

LIFE ON PURPOSE 7

“LIVING ON PURPOSE”

“You can make many plans, but the Lord’s purpose will prevail.”
Proverbs 19:21

We’ve just spent 6 weeks attempting to answer the question; “What on earth am I here for?” We’ve discovered that God has arranged 5 primary purposes for our existence:

We are planned to bring pleasure to God through our lives of worship,

We are formed to enjoy fellowship in God’s family.

We are created to discipline our spiritual lives until we become like Christ,

We are shaped with uniqueness to serve God and God’s world,

We are made with a mission to spread the Love of God throughout the world.

We’ve also discovered one underlying principle: **Our life is not about us**; it’s ultimately about God. Our purpose in life is not to worship the gods we make of things, or the gods we make of ourselves, but to worship the God who made us. Our purpose in life is not what we get out of the relationships we are in, but what we can offer to those in the circle of our lives. Our purpose in life is not necessarily to be happy, but to be holy, like God. Our purpose in life is not how others serve us, but how we follow Jesus in serving others. Our purpose in life is not just that we receive the good news and new life, but that we pass that good news on to others, because that is what God told us to do.

My purpose today is to try and help us begin to live this Purpose Driven Life. It makes little sense and less impact to leave this 7 week effort as a mere academic or intellectual or even spiritual exercise; it must impact the way we live our lives.

I believe that for us to be able to incorporate these purposes into our lives we have to come to an underlying understanding about 4 predominate issues that each of us face in our lives that are specifically addressed by understanding, accepting, and obediently applying the truths of the Purpose Driven Life. I want to explore those 4 issues, and help us resolve them so we might actually and emphatically live God centered, Jesus motivated, and Spirit Directed Purpose Driven Lives. Here then are the 4 great issues of life:

LIFE'S 4 GREAT ISSUES, AND THE QUESTIONS THAT REVEAL THEM:

1. IDENTITY (WHO AM I?)

All of us want to know who we are. Are we are more then the sum total of our cumulative DNA, are we more than the by-product of our parents love, are we more than the influences of our upbringing, our educations, and even our high and low experiences of life? Who are we? It is during the early formative years that most people explore and discover who they are, though some wrestle with this struggle all their lives, and largely do so for one important reason.

Many people move the natural childhood search for identity well into and sometimes even well beyond adulthood, for one very obvious reason; they are looking for identity in the wrong places. Most of us look for identity in comparing ourselves with other people. Paul apparently did too, listen"

"So we have stopped evaluating others by what the world thinks about them. Once I mistakenly thought of Christ that way, as though he were merely a human being. How differently I think about Him now! What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone, a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:16-17

We are all created by God, we are all loved by Jesus Christ, and we can all be saved through the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

We become Children of God by putting our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and by living in yielded obedience to the Holy Spirit. That, my friends, is the only way to truly discover who we really are, and the only way to live an authentic, human, Purpose Driven Life.

I had a professor in seminary who espoused that only those people, who live in a vital relationship with God, are authentically and fully human. That's a pretty dramatic statement, when you think of all the people we all know who have no intentional relationship with God. But if we consider and accept that we are all created and loved by God, then those who choose to disallow any influence of that God into their lives, then, yes, in a sense, they are living, less than whole, lives; not availing themselves of all there is to help make them fully human, fully holy, and even fully happy! Being all you can be is not about joining the Army, it's about joining God in the hardest adventure you'll ever love!

2. INTIMACY (WHO WILL LOVE ME?)

Many people wrestle with this great question all their lives, though most young people and young adults usually settle the question during later childhood, through surviving the teen years, and particularly during the 20's when most of us still marry. It is a burning question that is complicated for many people reared in less than loving homes, but it's not insurmountable.

We were created by a loving God, and placed in a loving family (hopefully). That is part of the reason God wants us to belong, because we need each other, to love each other. We have been given the capacity to love, as one of the attributes of God. And, also from God's nature; the desire to be loved has been deeply planted in the soil of our souls.

We become loving human beings by receiving God's love, (and again, hopefully,) primarily through our human families. But, we will only discover complete and authentic intimacy through a relationship with God. Not even the best families can give us the best of God's love, and not even the worst of human families can disqualify us from the best of God's love.

This is a critical issue for many young people today, and here is why. The most critical phase of a young person's search for intimacy, often coincides with their parents need to be fully and completely engaged in their careers.

So what often happens? Many young persons begin to look outside their families for that someone who will love me, and meet my needs for intimacy. 2 things must be addressed. 1) Parents, please be careful to fully weigh the differences between 'need' and 'want'. I'm not trying to make you parents feel guilty who legitimately have to work one, two, or even three jobs to provide for your family, I'm just pleading for you to not neglect what your young people really want and NEED, and that is YOU! 2) The church can play a significant role in providing ministry for and with youth and children. We can be a supplemental tool used by God to reinforce the values you hold, and counter the values that bombard all of us through the conduit of the cesspool of our culture.

Who of us doesn't know of some wrecked or wayward young person searching for love in all the wrong places? Legitimate intimacy is found only in a personal loving relationship with God, and is most often revealed through a loving family. Finding intimacy is a necessity in order to live the Purpose Driven Life.

3. INFLUENCE (WHAT AM I DOING THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE?)

Most of us adults come to a point in our lives when we begin to ask some hard questions.

We realize that making a difference is becoming more important than making money. We realize that making a life is becoming more important than making a living. We begin to question how we will live our lives, not just what we will do with our lives.

We don't all share these questions, but we who share life with Christ, ought to be asking them! For newly marrieds and young 'establishing career' people; paying the bills, school loans, and buying the American Dream house, often take center stage, but at some point, we will begin to consider life at a deeper level. Some people start the questioning earlier; some never get around to it.

Our world has been and will be for a while predominated by the baby boom generation. We are leaving a suspect legacy. The BB generation's will to succeed and grow rich has left shattered families, and a fractured culture in their wake. Their push for the top has left some trampled and crushed. Thankfully, succeeding generations are realizing the lack, and reversing the trend. We are seeing a more altruistic generation emerging right now, which cares more deeply about others, and is more concerned about making life different for themselves and making a difference in life for others!

We were created by God and called by Jesus to raise families and make our world a different place from how we found it. It's not about extracting as much as we can out of life that will give us ultimate fulfillment, but about what we might contribute to the good life of ours, and of others. Whom can we influence? How can we make our lives count for something good?

I know we have large group of people in this church in this group. Many of you have had conversations with me, some since considering this book; about making your life count for more than just a personal bottom line!

I commend you for asking the question, because it is one of life's greatest! Asking (and eventually answering) the question will not go unnoticed by God. It is built within us, that those of us who love God will tire of the rats always winning, and search for a better yardstick with which to measure our lives. Keep searching, keep seeking, God will be faithful to show you where and how to best extend your influence. I'm sure of it!

4. IMPACT (WHAT HAVE I DONE THAT MATTERS?)

This last issue, like the three before it, relates to a specific age or time or season of life; in this case, older adulthood. Though it is an issue for many of us at various times in our lives, we become more persistent in asking and demanding an answer as our life closes in on the end. Like the final scene in "Saving Private Ryan", the old man turns to his wife and demands: "Have I been a good man?" We all want an answer to the question; "Is my life having an impact?" "Does what I have done matter?"

As we approach the end of our lives many of us wish we might have some other standard to measure our lives than the bottom line of our bank account, or the sum total of our possessions. But for many who live their lives devoid of God, that's all they have to look forward to; passing on their possessions.

God has made us for eternity, to live forever in a destination of our own choosing; and the closer we get to stepping over that line from this life to the next, the more time we ought to be considering, 'what will be my legacy?' 'How will I be remembered?' 'Have I made a difference?' It's not likely we'll get huge libraries dedicated to our life and legacy, but what does that really matter? We ought to be more concerned about living faithfully and serving honorably, and giving graciously, and loving joyfully, and worshipping wholeheartedly, and living purposefully!

We ought to write our epitaph early in life, and then live it out, rather than leaving it to those left behind to try to capture our essence, which too often gets boiled down to 'he was a good man.' 'Or she was a good mother.' This is not a plea for your estates and wills be made over to the church, but a challenge to do what you can to leave your mark on this planet before you escape to the next world! Purposeful living is not a popular 40-day church program, it is an injunction to abandon our self-serving lives and give ourselves away, for a cause that will outlive us! One of my favorite quotes is this: "I would rather be a failure in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than a success in a cause that will ultimately fail." That is what the Christian life really is! Jesus described it thus:

"What shall it profit us to gain the whole world, at the cost of our very souls?"

A good question! A great American missionary to Central America who literally gave his life serving native people used to say: "He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep for that which he cannot lose." What ever we do on this earth to serve ourselves, and increase our assets, will only partially pleasure us, and then only as long as we are here. What can we take with us when we leave? The knowledge that we have lightened someone else's load, the warmth of knowing we have served in the shadow of Jesus, the knowledge that we have done our best to leave the world better than when we arrived. The joy of taking someone with us! You've got two hands, one to hang tightly to God, the other to reach someone else for Jesus.

Life on Purpose. It's not to late, whether you are lost in the wilderness of self-discovery, or searching for intimacy in all the wrong places, or plagued with the hope your work and life is making a difference, or lamenting on a legacy that might have been. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Begin it with God, live it with Jesus, end it well. Let us pray

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OUR LIFE IS NOT ULTIMATELY ABOUT _____, IT’S ABOUT _____

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2. _____ (WHO WILL LOVE ME?)

3. _____ (WHAT AM I DOING THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE?)

4. _____ (WHAT HAVE I DONE THAT MATTERS?)

“What shall it profit us to gain the whole world, at the cost of our very souls?”

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for that which he cannot _____.”