

You Can Live On Purpose

Now that you've read *The Purpose-Driven Life*, where do you go from here? God wants to show you why He made you.

Millions of people all over the world—Christians and non-Christians alike—have read Rick Warren's best-selling book *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Hundreds of churches have participated in the 40 Days of Purpose program. Yet at the end of the 40 days, most people—though convinced God created them for a purpose—still do not know what their purpose is.

Do you know your purpose? Do you believe it's possible to know what it is? I hope your answer to both questions is yes, but if not, take hope—and get ready. The real work begins on the 41st day.

God is a God of purpose. He has something for you to do that only you can do. He has something for you to be that only you can be. If God wants you to do His will—and He does—then He must tell you what that will is. He must reveal to you your purpose.

Your purpose is more than just worshiping God or living a life that brings Him glory. He calls all of us to do that—but how specifically you do that is your purpose.

Everyone everywhere wants to know his or her purpose. I discovered mine years ago after I was involved in a failed business venture.

I prayed, "God, if You didn't create me to start this

business, what did You create me to do?" To be honest, I didn't expect an answer. I was just trying to convince God to save my business.

But He did answer me. I saw that my purpose was and is "to create order out of chaos."

In the 25 years since that day, I have discovered that the Lord is more motivated to have me fulfill my purpose than I am motivated to pursue it. I never have to go looking for chaos; the Lord always brings chaos to me. He has consistently drawn me to situations in which I have helped people, ministries and businesses create order out of chaos—not only in the United States but also in 30 other countries.

From my own journey toward finding and fulfilling my purpose, I have coined the phrase "PurposeQuest" because purpose is a journey, not a destination. You begin your search and reinvent yourself at many different points during your life. Your purpose quest acts like a funnel that continues to narrow you to your greatest point of effectiveness.

Purpose Is Specific

Just before Jesus died He said to the Father: "'I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4, NKJV). Purpose is a specific work that God has assigned for you to do.

If Jesus glorified God by finishing the work the Father gave Him to do—that is, by fulfilling His purpose—then you will do the same. His "work" was to "seek and save the lost," and He never had to work to find the lost. The lost always came

looking for Him (and still do).

In my own life, I've never applied for a job or looked for work. I've never had to go looking for chaos; chaos has always come looking for me. That's the power of purpose.

Because God is motivated to help you fulfill your purpose, He will bring opportunities to you. Often these opportunities seem so natural they are easy to overlook. Often when people discover their purpose, their response is: "That's it? But it was there all along. I was looking for something more dramatic, more spiritual."

When you are involved in your purpose, it will be almost second nature for you, and that's why it's easy to overlook. Consider these simple but profound purpose statements that people have shared with me at PurposeQuest seminars:

1. To write things that bring others joy
2. To speak a word in season to those who are weary and brokenhearted
3. To untangle knots and tie up loose ends
4. To share with the world the message of God's mercy through music
5. To help others shine
6. To share the Word of God with the business world
7. To help others acquire, retain, and distribute wealth and prosperity

Your purpose is specific and practical, often something that will serve the needs of other people. In short, it's what you do best.

Others have probably seen your purpose and commented on it to you, telling you how effective you are in certain areas. You may have overlooked what they've said, however, because what you do and who you are may not seem as special to you as it is to them.

Wear the Right Armor

As you journey on your purpose quest, you may find that you have tried to be who others think you should be or do what you think you should do. Unless you know your purpose, that is what will happen.

David is a good example. As he was preparing to fight Goliath, King Saul tried to outfit David in armor that was not designed for him:

"So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, 'I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them.' So David took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:38-40).

I'm sure Saul had the best intentions as he dressed David in his own tunic, armor and helmet. After all, David was going to fight Goliath, the champion of the Philistines. Saul thought David would need what Saul himself wore.

But remember that Saul was “an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others” (1 Sam. 9:2, NIV). The armor that fit Saul so well proved to be too big and clumsy for David.

Everywhere I travel and speak, I see people wearing armor that doesn't fit them. They have put on what they thought they should wear or what they saw someone else wearing, but it isn't them—and often they are unhappy. A woman in Zimbabwe, where I minister frequently, recently wrote me:

“When I was in school I loved art, all forms of art—painting, drawing, sculpture—and I was really good at it. I also loved the performing arts; the stage was where it all lit up for me. I was drama leader in my final year of high school and I even directed my very first play when I was 18.

“When I finished school, I went to [the] university, where I studied law. I became a ‘typical’ law student—very conservative, always with books in hand and not at all artistic. The arts students at [the] university were always so distinct from everyone else, they stuck out with their brightness and ‘weirdness.’ I was secretly jealous.

“I came back to Zimbabwe with my law degree and a wardrobe of black, gray and brown suits. I hadn't touched a paintbrush since high school and basically buried my talent for about six years. I still appreciated art though.

“When I heard your message about purpose and creativity, I was really inspired. I am a creative person! In response I went out and bought some paintbrushes, paints and a sketchbook on Saturday. Part of me was thinking: This is a little too

enthusiastic. You're not going to find the time to do any of this. ... You don't have it in you anymore. But another part of me thought, Maybe this is very compulsive, but at least I have my tools now and I am going to try! I am sitting here in my black suit, but I know that there is so much color on the inside of me."

If you want to be a person of purpose, you must be true to who you are, not to who someone else thinks you should be. It is tempting to take on the armor of your culture, trying to be who others say is acceptable or respectable, but you can't dress in someone else's purpose and try to make it your own.

David knew how he fought best and what worked for him. Armor may have worked for Saul, but not for David. David took it off and stayed true to who he was, who God created him to be. By doing so, he defeated a superior foe in the power of his own gifts and purpose.

How about you? Whose armor are you wearing? Are you having trouble moving because you are weighed down by the expectations or good advice of some well-meaning person? Are you "clanking around," wearing the armor and tunic that belong to another?

The goal of your purpose quest is to find out who you are and see that person as good enough for God to use. If you're good enough for God, shouldn't you also be good enough for yourself?

An optometrist from Uganda wrote me: "I have finally been released from the great guilt I was unknowingly carrying around. I did not realize that a number of people actually had

two careers in their lifetime.

“Because of the money and effort that went into gaining my optometry career, I thought it would be selfish of me to give it up. But you made me realize that it can be done. I had conformed to what [I thought] society [in the shape of my family and friends] required for me, and though I was successful I was not fulfilled.

“I now know what makes me tick, what will fulfill me and allow me to fulfill God’s purpose in my life. Already I am seeking out the consultants [who] will allow me to shape the path to my new career. I also realize it will not come overnight but I need to start making the steps, and when I finally leave my optometry career it will not be with regret or guilt.”

Clarify Your Purpose

How much are you willing to “give” to define who you are and who you are not? Would you spend 15 minutes a day? Would you ask those closest to you how they see you and what they think your strengths are? If you are willing to spend the time, consider prayerfully and diligently pursuing the answers to the following questions:

1. What situations seem to seek you out that you don’t have to go looking for? Is there a problem that always finds its way to you to be solved? Is there a certain type of person to whom you find yourself drawn and with whom you enjoy effective work or ministry? What kinds of jobs or ministries have given you the most joy?

2. What things have people complimented you about during the

years that you don't think are very spiritual or special? Very often these things hold clues to your purpose.

3. Is there a passage of Scripture that is especially meaningful because it summarizes who you are and what you do best?

4. What would you do with your life if money weren't an issue?

5. What do you do that causes you to forget what time it is? What can you do and forget to eat?

I suggest that you start a journal in which you record the answers to these questions. Proverbs says that diligently seeking the Lord is always rewarded:

"My son [or daughter], if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:1-4, emphasis added).

As you walk out your purpose quest, I challenge you to make clarifying your purpose a top priority. After you have discovered it, you then must see how best to fulfill it in the will of God.

But first, seek and keep on seeking your purpose. If you don't give up, the Lord will reward you with clarity and direction, just as He did this woman in England:

"My purpose is to bring more joy and happiness into the world. I do this through my sense of humor and sense of fun and also through dance and my own personal brand of drama and entertainment and much laughter. It is my desire that people should always feel happier and more uplifted for having been in my presence.

"My two life-defining passages from the Bible are 'The joy of the Lord is my strength' [Neh. 8:10] and 'A merry heart does good, like medicine' [Prov. 17:22]. And as an aside, I work as a legal secretary [but that is not my purpose]. What do you think of that! I feel so much better now!"

Don't let the purpose momentum stop in your life. Don't stop on the 40th day. Finish your search.

No one can promise when or how you will find your purpose, but you will do so if you don't give up. Continue to move forward and devote as many days as needed to complete the job. Are you up to the task? Be a person of purpose and let the world see the real you, the person God intended you to be all along.

Purpose Statements From the Bible

The Bible features the stories of men and women who knew their purpose. Consider the purpose statements for some of these people and see if they hold any clues for your own life's mission:

8. Jesus: To seek and save the lost (see Luke 19:10)
9. Paul: To take the gospel to the Gentiles (see Gal. 2:7)
10. Peter: To take the gospel to the Jews (see Gal. 2:7)

11. Joseph the Levite from Cyprus: To be “Barnabas,” the son of encouragement (see Acts 4:36-38)
 12. Tabitha: To do good and help the poor (see Acts 9:36)
 13. Moses: To rescue his enslaved people (see Acts 7:25)
 14. David: To be king over Israel (see 1 Sam. 16:1-14)
 15. Esther: To intercede on behalf of Israel (see Esth. 4:12-14)
 16. Adam and Eve: To be fruitful and increase, to subdue and rule the Earth
(see Gen. 1:28)
 17. Abraham: To be a great nation and a blessing to other nations
(see Gen. 12:2)
 18. Joshua: To lead the people to inherit the land (see Josh. 1:6)
 19. Isaiah: To speak to the people on God’s behalf (see Is. 6:9)
 20. Andrew and Peter: To be fishers of men (see Matt. 4:19)
 21. Bezalel: To be skillful in all kinds of crafts (see Ex. 31:1-6)
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