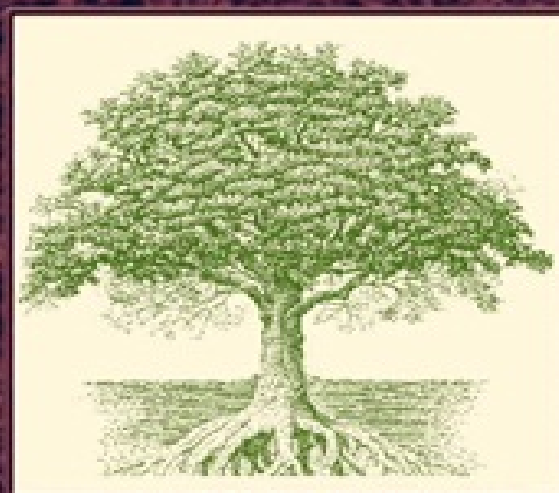


"THE BESTSELLING NONFICTION HARDBACK BOOK IN HISTORY"
—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

RICK WARREN

The
PURPOSE
DRIVEN®
Life



WHAT ON EARTH AM
I HERE FOR?

30 MILLION SOLD WORLDWIDE

The Purpose Driven® Life

WHAT ON EARTH AM I HERE FOR?

Rick Warren



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This book is dedicated to you.

Before you were born, God planned *this moment* in your life. It is no accident that you are holding this book. God *longs* for you to discover the life he created you to live—here on earth, and forever in eternity

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ,...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 I:II (Msg)

I am grateful to the hundreds of writers and teachers, both classical and contemporary, who have shaped my life and helped me learn these truths. I thank God and you for the privilege of sharing them with you.

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A JOURNEY WITH PURPOSE

Getting the Most from This Book

This is more than a book; it is a guide to a *40-day spiritual journey* that will enable you to discover the answer to life's most important question: What on earth am I here for? By the end of this journey you will know God's purpose for your life and will understand the big picture—how all the pieces of your life fit together. Having this perspective will reduce your stress, simplify your decisions, increase your satisfaction, and, most important, prepare you for eternity.

YOUR NEXT 40 DAYS

Today the average life span is 25,550 days. That's how long you will live if you are typical. Don't you think it would be a wise use of time to set aside 40 of those days to figure out what God wants you to do with the rest of them?

The Bible is clear that God considers 40 days a spiritually significant time period. Whenever God wanted to prepare someone for his purposes, he took 40 days:

- Noah's life was transformed by 40 days of rain.
- Moses was transformed by 40 days on Mount Sinai.
- The spies were transformed by 40 days in the Promised Land.
- David was transformed by Goliath's 40-day challenge.
- Elijah was transformed when God gave him 40 days of strength from a single meal.
- The entire city of Nineveh was transformed when God gave the people 40 days to change.
- Jesus was empowered by 40 days in the wilderness.
- The disciples were transformed by 40 days with Jesus after his resurrection.

The next 40 days will transform *your* life.

This book is divided into 40 brief chapters. I strongly urge you to *read only one chapter a day*, so you will have time to *think about* the implications for your life. The Bible says, "*Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do.*"

One reason most books don't transform us is that we are so eager to read the next chapter, we don't pause and take the time to seriously consider what we have just read. We rush to the next truth without reflecting on what we have learned.

Don't just *read* this book. *Interact with it.* Underline it. Write your own thoughts in the margins. Make it *your* book. Personalize it! The books that have helped me most are the ones that I reacted to, not just read.

FOUR FEATURES TO HELP YOU

At the end of each chapter is a section called "Thinking about My Purpose." There you will find

- **A Point to Ponder.** This is a nugget of truth that summarizes a principle of purpose-driven living that you can reflect on throughout your day. Paul told Timothy, "*Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.*"²

- **A Verse to Remember.** This is a Bible verse that teaches a truth from that chapter. If you really want to improve your life, memorizing Scripture may be the most important habit you can begin. You can either copy these verses onto small cards to carry with you, or purchase a *Purpose-Driven® Life Scripture Keeper Plus*.
- **A Question to Consider.** These questions will help you think about the implications of what you have read and how it applies to you personally. Let me encourage you to write your answers in the margin of this book or in a notebook, or obtain a copy of *The Purpose-Driven Life Journal*, a companion book designed for this purpose. Writing down your thoughts is the best way to clarify them.

In appendix 1 you will find:

- **Discussion Questions.** I strongly urge you to get one or more friends to join you in reading this book during the next 40 days. A journey is always better when it is *shared*. With a partner or a small reading group you can discuss what you read and bounce ideas off each other. This will help you grow stronger and deeper spiritually. Real spiritual growth is *never* an isolated, individualistic pursuit. Maturity is produced through relationships and community.

The best way to explain God's purpose for your life is to allow the Scripture to speak for itself, and in this book the Bible is quoted extensively, using over a thousand different verses from fifteen English translations and paraphrases. I have varied the versions used for several important reasons, which I explain in appendix 3.

I HAVE BEEN PRAYING FOR YOU

As I wrote this book, I often prayed that you would experience the incredible sense of hope, energy, and joy that comes from discovering what God put you on this planet to do. There's nothing quite like it. I am excited because I know all the great things that are going to happen to you. They happened to me, and I have never been the same since I discovered the purpose of my life.

Because I know the benefits, I want to challenge you to stick with this spiritual journey for the next 40 days, not missing a single daily reading. Your life is worth taking the time to think about it. Make it a daily appointment on your schedule. If you will commit to this, let's sign a covenant together. There is something significant about signing your name to a commitment. If you get a partner to read through this with you, have him or her sign it, too. Let's get started together!

My Covenant

With God's help, I commit the next 40 days of my life to discovering God's purpose for my life.

Your name

Partner's name



Rick Warren

"Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up... Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break."

Ecclesiastes 4:9 (TEV)

WHAT ON EARTH AM I HERE FOR?



A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump; a God-shaped life is a flourishing tree.
Proverbs 11:28 (Msg)

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord...They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit.
Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NLT)

1

It All Starts with God

For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible,...everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him.

Colossians 1:16 (Msg)

Unless you assume a God, the question of life's purpose is meaningless.

Bertrand Russell, atheist

It's not about you.

The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.

The search for the purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That's because we typically begin at the wrong starting point—ourselves. We ask self-centered questions like What do I want to be? What should I do with my life? What are my goals, my ambitions, my dreams for my future? But focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life's purpose. The Bible says, "*It is God who directs the lives of his creatures; everyone's life is in his power.*"¹

Focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life's purpose.

Contrary to what many popular books, movies, and seminars tell you, you won't discover your life's meaning by looking within yourself. You've probably tried that already. You didn't create yourself, so there is no way you can tell yourself what you were created for! If I handed you an invention you had never seen before, you wouldn't know its purpose, and the invention itself wouldn't be able to tell you either. Only the creator or the owner's manual could reveal its purpose.

I once got lost in the mountains. When I stopped to ask for directions to the campsite, I was told, "*You can't get there from here. You must start from the other side of the mountain!*" In the same way, you cannot arrive at your life's purpose by starting with a focus on yourself. You must begin with God, your Creator. You exist only because God wills that you exist. You were made *by* God and *for* God—and until you understand that, life will never make sense. It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other path leads to a dead end.

Many people try to use God for their own self-actualization, but that is a reversal of nature and is doomed to failure. You were made for God, not vice versa, and life is about letting God use you for his purposes, not your using him for your own purpose. The Bible says, "*Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life.*"²

I have read many books that suggest ways to discover the purpose of my life. All of them could be classified as "self-help" books because they approach the subject from a self-centered viewpoint. Self-help books, even Christian ones, usually offer the same predictable steps to finding your life's purpose: Consider your dreams. Clarify your values. Set some goals. Figure out what you are good at

Aim high. Go for it! Be disciplined. Believe you can achieve your goals. Involve others. Never give up.

Of course, these recommendations often lead to great success. You can usually succeed in reaching a goal if you put your mind to it. But being successful and fulfilling your life's purpose are *not at all* the same issue! You could reach all your personal goals, becoming a raving success by the world's standard, and *still* miss the purposes for which God created you. You need more than self-help advice. The Bible says, "*Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.*"³

This is not a self-help book. It is not about finding the right career, achieving your dreams, or planning your life. It is not about how to cram more activities into an overloaded schedule. Actually, it will teach you how to do *less* in life—by focusing on what matters most. It is about becoming what God created you to be.

How, then, do you discover the purpose you were created for? You have only two options. Your first option is *speculation*. This is what most people choose. They conjecture, they guess, they theorize. When people say, "I've always thought life is....," they mean, "This is the best guess I can come up with."

You were made by God and for God—and until you understand that, life will never make sense.

For thousands of years, brilliant philosophers have discussed and speculated about the meaning of life. Philosophy is an important subject and has its uses, but when it comes to determining the purpose of life, even the wisest philosophers are just guessing.

Dr. Hugh Moorhead, a philosophy professor at Northeastern Illinois University, once wrote to 250 of the best-known philosophers, scientists, writers, and intellectuals in the world, asking them, "What is the meaning of life?" He then published their responses in a book. Some offered their best guesses, some admitted that they just made up a purpose for life, and others were honest enough to say they were clueless. In fact, a number of famous intellectuals asked Professor Moorhead to write back and tell them if he discovered the purpose of life!⁴

Fortunately, there is an alternative to speculation about the meaning and purpose of life. It's *revelation*. We can turn to what God has revealed about life in his Word. The easiest way to discover the purpose of an invention is to ask the creator of it. The same is true for discovering your life's purpose: Ask God.

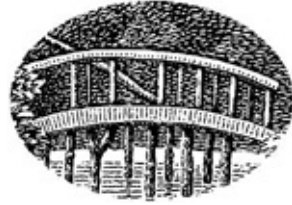
DAY ONE: IT ALL STARTS WITH GOD

God has not left us in the dark to wonder and guess. He has clearly revealed his five purposes for our lives through the Bible. It is our Owner's Manual, explaining why we are alive, how life works, what to avoid, and what to expect in the future. It explains what no self-help or philosophy book could know. The Bible says, "*God's wisdom...goes deep into the interior of his purposes...It's*

not the latest message, but more like the oldest—what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us."⁵

God is not just the starting point of your life; he is the *source* of it. To discover your purpose in life you must turn to God's Word, not the world's wisdom. You must build your life on eternal truths, not pop psychology, success-motivation, or inspirational stories. The Bible says, "*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.*"⁶ This verse gives us three insights into your purpose.

1. You discover your identity and purpose through a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you don't have such a relationship, I will later explain how to begin one.
2. God was thinking of you long before you ever thought about him. His purpose for your life predates your conception. He planned it before you existed, *without your input!* You may choose your career, your spouse, your hobbies, and many other parts of your life, but you don't get to choose your purpose.
3. The purpose of your life fits into a much larger, cosmic purpose that God has designed for eternity. That's what this book is about.



Andrei Bitov, a Russian novelist, grew up under an atheistic Communist regime. But God got his attention one dreary day. He recalls, "In my twenty-seventh year, while riding the metro in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) I was overcome with a despair so great that life seemed to stop at once, preempting the future entirely, let alone any meaning. Suddenly, all by itself, a phrase appeared: *Without God life makes no sense*. Repeating it in astonishment, I rode the phrase up like a moving staircase, got out of the metro and walked into God's light."²

You may have felt in the dark about *your* purpose in life. Congratulations, you're about to walk into the light.

DAY ONE
THINKING ABOUT MY PURPOSE

Point to Ponder: It's not about me.

Verse to Remember: "*Everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him.*"
Colossians 1:16b (Msg)

Question to Consider: In spite of all the advertising around me, how can I remind myself that life is really about living for God, not myself?

You Are Not an Accident

I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born.

Isaiah 44:2a (CEV)

God doesn't play dice.

Albert Einstein

You are not an accident.

Your birth was no mistake or mishap, and your life is no fluke of nature. Your parents may not have planned you, but God did. He was not at all surprised by your birth. In fact, he expected it.

Long before you were conceived by your parents, you were conceived in the mind of God. He thought of you first. It is not fate, nor chance, nor luck, nor coincidence that you are breathing at this very moment. You are alive because God wanted to create you! The Bible says, "*The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me.*"¹

God prescribed every single detail of your body. He deliberately chose your race, the color of your skin, your hair, and every other feature. He custom-made your body just the way he wanted it. He also determined the natural talents you would possess and the uniqueness of your personality. The Bible says, "*You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something.*"²

Because God made you for a reason, he also decided *when* you would be born and *how long* you would live. He planned the days of your life in advance, choosing the exact time of your birth and death. The Bible says, "*You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book!*"³

God also planned *where* you'd be born and where you'd live for his purpose. Your race and nationality are no accident. God left no detail to chance. He planned it all for *his* purpose. The Bible says, "*From one man he made every nation,...and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.*"⁴ Nothing in your life is arbitrary. It's all for a purpose.

Most amazing, God decided *how* you would be born. Regardless of the circumstances of your birth or who your parents are, God had a plan in creating you. It doesn't matter whether your parents were good, bad, or indifferent. God knew that those two individuals possessed *exactly* the right genetic makeup to create the custom "you" he had in mind. They had the DNA God wanted to make you.

While there are illegitimate parents, there are no illegitimate children. Many children are unplanned by their parents, but they are not unplanned by God. God's purpose took into account human error, and even sin.

God never does anything accidentally, and he never makes mistakes. He has a reason for everything he creates. Every plant and every animal was planned by God, and every person was

Long before you were conceived by your parents, you were conceived in the mind of God.

designed with a purpose in mind. God's motive for creating you was his love. The Bible says, "*Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love.*"⁵

God was thinking of you even *before* he made the world. In fact, that's why he created it! God designed this planet's environment just so we could live in it. We are the focus of his love and the most valuable of all his creation. The Bible says, "*God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the most important of all the things he made.*"⁶ This is how much God loves and values you!

God is not haphazard; he planned it all with great precision. The more physicists, biologists, and other scientists learn about the universe, the better we understand how it is uniquely suited for our existence, custom-made with the *exact* specifications that make human life possible.

Dr. Michael Denton, senior research fellow in human molecular genetics at the University of Otago in New Zealand, has concluded, "All the evidence available in the biological sciences supports the core proposition...that the cosmos is a specially designed whole with life and mankind as its fundamental goal and purpose, a whole in which all facets of reality have their meaning and explanation in this central fact."⁷ The Bible said the same thing thousands of years earlier: "*God formed the earth...He did not create it to be empty but formed it to be inhabited.*"⁸

Why did God do all this? Why did he bother to go to all the trouble of creating a universe for us? Because he is a God of love. This kind of love is difficult to fathom, but it's fundamentally reliable. You were created as a special object of God's love! God made you so he could love you. This is a truth to build your life on.

The Bible tells us, "*God is love.*"⁹ It doesn't say God *has* love. He *is* love! Love is the essence of God's character. There is perfect love in the fellowship of the Trinity, so God didn't *need* to create you. He wasn't lonely. But he wanted to make you in order to express his love. God says, "*I have carried you since you were born; I have taken care of you from your birth. Even when you are old, I will be the same. Even when your hair has turned gray, I will take care of you. I made you and will take care of you.*"¹⁰

If there was no God, we would all be "accidents," the result of astronomical random chance in the universe. You could stop reading this book, because life would have no purpose or meaning or significance. There would be no right or wrong, and no hope beyond your brief years here on earth.

But there *is* a God who made you for a reason, and your life has profound meaning! We discover that meaning and purpose *only* when we make God the reference point of our lives. The Message paraphrase of Romans 12:3 says, "*The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us.*"

This poem by Russell Kelfer sums it up:

You are who you are for a reason.
You're part of an intricate plan.
You're a precious and perfect unique design,
Called God's special woman or man.

You look like you look for a reason.
Our God made no mistake.

DAY TWO: YOU ARE NOT AN
ACCIDENT

He knit you together within the womb,
You're *just* what he wanted to make.

The parents you had were the ones he chose,
And no matter how you may feel,
They were custom-designed with God's plan in mind,
And they bear the Master's seal.

No, that trauma you faced was not easy.
And God wept that it hurt you so;
But it was allowed to shape your heart
So that into his likeness you'd grow.

You are who you are for a reason,
You've been formed by the Master's rod.
You are who you are, beloved,
Because there is a God![11](#)

DAY TWO
THINKING ABOUT MY PURPOSE

Point to Ponder: I am not an accident.

Verse to Remember: *"I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born."* Isaiah 44:2 (CEV)

Question to Consider: I know that God uniquely created me. What areas of my personality, background, and physical appearance am I struggling to accept?

What Drives Your Life?

I observed that the basic motive for success is the driving force of envy and jealousy!
Ecclesiastes 4:4 (LB)

The man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder—a waif, a nothing, a no man.
Thomas Carlyle

Everyone's life is driven by something.

Most dictionaries define the verb *drive* as “to guide, to control, or to direct.” Whether you are driving a car, a nail, or a golf ball, you are guiding, controlling, and directing it at that moment. What is the driving force in your life?

Right now you may be driven by a problem, a pressure, or a deadline. You may be driven by a painful memory, a haunting fear, or an unconscious belief. There are hundreds of circumstances, values, and emotions that can drive your life. Here are five of the most common ones:

Many people are driven by guilt. They spend their entire lives running from regrets and hiding their shame. Guilt-driven people are manipulated by memories. They allow their past to control their future. They often unconsciously punish themselves by sabotaging their own success. When Cain sinned, his guilt disconnected him from God's presence, and God said, “*You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.*”¹ That describes most people today—wandering through life without a purpose.

We are products of our past, but we don't have to be prisoners of it. God's purpose is not limited by your past. He turned a murderer named Moses into a leader and a coward named Gideon into a courageous hero, and he can do amazing things with the rest of your life, too. God specializes in giving people a fresh start. The Bible says, “*What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! ...What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.*”²

Many people are driven by resentment and anger. They hold on to hurts and never get over them. Instead of releasing their pain through forgiveness, they rehearse it over and over in their minds. Some resentment-driven people “*clam up*” and internalize their anger, while others “*blow up*” and explode it onto others. Both responses are unhealthy and unhelpful.

Resentment always hurts you more than it does the person you resent. While your offender has probably forgotten the offense and gone on with life, you continue to stew in your pain, perpetuating the past.

Listen: Those who have hurt you in the past cannot continue to hurt you now *unless* you hold on to the pain through resentment. Your past is past! Nothing will change it. You are only hurting yourself with your bitterness. For your own sake, learn from it, and then let it go. The Bible says, “*To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do.*”³

Many people are driven by fear. Their fears may be a result of a traumatic experience, unrealistic expectations, growing up in a high-control home, or even genetic predisposition. Regardless of the cause, fear-driven people often miss great opportunities because they're afraid to venture out. Instead they play it safe, avoiding risks and trying to maintain the status quo.

Fear is a self-imposed prison that will keep you from becoming what God intends for you to be. You *must* move against it with the weapons of faith and love. The Bible says, “*Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love.*”⁴

Many people are driven by materialism. Their desire to acquire becomes the whole goal of their lives. This drive to always want more is based on the misconceptions that having more will make me more happy, more important, and more secure, but all three ideas are untrue. Possessions only provide *temporary* happiness. Because things do not change, we eventually become bored with them and then want newer, bigger, better versions.

It’s also a myth that if I get more, I will be more important. Self-worth and net worth are not the same. Your value is not determined by your valuables, and God says the most valuable *things* in life are not things!

The most common myth about money is that having more will make me more secure. It won’t. Wealth can be lost instantly through a variety of uncontrollable factors. Real security can only be found in that which can never be taken from you—your relationship with God.

Many people are driven by the need for approval. They allow the expectations of parents or spouses or children or teachers or friends to control their lives. Many adults are still trying to earn the approval of unpleasable parents. Others are driven by peer pressure, always worried by what others might think. Unfortunately, those who follow the crowd usually get lost in it.

Nothing matters more than knowing God’s purposes for your life, and nothing can compensate for not knowing them.

I don’t know all the keys to success, but one key to failure is to try to please everyone. Being controlled by the opinions of others is a guaranteed way to miss God’s purposes for your life. Jesus said, “*No one can serve two masters.*”⁵

There are other forces that can drive your life but all lead to the same dead end: unused potential, unnecessary stress, and an unfulfilled life.

This forty-day journey will show you how to live a *purpose-driven* life—a life guided, controlled, and directed by God’s purposes. Nothing matters more than knowing God’s purposes for your life, and nothing can compensate for not knowing them—not success, wealth, fame, or pleasure. Without a purpose, life is motion without meaning, activity without direction, and events without reason. Without a purpose, life is trivial, petty, and pointless.

THE BENEFITS OF PURPOSE-DRIVEN LIVING

There are five great benefits of living a purpose-driven life:

Knowing your purpose gives meaning to your life. We were made to have meaning. This is why people try dubious methods, like astrology or psychics, to discover it. When life has meaning, you can bear almost anything; without it, nothing is bearable.

DAY THREE: WHAT DRIVES YOUR LIFE?

A young man in his twenties wrote, “I feel like a failure because I’m struggling to become something, and I don’t even know what it is. All I know how to do is to get by. Someday, if I discover my purpose, I’ll feel I’m beginning to live.”

Without God, life has no purpose, and without purpose, life has no meaning. Without meaning, life has no significance or

hope. In the Bible, many different people expressed this hopelessness. Isaiah complained, “*I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing.*”⁶ Job said, “*My life drags by—day after hopeless day*”⁷ and “*I give up; I am tired of living. Leave me alone. My life makes no sense.*”⁸ The greatest tragedy is not death, but life without purpose.

Hope is as essential to your life as air and water. You need hope to cope. Dr. Bernie Siegel found he could predict which of his cancer patients would go into remission by asking, “Do you want to live to be one hundred?” Those with a deep sense of life purpose answered yes and were the ones most likely to survive. Hope comes from having a purpose.

If you have felt hopeless, hold on! Wonderful changes are going to happen in your life as you begin to live it on purpose. God says, “*I know what I am planning for you... ‘I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future.’*”⁹ You may feel you are facing an impossible situation, but the Bible says, “*God...is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of—ininitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes.*”¹⁰



Knowing your purpose simplifies your life. It defines what you do and what you don’t do. Your purpose becomes the standard you use to evaluate which activities are essential and which aren’t. You simply ask, “Does this activity help me fulfill one of God’s purposes for my life?”

Without a clear purpose you have no foundation on which you base decisions, allocate your time, and use your resources. You will tend to make choices based on circumstances, pressures, and your mood at that moment. People who don’t know their purpose try to do too much—and *that* causes stress, fatigue, and conflict.

It is impossible to do everything people want you to do. You have just enough time to do God’s will. If you can’t get it all done, it means you’re trying to do more than God intended for you to do (possibly, that you’re watching too much television). Purpose-driven living leads to a simpler lifestyle and a saner schedule. The Bible says, “*A pretentious, showy life is an empty life; a plain and simple life is a full life.*”¹¹ It also leads to peace of mind: “*You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.*”¹²

Knowing your purpose focuses your life. It concentrates your effort and energy on what’s important. You become effective by being selective.

It’s human nature to get distracted by minor issues. We play *Trivial Pursuit* with our lives. Henry David Thoreau observed that people live lives of “*quiet desperation,*” but today a better description is *aimless distraction*. Many people are like gyroscopes, spinning around at a frantic pace but never going anywhere.

Without a clear purpose, you will keep changing directions, jobs, relationships, churches, or other externals—hoping each change will settle the confusion or fill the emptiness in your heart. You think *Maybe this time it will be different,* but it doesn’t solve your real problem—a lack of focus and purpose.

The Bible says, “*Don’t live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the Master wants.*”¹³

The power of focusing can be seen in light. Diffused light has little power or impact, but you can concentrate its energy by focusing it. With a magnifying glass, the rays of the sun can be focused to set grass or paper on fire. When light is focused even more as a laser beam, it can cut through steel.

There is nothing quite as potent as a focused life, one lived on purpose. The men and women who have made the greatest difference in history were the most focused. For instance, the

If you want your life to have

impact, focus it!

apostle Paul almost single-handedly spread Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. His secret was a focused life. He said, *“I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.”*¹⁴

If you want your life to have impact, *focus it!* Stop dabbling. Stop trying to do it all. Do less. Prune away even good activities and do only that which matters most. Never confuse activity with productivity. You can be busy without a purpose, but what’s the point? Paul said, *“Let’s keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us.”*¹⁵

Knowing your purpose motivates your life. Purpose always produces passion. Nothing energizes like a clear purpose. On the other hand, passion dissipates when you lack a purpose. Just getting out of bed becomes a major chore. It is usually meaningless work, not overwork, that wears us down, saps our strength, and robs our joy.

You weren’t put on earth to be remembered. You were put here to prepare for eternity.

George Bernard Shaw wrote, “This is the true joy of life: the being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little cloud of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.”

Knowing your purpose prepares you for eternity. Many people spend their lives trying to create a lasting legacy on earth. They want to be remembered when they’re gone. Yet, what ultimately matters most will not be what others say about your life but what *God* says. What people fail to realize is that all achievements are eventually surpassed, records are broken, reputations fade, and tributes are forgotten. In college, James Dobson’s goal was to become the school’s tennis champion. He felt proud when his trophy was prominently placed in the school’s trophy cabinet. Years later, someone mailed him that trophy. They had found it in a trashcan when the school was remodeled. Jim said, *“Given enough time, all your trophies will be trashed by someone else!”*

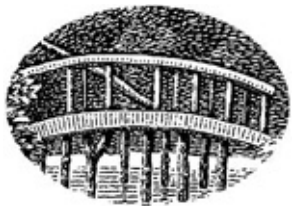
Living to create an earthly legacy is a short-sighted goal. A wiser use of time is to build an *eternal* legacy. You weren’t put on earth to be remembered. You were put here to prepare for eternity.

One day you will stand before God, and he will do an audit of your life, a final exam, before you enter eternity. The Bible says, *“Remember, each of us will stand personally before the judgment seat of God...Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God.”*¹⁶ Fortunately, God wants us to pass this test, so he has given us the questions in advance. From the Bible we can surmise that God will ask us two crucial questions:

First, *“What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ?”* God won’t ask about your religious background or doctrinal views. The only thing that will matter is, did you accept what Jesus did for you and did you learn to love and trust him? Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*¹⁷

Second, *“What did you do with what I gave you?”* What did you do with your life—all the gifts, talents, opportunities, energy, relationships, and resources God gave you? Did you spend them on yourself, or did you use them for the purposes God made you for?”

Preparing you for these two questions is the goal of this book. The first question will determine *where* you spend eternity. The second question will determine *what you do* in eternity. By the end of this book you will be ready to answer both questions.



DAY THREE

THINKING ABOUT MY PURPOSE

Point to Ponder: Living on purpose is the path to peace.

Verse to Remember: “*You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.*” Isaiah 26:3 (TEV)

Question to Consider: What would my family and friends say is the driving force of my life? What do I want it to be?

Made to Last Forever

God has...planted eternity in the human heart.
Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NLT)

Surely God would not have created such a being as man to exist only for a day! No, no, man was made for immortality.
Abraham Lincoln

This life is not all there is.

Life on earth is just the dress rehearsal before the real production. You will spend far more time on the other side of death—in *eternity*—than you will here. Earth is the staging area, the preschool, the tryout for your life in eternity. It is the practice workout before the actual game; the warm-up lap before the race begins. This life is preparation for the next.

At most, you will live a hundred years on earth, but you will spend forever in eternity. Your time on earth is, as Sir Thomas Browne said, “but a small parenthesis in eternity.” You were made to last forever.

The Bible says, “*God has...planted eternity in the human heart.*”¹ You have an inborn instinct that longs for immortality. This is because God designed you, in his image, to live for eternity. Even though we know everyone eventually dies, death always seems unnatural and unfair. The reason we feel we should live forever is that God wired our brains with that desire!

One day your heart will stop beating. That will be the end of your body and your time on earth, but it will not be the end of you. Your earthly body is just a temporary residence for your spirit. The Bible calls your earthly body a “tent,” but refers to your future body as a “house.” The Bible says, “*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

While life on earth offers many choices, eternity offers only two: heaven or hell. Your relationship to God on earth will determine your relationship to him in eternity. If you learn to love and trust God’s Son, Jesus, you will be invited to spend the rest of eternity with him. On the other hand, if you reject his love, forgiveness, and salvation, you will spend eternity apart from God forever.

C. S. Lewis said, “There are two kinds of people: those who say to God ‘*Thy will be done*’ and those to whom God says, ‘*All right then, have it your way.*’” Tragically, many people will have to endure eternity without God because they chose to live without him here on earth.

When you fully comprehend that there is more to life than just here and now, and you realize that life is just preparation for eternity, you will begin to live differently. You will start *living in light of eternity*, and that will color how you handle every relationship, task, and circumstance. Suddenly many activities, goals, and even problems that seemed so important will appear trivial, petty, and unworthy of your attention. The closer you live to God, the smaller everything else appears.

This life is preparation for the next.

When you live in light of eternity, your values change. You use your time and money more

wisely. You place a higher premium on relationships and character instead of fame or wealth or achievements or even fun. Your priorities are reordered. Keeping up with trends, fashions, and popular values just doesn't matter as much anymore. Paul said, "*I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.*"³

When you live in light of eternity, your values change.

If your time on earth were all there is to your life, I would suggest you start living it up immediately. You could forget being good and ethical, and you wouldn't have to worry about any consequences of your actions. You could indulge yourself in total self-centeredness because your actions would have no long-term repercussions. But—and *this makes all the difference*—death is not the end of you! Death is not your termination, but your transition into eternity, so there are *eternal* consequences to everything you do on earth. Every act of our lives strikes some chord that will vibrate in eternity.

The most damaging aspect of contemporary living is short-term thinking. To make the most of your life, you must keep the vision of eternity continually in your mind and the value of it in your heart. There's far more to life than just here and now! Today is the visible tip of the iceberg. Eternity is all the rest you don't see underneath the surface.

What is it going to be like in eternity with God? Frankly, the capacity of our brains cannot handle the wonder and greatness of heaven. It would be like trying to describe the Internet to an ant. It's futile. Words have not been invented that could possibly convey the experience of eternity. The Bible says, "*No mere man has ever seen, heard or even imagined what wonderful things God has ready for those who love the Lord.*"⁴

However, God has given us glimpses of eternity in his Word. We know that right now God is preparing an eternal home for us. In heaven we will be reunited with loved ones who are believers, released from all pain and suffering, rewarded for our faithfulness on earth, and reassigned to do work that we will enjoy doing. We won't lie around on clouds with halos playing harps! We will enjoy unbroken fellowship with God, and he will enjoy us for an unlimited, endless forever. One day Jesus will say, "*Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.*"⁵

DAY FOUR: MADE TO LAST FOREVER

C. S. Lewis captured the concept of eternity on the last page of the Chronicles of Narnia, his seven-book children's fiction series: "For us this is the end of all the stories...But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world...had only been the cover and the title page now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever and in which every chapter is better than the one before."⁶

God has a purpose for your life on earth, but it doesn't end here. His plan involves far more than the few decades you will spend on this planet. It's more than "the opportunity of a lifetime"; God offers you an opportunity *beyond* your lifetime. The Bible says, "*[God's] plans endure forever; his purposes last eternally.*"⁷

The only time most people think about eternity is at funerals, and then it's often shallow, sentimental thinking, based on ignorance. You may feel it's morbid to think about death, but actually it's unhealthy to live in denial of death and not consider what is inevitable.⁸ Only a fool would go through life unprepared for what we all know will eventually happen. You need to think *more* about eternity, not less.

Just as the nine months you spent in your mother's womb were not an end in themselves but

preparation for life, so this life is preparation for the next. If you have a relationship with God through Jesus, you don't need to fear death. It is the door to eternity. It will be the last hour of your time on earth, but it won't be the last of you. Rather than being the end of your life, it will be your birthday into eternal life. The Bible says, "*This world is not our home; we are looking forward to our everlasting home in heaven.*"⁹



Measured against eternity, our time on earth is just a blink of an eye, but the consequences of it will last forever. The deeds of this life are the destiny of the next. We should be "*realizing that every moment we spend in these earthly bodies is time spent away from our eternal home in heaven with Jesus.*"¹⁰ Years ago a popular slogan encouraged people to live each day as "the first day of the rest of your life." Actually, it would be wiser to live each day as if it were the last day of your life. Matthew Henry said, "It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our final day."

DAY FOUR

THINKING ABOUT MY PURPOSE

Point to Ponder: There is more to life than just here and now.

Verse to Remember: "*This world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever.*" 1 John 2:17 (NLT)

Question to Consider: Since I was made to last forever, what is the one thing I should stop doing and the one thing I should start doing today?

Seeing Life from God's View

What is your life?
James 4:14b (NIV)

We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.
Anaïs Nin

The way you *see* your life *shapes* your life.

How you define life determines your destiny. Your perspective will influence how you invest your time, spend your money, use your talents, and value your relationships.

One of the best ways to understand other people is to ask them, “*How do you see your life?*” You will discover that there are as many different answers to that question as there are people. I’ve been told life is a circus, a minefield, a roller coaster, a puzzle, a symphony, a journey, and a dance. People have said, “Life is a carousel: Sometimes you’re up, sometimes you’re down, and sometimes you just go round and round” or “life is a ten-speed bicycle with gears we never use” or “life is a game of cards: You have to play the hand you are dealt.”

If I asked how you picture life, what image would come to your mind? That image is your *life metaphor*. It’s the view of life that you hold, consciously or unconsciously, in your mind. It’s your description of how life works and what you expect from it. People often express their life metaphors through clothes, jewelry, cars, hairstyles, bumper stickers, even tattoos.

Your unspoken life metaphor influences your life more than you realize. It determines your expectations, your values, your relationships, your goals, and your priorities. For instance, if you think life is a party, your primary value in life will be *having fun*. If you see life as a race, you will value *speed* and will probably be in a hurry much of the time. If you view life as a marathon, you will value *endurance*. If you see life as a battle or a game, *winning* will be very important to you.

What is your view of life? You may be basing your life on a faulty life metaphor. To fulfill the purposes God made you for, you will have to challenge conventional wisdom and replace it with the *biblical* metaphors of life. The Bible says, “*Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then*

DAY FIVE: SEEING LIFE
FROM GOD'S VIEW

you will be able to know the will of God.”¹

The Bible offers three metaphors that teach us God’s view of life: Life is a *test*, life is a *trust*, and life is a *temporary assignment*. These ideas are the foundation of purpose-driven living. We will look at the first two in this chapter and the third one in the next.

Life on earth is a Test. This life metaphor is seen in stories throughout the Bible. God continually tests people’s character, faith, obedience, love, integrity, and loyalty. Words like *trials*, *temptations*, *refining*, and *testing* occur more than 200 times in the Bible. God tested Abraham by asking him to offer his son Isaac. God tested Jacob when he had to work extra years to earn Rachel as his wife.

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