrote several publishers, proposing to do for *Devotions* what Ken Taylor had done for the King James Version—a *Living Donne*, perhaps, or *John Donne Redone*. I spent long hours working up samples. Everyone judged the idea fine as a literary exercise but totally unmarketable as a contemporary book.

My boss at that time had a suggestion. "The problem," he said, "is not just the dated language, but the dated context and even dated way of thinking. Why don't you do your own book on the problem of pain and suffering, using modern examples?" *Where Is God When It Hurts?* was born.

While researching for that book, I met Paul Brand, a world authority on the subject of pain. I came to know him "by chance," when my wife cleaned out a supply closet at the warehouse of a Christian relief organization.

There's an article on pain in this international conference report that I think you'll like," she told me. Dr. Brand's unique perspective in this report so fascinated me that I arranged for a meeting as soon as possible. During our conversations, I ultimately learned of a scuffed-up transcript of some devotional talks he had kept in a file drawer for 20 years. That transcript became the genesis of *Fearfully And Wonderfully Made*.

As I look back, the hand of God seems evident in those and many other choices. They fit together into a pattern. But at the time, they seemed no more extraordinary than any other event in my life: a rejection slip on a book idea, a musty book from a supply closet, a set of devotional talks given in India by a stranger 20 years before.

This pattern has recurred so often (and clear guidance for the future has occurred so seldom) that I am about to conclude that we have a basic direction wrong. I had always thought of guidance as forward-looking. We keep praying, hoping, counting on God to reveal what we should do next. In my own experience, at least, I have found the direction to be reversed. The focus must be on the moment before me, the present. How is my relationship to God? As circumstances change, for better or worse, will I respond with obedience and trust?

For me, guidance becomes clear only as I look backward. At the moment, my future is a big blur. My present is a daily struggle to crank out more words and a desire to grow in relationship with God.

A picture is being painted, for me, for all who are called the sons and daughters of God. Yet it does not take shape until enough time passes for me to stand up and look back on what colors and designs have been laid down. If I saw the pattern in advance, a sort of schema for "paint-by-numbers," that would leave no room for faith. And besides, God does not paint by numbers.

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God's Will And My Will



This study does not claim to offer all the answers for the complex decisions of life. But it does offer a plan for following what God wants you to do. Your answers to the following questions should help you evaluate your ability to make a God-honoring decision when faced with difficult choices.

- Have I asked for God's help?
- Do I show my trust for God with every area of my life, not merely this decision?
- Do I obey God's clearly revealed will?
- Am I operating on the basis of good reasons rather than changing feelings?
- Am I filling my mind with God's Word so that my mind is being transformed?
- Are there biblical commands or principles that apply to my specific situation?
- What are the alternatives and consequences of each possible option?
- How do these fare when evaluated by what the Bible says?
- Do my abilities and weaknesses have a bearing on the decision? How?
- What decision will glorify God, build me up spiritually, and edify others?
- Have I sought out worthy advisors?
- Have I carefully evaluated the advice, not merely accepted or rejected it?
- Is this decision a matter of my own freedom?
- Do I have peace that my decision is right?
- Would waiting be profitable or detrimental?
- Am I determined to obey and please God?