

FROM THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN® LIFE

WHAT
on
Earth
AM I
HERE
for?

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What on Earth Am I Here For?

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WHAT
on
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for?



It All Starts with God

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

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. They want God to be a personal "genie" who serves their self-centered desires. 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 purposes. 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've 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 usually offer the same predictable steps to finding your life's purpose: Consider your dreams. Figure out what you are good at. Clarify your values. Set some goals. Aim high. Believe you can achieve it. Be disciplined. Never give up.

Of course, these recommendations are all good and 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. Jesus Christ once said, "*Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.*"³

This booklet 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, knowing your purpose will allow you 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 where most people are. They just guess or speculate or theorize about the purpose of life.

When someone says, “I’ve *always thought* the purpose of life is . . .,” they’re really saying, “This is the best guess I can come up with.”

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 and asked each person “What is the meaning of life?” He then published their responses—which were quite discouraging—in a book. Some of these famous thinkers 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 these intellectuals asked Professor Moorhead to write back and tell them if he discovered the purpose of life!⁴

Fortunately, there is a better alternative to speculation about the meaning and purpose of life. The easiest way to discover the purpose of an invention is to ask the creator to explain it. The same method works for discovering your life’s purpose. You can find what God, your creator, has revealed about life in his Word, the Bible. *Revelation* beats *speculation* any day.

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. *"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 best guesses. You must build your life on unchanging, eternal truths, not the ever-changing opinions of talk shows, pop psychology fads, or success-motivation seminars. 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.

First, you discover your identity and purpose through a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you don't have such a relationship, I'll explain later how you can begin one.

Second, 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.

Third, the purpose of your life fits into a much larger, cosmic purpose that God has designed for eternity. That's what this booklet is about.

Andrei Bitov, a Russian novelist, grew up under a government that denied the existence of God. 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."⁷

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

Point to Ponder: If there were no God, and everything was a result of random chance, there would be no purpose to your life. It all starts with God.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

-  Have you ever wondered about, or felt confused about, the purpose of your life?
-  What ways have you tried to discover your life's purpose that haven't worked?
-  Why do you think people try to discover their life's purpose without turning to God, their creator?

If you'd like to explore these questions, visit www.purposedrivenlife.com.



You Are Not an Accident

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 that doesn't mean God didn't plan you. He works even through human error and failings, and he was not surprised by your birth; in fact, he expected it.

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.*"⁸

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 [God] 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.*"⁹

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!*”¹⁰

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.*”¹¹ 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. Some children may be unplanned by their parents, but they are not unplanned by God.

God’s purposes take into account human mistakes, even sin. This does not mean that God causes or condones sin or evil—he does not—but it does mean God is able to redeem any and all situations and use them for his own good.

So regardless of the circumstances of your birth, you can celebrate the fact that God created you to be you. 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 for a purpose, and every person was designed with a purpose in mind, too. God's motive for creating you is 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.*"¹²

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.*"¹³ 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.”¹⁴ 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.*”¹⁵

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!¹⁶ God made you so he could love you. This is a truth to build your life on.

The Bible tells us, “*God is love.*”¹⁷ It doesn’t say God *has* love. He *is* love! Love is the essence of God’s character. Now God is perfect and complete in himself, so he 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.*”¹⁸

If there were no God, we would all be “accidents,” the result of astronomical random chance in the universe. You could stop reading this right now, because life would have no purpose or significance. There would be no

right or wrong, no good or evil, and no hope beyond your brief years on earth. Life would be a meaningless existence, and death would be the end.

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 only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us.”*¹⁹

Point to Ponder: You are not an accident!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

-  What events or experiences in your life have “hinted” or suggested that maybe you were created for a specific purpose?
-  Have you ever really felt God’s deep love for you personally?
-  How would your life change if you began to live each day confident that God loves you deeply and has a purpose for your life?

If you’d like to explore these questions, visit www.purposedrivenlife.com.



What Drives Your Life?

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 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. In the Bible, when a man named Cain killed his brother, his guilt disconnected him from feeling God's presence, and God said, “*You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.*”²⁰ 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 never limited by your past. He turned a murderer named Moses into a compassionate 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.”*²¹

Many people are driven by resentment. They hold on to their 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 past, perpetuating the pain.

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. God’s Word says, *“To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do.”*²²

Many people are driven by fear. These fears may be a result of a traumatic experience, an

unrealistic expectation, 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. The only way to defeat fear is to move against it with the spiritual 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.*"²³

Many people are driven by materialism. Their *desire to acquire* becomes the whole goal of their lives. This drive to always get more is based on the misconception 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 a newer, bigger, better version.

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. 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 to 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. 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 other is a guaranteed way to miss God's purposes for your life. Jesus said, "*No one can serve two masters.*"²⁴

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

That's why nothing matters more than knowing God's purpose for your life, and nothing can compensate for not knowing it—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.

This booklet will *introduce* you to the five

purposes you were created for, but first let's look at some of the practical 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 meaning, nothing is bearable.

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.*"²⁵ Job said, "*My life drags by—day after hopeless day*"²⁶ and "*I give up; I am tired of living. Leave me alone. My life makes no sense.*"²⁷ The greatest tragedy is not death, but life without purpose.

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."

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.*”²⁸ 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—infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes.*”²⁹

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 to 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, or, possibly, that you're wasting your time in some way. 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.*"³⁰ 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.*"³¹

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.*"³²

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. One of the most effective leaders in the Bible, St. Paul, said, *“I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.”*³³ Have you done that?

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 what matters most. Never confuse activity with productivity. You can be busy without a purpose, but what’s the point? *“Let’s keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us.”*³⁴

Knowing your purpose energizes your life. Purpose always produces passion. Nothing motivates 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.

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 clot 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 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. I once read of a college student whose only 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! That man said, “*Given enough time, all your trophies will be trashed by someone else!*” He was right.

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.*”³⁵ 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 your 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.*”³⁶ God wants you to get to know, love, and trust his Son, Jesus, whom he sent to earth to show us what God is like and to forgive and save us.

Second, “What did you do with your life?” What did you do with all that God gave you—all your gifts, talents, opportunities, energy, relationships, and resources? Did you spend them on yourself, or did you use them to fulfill God’s purposes for your life?

Preparing you for these two questions is the goal of this booklet. The first question will determine *where* you spend eternity—with God or separated from God. The second

question will determine *what you do* in eternity—your responsibilities and rewards in heaven. By the end of this booklet you will be ready to answer both questions.

Point to Ponder: What drives your life?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

-  If you asked your family and friends to describe what drives your life, what driving force or motivations would they mention?
-  Why do you think most people are not driven and guided by the purpose of their lives?
-  What habits, or hurts, or hang-ups, or fears might keep you from beginning to live out and enjoy God's purpose for your life?

If you'd like to explore these questions, visit www.purposedrivenlife.com.



Made to Last Forever

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.*”³⁷ 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. God’s Word calls your earthly body

“a tent,” but refers to your future body in heaven 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.*”³⁸

While life on earth offers many choices, eternity offers only two choices: 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.

The brilliant Oxford professor and author 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 on a daily basis. You will start *living in light of eternity*, and that will color how you handle every relationship, every task, and every 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.

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. St. Paul said, "*I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.*"³⁹

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.*"⁴⁰

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.*"⁴¹

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 for ever, and in which every chapter is better than the one before.”⁴²

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.”⁴³

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.⁴⁴ 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.”*⁴⁵

Measured against eternity, your 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.”*⁴⁶

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. It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our final day.

Point to Ponder: This life is not all there is.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

-  Why do you think God made us to last forever?
-  Why do we spend more time worrying about what won't last and so little time preparing for eternity, which will last forever?
-  What are you doing right now to prepare for eternity?

If you'd like to explore these questions, visit www.purposedrivenlife.com.



Seeing Life from God's View

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 that 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, or 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 view life as a party, your primary value in life will be *having fun*. If you see life as a race, you'll value *speed* and will probably be in a hurry much of the time. If you view life as a marathon, you'll 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?

Have you ever paused to consider that you may be basing your life on a faulty metaphor? You may have picked it up from a parent, from your friends, from the movies you watch or magazines you read, or from some other fallible source. But to fulfill the purposes God made you for, you'll have to challenge conventional wisdom and replace it with *God's* 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 you will be able to know the will of God.*"⁴⁷

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'll 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 found in stories throughout the Bible. God continually tests people's character, faith, obe-

dience, love, integrity, and loyalty. Words like *trials*, *temptations*, *refining*, and *testing* occur more than 200 times in God's Word. 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.

Adam and Eve failed their test in the Garden of Eden, and King David failed tests from God on several occasions. But the Bible also gives us many examples of people who passed personal tests of their character, such as Joseph, Ruth, Esther, and Daniel.

Character is both developed and revealed by tests, and *all* of life is a test. You are *always* being tested. God constantly watches your response to people, problems, success, conflict, illness, disappointment, and even the weather! He even watches the simplest actions such as when you open a door for others, when you pick up a piece of trash, or when you're polite toward a clerk or waitress.

We don't know all the tests God will give you, but we can predict some of them, based on the Bible. You will be tested by major changes, by delayed promises, by impossible problems, by unanswered prayers, by undeserved criticism, and even by senseless tragedies. In my own life I've noticed that God tests my *faith* through problems, tests my *hope* by how I handle possessions, and tests my *love* through people.

A very important test is how you act when you can't *feel* God's presence in your life. Sometimes God intentionally draws back, and we don't sense his closeness. A king named Hezekiah experienced this test. The Bible says, "*God withdrew from Hezekiah in order to test him and to see what was really in his heart.*"⁴⁸ Hezekiah had enjoyed a close fellowship with God, but at a crucial point in his life God left him alone to test his character, to reveal a weakness, and to prepare him for more responsibility.

When you understand that life is a test, you realize that *nothing* is insignificant in your life. Even the smallest incident has significance for your character development. Every day is an important day, and every second is a growth opportunity to deepen your character, to develop your love, or to depend on God. Some tests seem overwhelming while others you don't even notice. But all of them have eternal implications.

The good news is that God wants you to pass the tests of life, so he never allows them to be greater than the grace he gives you to handle them. The Bible says, "*God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out.*"⁴⁹

Every time you pass a test, God notices and makes plans to reward you in eternity. The

Bible says, *“Blessed are those who endure when they are tested. When they pass the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”*⁵⁰

Life on earth is a Trust. This is the second metaphor of life we find in the Bible. Our time, energy, intelligence, opportunities, relationships, and resources are all gifts that God has entrusted to our care and management. We are stewards, or managers, of whatever God gives us. This concept of stewardship begins with the recognition that God is the owner of everything and everyone on earth. The Bible says, *“The world and all that is in it belong to the Lord; the earth and all who live on it are his.”*⁵¹

We never really own anything during our brief stay on earth. God just *loans* it to us while we’re here. It was God’s property before you arrived, and God will loan it to someone else after you die. You just get to enjoy it for a while.

When God created Adam and Eve, he entrusted the care of his creation to them and appointed them trustees of his property. The Bible says, *“God blessed them, and said, ‘Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge.’”*⁵²

The first job God gave humans was to manage and take care of his “stuff” on earth. This role has never been rescinded. It is a part of our purpose today. Everything we enjoy is to

be treated as a *trust* that God has placed in our hands. The Bible says, “*What do you have that God hasn’t given you? And if all you have is from God, why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?*”⁵³

Years ago, a couple let my wife and me use their beautiful, beachfront home in Hawaii for a vacation. It was an experience we could never have afforded, and we enjoyed it immensely. We were told, “Use it just like it’s yours,” so we did! We swam in the pool, ate the food in the refrigerator, used the bath towels and dishes, and even jumped on the beds in fun! But we knew all along that it wasn’t *really* ours, so we took special care of everything. We enjoyed the benefits of using the home without owning it.

Our human nature says, “If I don’t own it, I don’t have to take care of it.” But God expects us to live by a higher standard: “Because *God* owns it, I must take the best care of it that I possibly can.” The Bible says, “*Those who are trusted with something valuable must show they are worthy of that trust.*”⁵⁴ Jesus often referred to life as a trust and told many stories to illustrate our responsibility toward God. In the story of the talents,⁵⁵ a businessman entrusts his wealth to the care of his servants while he’s away. When he returns, he evaluates each servant’s responsibility and rewards them accordingly. The owner says, “*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have*

*been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness."*⁵⁶

At the end of your life on earth you will be evaluated and then rewarded according to how well you handled what God entrusted to you. That means *everything* you do, even simple daily chores, has eternal implications. If you treat everything as a *trust*, God promises three rewards in eternity. First, you'll receive God's affirmation: He'll say, "*Good job! Well done!*" Next, you will receive a promotion and be given greater responsibility in eternity: "*I will put you in charge of many things.*" Then you will be honored with a celebration: "*Come and share your Master's happiness.*"

Most people fail to realize that money is both a *test* and a *trust* from God. God uses finances to teach us to trust him, and for many people, money is the greatest test of all. God watches how we use money to test how trustworthy we are. Jesus said, "*If you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?*"⁵⁷

This is a very important spiritual truth that most people are completely unaware of. God says there is a direct relationship between how I use my money and the quality of my spiritual life! How I manage my money ("*worldly wealth*") determines how much God can trust me with spiritual blessings ("*true riches*"). Let

me ask you: Is the way you manage your money preventing God from doing more in your life? Can God trust you with spiritual riches?

Jesus said, *"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."*⁵⁸ Life is a test and a trust, and the more God gives you, the more responsible he expects you to be.

Point to Ponder: Life is a test and a trust.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

-  What has been your life metaphor up to this point? How have you described life?
-  Can you think of a past experience where you can now see that God was testing you?
-  If you were to start living the truth that everything you "own" is really on loan from God, how would that change the way you feel about your possessions?

If you'd like to explore these questions, visit www.purposedrivenlife.com.



Life Is a Temporary Assignment

Life on earth is a temporary assignment.

The Bible is full of metaphors that teach the brief, temporary, transient nature of life on earth. Life is described as *a mist, a fast runner, a breath, and a wisp of smoke*. The Bible says, “*For we were born but yesterday. . . . Our days on earth are as transient as a shadow.*”⁵⁹

To make the best use of your life, you must never forget two truths: First, compared with eternity, life is extremely brief. Second, earth is only a temporary residence. You won’t be here long, so don’t get too attached. Ask God to help you see life on earth as he sees it. David prayed, “*Lord, help me to realize how brief my time on earth will be. Help me to know that I am here for but a moment more.*”⁶⁰

Repeatedly God’s Word compares life on earth to temporarily living in a foreign country. This is not your permanent home or final destination. You’re just passing through, just visiting earth. The Bible uses terms like *alien, pilgrim, foreigner, stranger, visitor, and traveler* to describe our brief stay on earth. David said, “*I am but a foreigner here on earth,*”⁶¹ and St. Peter explained, “*If you call God your Father, live your time as temporary residents on earth.*”⁶²

In California, where I live, many people have moved from other parts of the world to work

here, but they keep their citizenship with their home country. They are required to carry a visitor registration card (called a “green card”), which allows them to work here even though they aren’t citizens. Actually, we all should carry *spiritual* green cards to remind us that our citizenship is in heaven. God says that his children are to think differently about life from the way unbelievers do. “*All they think about is this life here on earth. But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives.*”⁶³ Real believers realize that there will be far more to life than just the few years we live on this planet.

Your identity is in eternity, and your homeland is heaven. Once you fully grasp this truth, you will stop worrying about “having it all” on earth. God is very blunt about the danger of living for *here and now* and adopting the values, priorities, and lifestyles of the world around us. When we flirt with the temptations of our culture, God calls it spiritual adultery. The Bible says, “*You’re cheating on God. If all you want is your own way, flirting with the world every chance you get, you end up enemies of God and his way.*”⁶⁴

Imagine if you were asked by your country to be an ambassador to an enemy nation. You would probably have to learn a new language and adapt to some customs and cultural differences in order to be polite and accomplish your mission. As an ambassador you would not

be able to isolate yourself from the enemy. To fulfill your mission, you would have to have contact and relate to them.

But suppose you became so comfortable with this foreign country that you fell in love with it, preferring it to your homeland. Your loyalty and commitment would change. Your role as an ambassador would be compromised. Instead of representing your home country, you would start acting like the enemy. You'd be a traitor.

The Bible says, "*We are Christ's ambassadors.*"⁶⁵ Sadly, even many people who think of themselves as followers of Jesus Christ often forget this spiritual truth. They have foolishly concluded that because they live on earth right now, it's their permanent home. It is not. St. Peter said, "*Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it. Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul.*"⁶⁶

God warns us to not get too attached to what's around us, because it is all temporary. We're told, "*Those in frequent contact with the things of the world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them, for this world and all it contains will pass away.*"⁶⁷

Compared with other centuries, life has never been easier for much of the world. We are constantly entertained, amused, and catered to. With all the fascinating attractions, mesmerizing media, and enjoyable experiences available

today, it's easy to forget that the pursuit of happiness is *not* what life is about! Only as we realize that life is a test, a trust, and a temporary assignment in preparation for eternity will the appeal of these good, but secondary things lose their grip on our lives. We are preparing for something even better! "*The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever.*"⁶⁸

The fact that earth is not our ultimate home explains why we experience difficulty, sorrow, and rejection in this world.⁶⁹ It also explains why some of God's promises seem unfulfilled, some prayers seem unanswered, and some circumstances seem unfair. This is not the end of the story.

In order to keep us from becoming too attached to earth, God allows us to feel a significant amount of discontent and dissatisfaction in life—longings that will *never* be fulfilled on this side of eternity. We're not completely happy here because we're not supposed to be! It's not our final home; we were created for something much more wonderful.

A fish would never be happy living on land because it was made for water. An eagle could never feel satisfied if it wasn't allowed to fly. You will never feel completely satisfied on earth because you were made for more than just here and now. You will have many happy moments

on earth, but it's nothing compared with what God has planned for you.

Realizing that life on earth is just a temporary assignment should radically alter your values. Eternal values, not temporal ones, should become the deciding factors for your decisions. As C. S. Lewis observed, "All that is not eternal is eternally useless." The Bible says, "*We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*"⁷⁰

It is a fatal mistake to assume that God's goal for your life is material prosperity or popular success, as the world defines it. The abundant life has nothing to do with *material* abundance, and faithfulness to God does not guarantee success. God is far more interested in your character than your comfort. He's more interested in what you are becoming than in making this life easy for you. Remember, life is a test.⁷¹

St. Paul was faithful to God, yet he ended up in prison. John the Baptist was faithful to God, and he was beheaded for it! Millions of faithful people have been martyred, have lost everything, or have come to the end of life with nothing to show for it in the world's eyes. *But the end of life is not the end!*

In God's eyes, the greatest heroes are not those who achieve prosperity, success, and power in this life, but those who treat this life

as a temporary assignment and serve faithfully, expecting their promised reward in eternity. The Bible says this about God's Hall of Fame: *"All these great people died in faith. They did not get the things that God promised his people, but they saw them coming far in the future and were glad. They said they were like visitors and strangers on earth. . . . they were looking forward to a better home in heaven. That's why God wasn't ashamed for them to call him their God. He even built a city for them."*⁷² Your time on earth is not the complete story of your life. You must wait until heaven for the rest of the chapters.

An old story is told of a retiring missionary coming home to America on the same boat as the president of the United States. Cheering crowds, a military band, a red carpet, banners, and the media welcomed the president home, but the missionary slipped off the ship unnoticed. Feeling self-pity and resentment, he began complaining to God. Then God gently reminded him, "But my child, *you're not home yet.*"

You will not be in heaven two seconds before you cry out, "Why did I place so much importance on things that were so temporary? What was I thinking? Why did I waste so much time, energy, and concern on that which wasn't going to last?"

When life gets tough, when you're overwhelmed with doubt, or when you wonder if

living God's way is worth the effort, remember that you are not home yet! At death you won't leave home—you'll *go* home.

Point to Ponder: Life is a temporary assignment.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

-  If the only thing that is going to last for eternity is your relationship to God, what are the implications for your values, your priorities, your possessions, and your schedule?
-  Since God is more interested in your character than your comfort, how does that truth change the way you should view and respond to your problems?
-  Do you know anyone who has already gone on to heaven? Based on what you have just read, what do you imagine they would like to say to you if they could?

If you'd like to explore these questions, visit www.purposedrivenlife.com.



The Reason for Everything

It's all for God.

Not only were you created *by* God; you were created *for* him, too. The ultimate goal of the universe is to show the glory of God. It is the reason for everything that exists, including you. God made it *all* for his glory. Without God's glory, there would be nothing.

What is the glory of God? It is who God is. It is his nature, his character, and his power.

Where is the glory of God? Just look around. *Everything* created by God reflects his glory in some way. We see it everywhere, from the most microscopic form of life to the vast Milky Way, from sunsets and stars to storms and seasons. Creation reveals our Creator's glory. You can learn a lot about God's character just by looking around. Through nature we learn that God is powerful, that he enjoys variety, loves beauty, is organized, and is wise and creative. The Bible says, "*The heavens declare the glory of God.*"⁷³

How can you know what God is really like? Throughout history, God has revealed his glory to people in different settings. But God's clearest picture of what he is really like is seen in his Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "*In the past God spoke through the prophets many times and in many different ways. But now . . . has*

spoken to us through his Son. . . . The Son reflects the glory of God and shows exactly what God is like."⁷⁴

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."⁷⁵ Because of Jesus, we are no longer in the dark about what God is really like. The Bible says, "*The Son is the radiance of God's glory.*"⁷⁶ There are many insights about God that we would never know unless Jesus had come to earth. Jesus came so we could fully understand God's glory. The Bible says, "*The Word became human and lived among us and we saw his glory . . . a glory full of grace and truth.*"⁷⁷

As humans created by God we are commanded to *recognize* God's glory, *honor* his glory, *praise* his glory, *reflect* his glory, and *live* for his glory.⁷⁸ Why? Because God deserves it! We owe him every honor we can possibly give. Since God made all things, he deserves all the glory. The Bible says, "*You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created everything.*"⁷⁹

In the entire universe, only two of God's creations fail to bring glory to him: fallen angels (demons) and us (people). Not giving God his due glory is called "sin." All sin, at its root, is failing to give God the glory he deserves. It is loving anything else more than God. Refusing to bring glory to God is prideful rebellion, and it is the sin that caused Satan's fall—and ours, too. In different ways we have

all lived for our own glory, not God's. The Bible says, "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*"⁸⁰

None of us have given God the full glory he deserves from our lives. This is the worst sin and the biggest mistake we can commit. On the other hand, living for God's glory is the greatest achievement we can accomplish with our lives. God says, "*They are my own people, and I created them to bring me glory,*"⁸¹ so bringing glory to God ought to be the number one goal of your life.

Jesus told God in heaven, "*I brought glory to you here on earth by doing everything you told me to do.*"⁸² He honored God by fulfilling his purpose on earth. We honor God the same way. When anything in creation fulfills its purpose, it brings glory to God. Birds bring glory to God by flying, chirping, nesting, and doing other birdlike activities that God intended. Even the lowly ant brings glory to God when it fulfills its purpose. God made ants to be ants, and he made you to be you. St. Irenaeus said, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive!"

The book *The Purpose-Driven Life* explains in detail how to fulfill God's five purposes for your life. I hope you will obtain a copy and read it. But here is a summarized overview of those five purposes:

1. You bring God glory by getting to know and love him. This first purpose of your

life is called *worship*. It is your number one responsibility on earth. “Some people have missed the most important thing in life—they don’t know God.”⁸³ You may know a lot about a lot of things, but if you don’t know God personally, you’re missing the first reason you were created.

Worship is far more than going to a church service. Worship is a lifestyle of *enjoying* God, *loving* him, and *giving* ourselves to be used for his purposes. We worship God by enjoying him! C. S. Lewis said, “In commanding us to glorify him, God is inviting us to enjoy him.” God wants our worship to be motivated by love, thanksgiving, and delight, not duty. When you use your life for God’s glory, everything you do can become an act of worship. The Bible says, “Use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.”⁸⁴ Until you begin fulfilling this first purpose, you won’t be able to fulfill the other four.

2. You bring God glory by learning to love other people in God’s family. This second purpose is called *fellowship*, and it is preparation for eternity where those who have accepted God’s Son, Jesus, will fellowship together forever.

When you commit your life to Jesus Christ, you become a part of God’s family. The life God intends for you to enjoy is more than just believing; it also includes *belonging*. Why?

Because learning to love is one of the great lessons God wants you to learn on earth before taking you into eternity. St. John wrote, *“Our love for each other proves that we have gone from death to life,”*⁸⁵ and St. Paul said, *“Accept each other just as Christ has accepted you; then God will be glorified.”*⁸⁶

Your second great responsibility is to learn to love as God does, because God is love and he wants you to be like him. That’s why getting connected to a local church as your spiritual family is essential. You cannot fulfill God’s second purpose for your life on your own. He made us to need each other. Jesus said it is the proof that we really know him: *“As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*⁸⁷

3. You bring God glory by becoming like Christ. Once we are spiritually born into God’s family through a commitment to Christ, God wants us to grow to spiritual maturity. What does that look like? Spiritual maturity is becoming like Jesus in the way we think, feel, and act. The more you develop Christlike character, the more you’ll bring glory to God. The Bible says, *“As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.”*⁸⁸

God gives you a new life and a new nature when you accept Jesus Christ to be the manager (or “Lord”) of your life. Then, for the rest of

your life on earth, he wants to continue the process of changing your character. The Bible says, *“Be filled with the fruit of your salvation—those good things that are produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.”*⁸⁹ God uses a variety of tools—like other people, the Bible, circumstances, and time—to develop you spiritually and prepare you for eternity.

4. You bring God glory by serving others. Again, this is practice for eternity. In heaven we are going to enjoy serving God, so one of the five reasons he put you on earth was to give you time to get good at it! Of course, the only way to serve God (whom you can’t see) is by serving others (who you can see!). That’s why God has given you certain talents.

You were custom-designed by God with talents, gifts, skills, and abilities in order to serve God by serving others. The Bible calls this fourth purpose of serving others your “ministry.” Contrary to popular opinion, God wired everyone to have a ministry, or serving niche. The way you’re “wired” is not an accident.

God didn’t give you your abilities for selfish purposes. They were given to benefit other people just as others were given abilities for your benefit. The Bible says, *“God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God’s*

generosity can flow through you. . . . Are you called to help others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then God will be given glory."⁹⁰

5. You bring God glory by telling others about him. God doesn't want his love and purposes kept a secret. Once we know the truth, he expects us to share it with others. This is a great privilege—introducing others to Jesus, helping them discover their purpose, and preparing them for their eternal destiny. The Bible says, *"As God's grace brings more and more people to Christ . . . , God will receive more and more glory."*⁹¹

Living the rest of your life for the glory of God will require a change in your priorities, your schedule, your relationships, and everything else. It will sometimes mean choosing a difficult path instead of the easy one. Even Jesus struggled with this. Knowing he was about to be crucified, he cried out, *"My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name."*⁹²

Jesus stood at a fork in the road. Would he fulfill his purpose and bring glory to God, or would he shrink back and live a comfortable, self-centered life? You face the same choice. Will you live for your own goals, comfort, and pleasure, or will you live the rest of your life for God's glory, knowing that he has promised

eternal rewards? The Bible says, “*Anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go . . . you’ll have it forever, real and eternal.*”⁹³

It’s time to settle this issue. *Who* are you going to live for—yourself or God? You may hesitate, wondering whether you will have the strength to live for God. Don’t worry! God will give you what you need if you will just make the choice to live for him. The Bible says, “*Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God.*”⁹⁴

Also, don’t feel that you must have all of your questions answered before you commit. You will always have questions for the rest of your life. I have been a follower of Christ for over forty years, and I *still* have questions and doubts about some things I read in the Bible. But those questions have not prevented me from enjoying a relationship with Jesus Christ. I don’t have to understand how internal combustion works in order to benefit from a car. I don’t have to understand the chemistry of digestion in order to enjoy a steak. Likewise, I wish someone had told me that I could accept Christ into my life even with all my doubts and questions. You can accept him, too.

Right now God is inviting you to live for his glory by fulfilling the purposes he made

you for. It's really the only way to live. Everything else is just *existing*. Real life begins by committing yourself completely to Jesus Christ. If you are not sure you have done this, all you need to do is *receive* and *believe*. The Bible promises, "*To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*"⁹⁵ Will you accept God's offer?

First, believe. Believe God loves you and made you for his purposes. Believe you're not an accident. Believe you were made to last forever. Believe God has chosen you to have a relationship with Jesus, who died on the cross for you. Believe that no matter what you've done, God wants to forgive you. Ask him to forgive you and help you change—and he will!

Second, receive. Receive Jesus Christ into your life by allowing him to become your Lord (manager, boss, the one in control) and Savior (who died to pay the penalty for everything you've ever done wrong). Receive his forgiveness for your sins. Receive his purpose and peace. Receive his power to help you fulfill your life purpose. The Bible says, "*Whoever accepts and trusts the Son gets in on everything, life complete and forever!*"⁹⁶

Right now, regardless of where you are reading this, I invite you to bow your head and quietly whisper the prayer that will change your eternity: "*Jesus, I believe in you and I receive*

you. Thank you for dying on the cross to pay for all my sins. As much as I know how, I ask you to come into my life and help me learn to know you, trust you, and love you.” Go ahead.

If you sincerely meant that prayer, congratulations! Welcome to the family of God! You are now ready to discover and start living God’s purpose for your life. I urge you to tell someone about it. You’re going to need support. If you will visit the website www.purposedrivenlife.com, or email info@purposedrivenlife.com, you can tell me of your decision, and I’ll send you some free material to get you started on your new spiritual journey.

Point to Ponder: Who are you going to live for—yourself or God?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

-  Did you pray the prayer above?
-  If you haven’t yet opened your life to Christ, what are you waiting on?
-  Who could you tell about your decision to follow Christ and begin living a purpose-driven life? Write down some names and tell someone today.

If you'd like information on how to continue this spiritual journey, visit www.purposedrivenlife.com.

You will also want to read the global bestseller *The Purpose-Driven Life*, available in bookstores or online.

We want to hear from you. Please send your comments about this booklet to us in care of zreview@zondervan.com.
Thank you.

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Notes

1. Job 12:10 Today's English Version (TEV).
2. Romans 8:6 The Message (Msg).
3. Matthew 16:25 (Msg).
4. Hugh S. Moorhead, comp., *The Meaning of Life According to Our Century's Greatest Writers and Thinkers* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1988).
5. 1 Corinthians 2:7 (Msg).
6. Ephesians 1:11 (Msg).
7. David Friend, ed., *The Meaning of Life* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), 194.
8. Psalm 138:8 New International Version (NIV).
9. Psalm 139:15 (Msg).
10. Psalm 139:16 Living Bible (LB).
11. Acts 17:26 (NIV).
12. Ephesians 1:4 (Msg).
13. James 1:18 New Century Version (NCV).
14. Michael Denton, *Nature's Destiny: How the Laws of Biology Reveal Purpose in the Universe* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 389.
15. Isaiah 45:18 God's Word Translation (GWT).
16. 1 John 3:2 (Msg).
17. 1 John 4:8.
18. Isaiah 46:3–4 (NCV).
19. Romans 12:3 (Msg).
20. Genesis 4:12 (NIV).
21. Psalm 32:1 (LB).
22. Job 5:2 (TEV).
23. 1 John 4:18 (Msg).
24. Matthew 6:24 New Living Translation (NLT).
25. Isaiah 49:4 (NIV).
26. Job 7:6 (LB).
27. Job 7:16 (TEV).
28. Jeremiah 29:11 (NCV).
29. Ephesians 3:20 (LB).

30. Proverbs 13:7 (Msg).
31. Isaiah 26:3 (TEV).
32. Ephesians 5:17 (Msg).
33. Philippians 3:13 (NLT).
34. Philippians 3:15 (Msg).
35. Romans 14:10b, 12 (NLT).
36. John 14:6 (NIV).
37. Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NLT).
38. 2 Corinthians 5:1 (TEV).
39. Philippians 3:7 (NLT).
40. 1 Corinthians 2:9 (LB).
41. Matthew 25:34 (NIV).
42. C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: Collier Books, 1970), 184.
43. Psalm 33:11 (TEV).
44. Ecclesiastes 7:2 Contemporary English Version (CEV).
45. Hebrews 13:14 (LB).
46. 2 Corinthians 5:6 (LB).
47. Romans 12:2 (TEV).
48. 2 Chronicles 32:31 (NLT).
49. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (TEV).
50. James 1:12 (GWT).
51. Psalm 24:1 (TEV).
52. Genesis 1:28 (TEV).
53. 1 Corinthians 4:7 (NLT).
54. 1 Corinthians 4:2 (NCV).
55. Matthew 25:14–29.
56. Matthew 25:21 (NIV).
57. Luke 16:11 (NLT).
58. Luke 12:48 (NIV).
59. Job 8:9 (NLT).
60. Psalm 39:4 (LB).
61. Psalm 119:19 (NLT).
62. 1 Peter 1:17 (GWT).
63. Philippians. 3:19–20 (NLT).
64. James 4:4 (Msg).
65. 2 Corinthians 5:20 (NLT).

66. 1 Peter 2:11 (Msg).
67. 1 Corinthians 7:31 (NLT).
68. 2 Corinthians 4:18 (Msg).
69. John 16:33; 16:20; 15:18–19.
70. 2 Corinthians 4:18 (NIV).
71. 1 Peter 2:11 (GWT).
72. Hebrews 11:13, 16 (NCV).
73. Psalm 19:1 (NIV).
74. Hebrews 1:1-3 (NCV).
75. John 8:12 (NIV).
76. Hebrews 1:3 (NIV); also 2 Corinthians 4:6 (LB).
77. John 1:14 (GWT).
78. 1 Chronicles 16:24; Psalm 29:1; 66:2; 96:7;
- 2 Corinthians 3:18.
79. Revelation 4:11 (NLT).
80. Romans 3:23 (NIV).
81. Isaiah 43:7 (TEV).
82. John 17:4 (NLT).
83. 1 Tim. 6:21 (LB).
84. Romans 6:13 (NLT).
85. 1 John 3:14 (CEV).
86. Romans 15:7 (NLT).
87. John 13:34–35 (NIV).
88. 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT).
89. Philippians 1:11 (NLT); see also John 15:8 (GWT).
90. 1 Peter 4:10-11 (NLT); see also 2 Corinthians 8:19 (NCV).
91. 2 Corinthians 4:15 (NLT).
92. John 12:27–28 New American Standard Bible (NASB).
93. John 12:25 (Msg).
94. 2 Peter 1:3 (Msg).
95. John 1:12 (NIV).
96. John 3:36 (Msg).

I have intentionally varied the Bible translations used for two important reasons. First, no matter how wonderful a translation is, it has limitations. Second, and even more important, is the fact that we often miss the full impact of familiar Bible verses, *not* because of poor translating, but simply because they have become so familiar! We *think* we know what a verse says because we have read it or heard it so many times. Then when we find it quoted in a book, we skim over it and miss the full meaning. Therefore I have deliberately used paraphrases in order to help you see God's truth in new, *fresh* ways.

Also, since the verse divisions and number were not included in the Bible until 1560 A.D., I haven't always quoted the *entire* verse, but rather focused on the phrase that was appropriate. My model for this is Jesus and how he and the apostles quoted the Old Testament. They often just quoted a phrase to make a point.

- CEV *Contemporary English Version*, New York: American Bible Society (1995)
- GWT *God's Word Translation*, Grand Rapids: World Publishing, Inc. (1995)
- LB *Living Bible*, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers (1979)
- Msg *The Message*, Colorado Springs: Navpress (1993)
- NASB *New American Standard Bible*, Anaheim, CA: Foundation Press (1973)
- NCV *New Century Version*, Dallas: Word Bibles (1991)
- NIV *New International Version*, Colorado Springs: International Bible Society (1978, 1984)
- NLT *New Living Translation*, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers (1996)
- TEV *Today's English Version*, New York: American Bible Society (1992)
(Also called *Good News Translation*)

