

805 *What Is My Purpose in Life?*

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

Someone has said, "Fear not that your life shall come to an end, but rather fear that it shall never have a beginning." God made each us for a purpose; we are not here by accident or by chance. What impact are you making with your life? Stay with us for a meaningful Bible study. Today we're asking the question, "What is my purpose in life?" Perhaps a better question is "what is God's plan and purpose for my life?" Many people live empty lives because they have never made a decision as to what they want to do with their lives. Many people never make a difference in life because they fail to embrace anything bigger than themselves. They live their lives aimlessly, going to work each day and enjoying themselves each evening. My friend, if I asked you what your goal in life is, what would you say? What are you doing with your life? What difference have you made in the lives of people you know? When you enter eternity and face God, what will you tell Him you have done with your life?

I occasionally notice people who seem never to know where they are going; they drift through life without any direction or reason. They do what is necessary to "get by" but never push themselves to rise above mediocrity. They live their whole lives without a thought about God. They don't seem to understand they were created for a purpose; rather they blunder through life trying to avoid problems. They remind me of the rich farmer in Luke 12 whose land produced bountifully. All he could think to do was to build larger barns and lay up his goods for himself. He never gave a thought to his neighbor and never gave a thought to God. Totally selfish, he dreamed of relaxing, eating, drinking and being merry.

You remember the rest of this Bible story. God told him, "You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?" The Lord Jesus said in Luke 12:21, "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Some people set out to live their lives for their own pleasure—that's their purpose in life. Such a purpose, however, is as Solomon said in Ecclesiastes, *Vanity of vanities,*" says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." You may get what you want for a short time, but its promise is empty. It is a chasing after the wind.

The apostle Paul gives far better instruction on what is meaningful in life. He gives us a purpose that is full of life and hope. By inspiration Paul said in Colossians 3:1-4, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." That is not simply a goal; it is an eternal goal. Man was created to have a relationship with God. If we miss that purpose, we have missed the very reason for our existence.

Well, why are we here? What is our purpose in life? The apostle John wrote in Revelation 4:11 of the praise the twenty-four elders gave to Christ. They said, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created." We were created to love and to honor God. God said in Isaiah 43:6-7, "Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth, Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made." We are here because God willed us to be here, and we were made for His glory! Psalm 149:4 says, "For the LORD takes pleasure in His people."

What about us glorifies or pleases God? What does God really want from us? Jesus said in John 8:28-29, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My

own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." God wants us to love Him enough to listen to His words and to obey Him. Jesus said He always did the things that are pleasing to the Father, and so should we! We ought to make it the business of our lives to do what pleases the Father.

God wants your complete love. He wants to be first in your life. In Mark 12:28-30, one of the scribes came and heard them [the Sadducees] arguing [with Jesus], and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' God wants all of you—your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength. He wants you to love Him, the way He loves you. He has given you His best, and He wants the best from you.

Without love, we can never please God. You'll remember the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." No matter what we do, it must be done in love with love and to love.

The problem with some of the Corinthians is that their motives were bad. They had miraculous gifts to do amazing things. But in their immaturity, they began to exalt themselves and disrespect others. Paul told them in 1 Corinthians 8:1-3, "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. [Another version says: "Knowledge puffs up but love builds up."] If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him." God is interested in the heart not in appearances. He wants people to act from genuine motives not for show.

Love for God means that I will place Him first in my life, before myself and before others. You'll remember what Jesus said in Luke 14:25-26. The Bible says: Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." God will not accept second place, third place, or any place but first. To follow the Lord means putting Him before our own desires or even our family.

On one occasion Paul was preaching God's will to some Jewish brethren who didn't agree with him. By inspiration Paul asked in Galatians 1:10, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men?" He then concludes: "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ." You cannot serve God if you are listening to the will of men. You can't please God and put the favor of men first. God will simply never take second place to anyone or anything. He demands to be first in everything. James said in James 4:4, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Love expresses itself in obedience. Love listens enough to take seriously what it hears. In John 14:23-24 Jesus answered and said to him [Judas, not Iscariot], "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and

make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me." As Christians we don't obey the Lord simply because we're afraid of going to hell; we obey God out of love and faith.

Love for God expresses itself in genuine worship. One who loves, adores and praises the person he/she loves. To know God is to love Him. The Lord said in John 4:23, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers." A true worshiper sings from the heart filled with thankfulness, prays fervently to a Father he knows is listening, remembers and communes with the Lord in the Supper each Lord's day, gives generously out of joy and love, and listens when God speaks in His Word. A true worshiper thinks about what God desires not what pleases himself. He does not substitute entertainment for worship.

Love expresses itself in righteous living. Anyone who loves God wants to please Him by the way He lives. Christians avoid sin, not because they want to be hateful to sinners but because they want to show their love and respect for God's will. A person who loves God will hunger and thirst for righteousness. He not only wants to be right, he also wants his neighbor to be right with God. He sees the utter value of righteous living and sees the pain of the sinful lifestyle. God gives us His laws for our good. Every law of God is a blessing to us, because He loves us. He doesn't give us laws to box us in or dominate us; God gives us His laws to protect us.

God said in Ephesians 5:36-10, "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things [sinful acts] the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."

Love for God further expresses itself in Christian service. God said in Galatians 6:10, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Christian love always serves and does what it can to bless the spiritual and the physical lives of others both inside and outside of the church. The Bible describes Jesus as one who went about doing good. God said in Hebrews 13:15-16, "Through Him [Jesus] then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." One of the primary ways we glorify God is through doing good to others.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 25:34-40, "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

"Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'" Every act of kindness and love we do for another, it is as if we were doing that very thing for the Lord Jesus himself!

Now the real purpose of life is to love, please, and glorify God. If you were rating yourself from one to ten on how well you do these things, what would score be? One being the least and ten being the most, how much do you love God? How much does your life please God? How much does your life glorify God? But you see, these are the wrong questions. It is not how you judge yourself that matters; it is how God would judge you. Would God say you love Him, that you please Him, and that your life glorifies Him? You see, it is not what we perceive; it is what God perceives that matters. Are you living up to God's purpose for your life?

The purpose of life is a relationship filled with loving the Lord and serving Him. Many people feel unfulfilled because they are distracted by so many other things and have lost sight of the Lord Jesus. They have forgotten the cross, forgotten the Bible, forgotten prayer, and forgotten their commitment to the Lord. Then they wonder why life seems so empty and futile. C. S. Lewis, described fulfillment 50 years ago in these terms: "A car is made to run on petrol [gasoline], and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing." Lewis was right. There is no real, lasting happiness apart from a loving relationship with God. Maybe there is a hole in your heart because you have filled your life with everything but God. Solomon said in Prov. 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." God blesses those who give themselves to Him. In fact the Lord searches to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those who set their hearts upon serving Him (2 Chronicles 16:9).

A life with God must be built on trust. God will never mislead you. Trust is when you put your heart and life into His hands. You hear Him and do His will; you go where He sends; and you love like He loves. When you believe in Him, turn away from the world in repentance, confess the name of Christ before others, and are baptized, the Lord will cleanse you from sin and add you to His church (Acts 2:38-42). This is the beginning of a life relationship that gets better and better as you draw closer and closer to God. I hope you will trust God enough to put yourself into His hands and serve Him all your days. I hope you won't let anything come between you and your God that would keep you from living for Him. Let God be first and foremost in your life. Love Him and serve Him. When you do, you'll find life getting better and better.

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