

LIFE PURPOSE IN A NUTSHELL: A BIBLICAL APPROACH TO LIFE PURPOSE DISCOVERY

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WHAT IS LIFE PURPOSE?

Life purpose is the progressive realization of who God is and your willingness to be utilized to the full extent of His unique will for your life.

Life purpose is what your life is adding up to and *why*. It is the general aim toward which you are moving. It is the stuff of which life is made...the main thing...the core curriculum...the essence of life...the *why* of life which allows you to endure any *how*.

Life purpose is the meaningful journey toward a worthwhile ideal. It is the main reason for getting up each morning. It is the *raison d'être*—the reason for being.

It is not important that you go to work early and stay late; it is quite important that you ask yourself *why*. Why do you do what you do?

Because...you teach high school algebra, so what?
...you sell life insurance, so what?
...you write poetry, so what?
...you serve in the armed forces, so what?
...you appraise real estate, so what?
...you parent three young children, so what?

The answers to these questions have a lot to do with life purpose. Jobs do not give people purpose; people give jobs purpose.

Life purpose conquers preoccupation with self. It lives life at a level beyond self-esteem. Life purpose is giving-living; it is finding a need and filling it in a very unique way. It is relating the normally unrelated. It is the accomplishment of a beautiful dream.

Life purpose is an *examined* life which matures into selfless humility; life purpose becomes an *excellent* life when you progressively realize who God is and express your willingness to be utilized to the *full extent* of His unique will.

Life purpose is to live your life in such a way that the person who preaches your funeral doesn't have to stretch the truth.

Life purpose asks these questions:

Who is God?

Who am I?

Why am I?

DON'T ALL CHRISTIANS HAVE THE SAME PURPOSE?

A unique life purpose revealed and confirmed by God is your personal Holy Life Assignment.

Yes, all Christians do have the same purpose in the universal sense. You are to love God and to seek first His kingdom. You are to understand and to know God as you become more Christ-like and you are to go and make disciples of all nations as you treat others the way that you would like to be treated.

There is another purpose however, a *unique* sense of purpose, which is individual, distinct, unparalleled and most significant for each and every person who has a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The lack of a unique life purpose could very well be one of the most deadly forms of self-limitation. Most stress management experts agree that *purposelessness* is one of the most devastating stressors of our time.

Without purpose...problems are allowed to rule your life.

- ...your work becomes grievous.
- ...others expectations radically affect your choices.
- ...busyness substitutes for real accomplishment.
- ...past mistakes choke your dreams of the future.
- ...initiative and creativity are lulled to sleep.
- ...feelings dictate your behavior.
- ...the beautiful music inside you never comes out!

A unique life purpose expresses the *full measure* of the joy and love of Jesus Christ through your life message. Because you are salt and light (Matt. 5:13-14), because you are chosen and appointed (John 15:16), because you are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), because you are God's workmanship (Eph. 2:10), because you have been given a spirit of power, love and self-discipline (2 Tim 1:7), because you have been given direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:18), because you have been made complete in Christ (Col. 2:10) and because you truly believe in Him...God is able and willing to reveal Himself and what He has prepared for you in a most personal way.

A unique life purpose revealed and confirmed by God through the prompting of the Holy Spirit is your personal Holy Life Assignment. It is truly the internal appropriation of abundant living.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS IN DISCOVERING LIFE PURPOSE?

The life purpose process is not a microwave process, it is a slow, tenderizing process in which you allow God to set the timer.

The life purpose discovery process is an extraordinary challenge because it requires that you recognize the spiritual dimension of things. Would you consider that you are first and foremost a spiritual being? Spiritual beings crave significance and spiritual beings want to know why they are here.

Four common barriers in discovering life purpose are:

Lack of Commitment To *trifle* is to play or toy with something. God is a just and holy God who will not trifle with you nor allow you to trifle with Him. The trifler is frustrated and sometimes eliminated when it comes to knowing God's unique life purpose. Life purpose is not a curiosity search. Life purpose is a deep thing of God revealed by the Holy Spirit. The searcher of life purpose must be more than curious; the searcher must first be committed to doing God's will. Either you choose your way or you choose His. You can't have it both ways.

Logic What God has prepared for you is *revealed* through the Holy Spirit. Logic simply doesn't cut it when it comes to the deep things of God; it doesn't cut it because it doesn't go deep enough! Deep calls unto deep. No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. A trained and devoted intellect does not have the capacity to process the infinite wisdom of God. Life purpose does not come by human reason: it comes by God's revelation.

Unresolved Sin Unresolved sin is a burden of the worst kind because it results in guilt, anger, discouragement and other kinds of self-deprecating blockage which keep the Holy Spirit from working without restraint. Living with unresolved sin is a self-imposed life penalty. It is dragging around an emotional ball and chain everywhere you go. Unresolved sin can be removed *only* through God's ineffable mercy, grace and forgiveness.

Busyness Busyness destroys relationships, especially the relationship with God. Busyness is the agitation of the times. You cannot pray on the run; you cannot study on the run; you cannot listen on the run and you certainly cannot discover God's unique purpose for your life on the run. In order to know and understand God you must learn to be still. The life purpose process is not a microwave process; it is a slow, *tenderizing* process in which you allow God to set the timer.

HOW DO I DISCOVER GOD'S UNIQUE PURPOSE?

Discovering God's unique purpose for your life does not come through human reason. Life purpose comes through God's divine revelation.

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. --I Corinthians 2:9-10

Consider this life purpose discovery model as you progressively gain the proper posture to come before the LORD to gain His viewpoint of your life:

Past → **Present** → **Personality** → **Passions** →
Burdens → **Consecration** → **Purpose Statement**

Past Reflect on your parents' messages, personal and professional accomplishments, individual and group achievements and previous aptitude and intelligence tests in order to discover your *abilities*. (Example- you analyze data well and you write succinctly.)

Present Analyze your current roles, values, goals, financial commitments and mental/physical/spiritual condition in order to discover your *existing mindset*.

(Example- “Life now is unsettling--the pace is too quick, the debt is too high and the commitments are too many.”)

- Personality** Assess your personality pattern and giftedness in order to discover your *spiritual shape*. (Example-Driver/gift of teaching.)
- Passions** Search your heart to identify *people* and *issues* in order to discover what you really care about. (Example- Single parents/drugs & alcohol addiction.)
- Burdens** Humble yourself before the LORD and ask Him to specifically reveal any unresolved sin that is preventing the Holy Spirit from working *unrestricted* in your life. (It is essential at this point to allow for God Most High to fully exercise His discipline, His mercy and His grace on your behalf.)
- Consecration** In an attitude of fervent and effectual prayer, make a commitment to *obey* the LORD’S promptings, no matter what! (Commitment precedes revelation.) Then:
1. Bind the Enemy in the name of Jesus Christ
 2. Ask God to reveal His unique purpose for your life
 3. BE STILL
 4. Receive God’s promptings
 5. Begin a journal to capture His revelations

Remember, the perfecting process of your individual sanctification (including life purpose discovery) takes time. *Importunity* is when you *keep asking* God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

As you begin to set your heart and mind on things above and put to death what belongs to your earthly nature, God himself, the God of peace will sanctify you through and through. The process may include substantial change, a transformation of the way you think and even some inner brokenness.

Jesus himself, though he was surely perfect, was also *perfected* and actually learned obedience through suffering. Jesus surrendered His will to God’s will and Jesus certainly experienced strong crying and tears.

Take heart as God progressively brings you to the right condition so that you are as you should be. Keep in mind that the perfecting process of your individual sanctification does not necessarily *fix* that which is broken, rather, it *frees* you from the controlling power of that which is broken, as you learn to put no confidence in the flesh.

IS A LIFE PURPOSE STATEMENT REALLY NECESSARY?

A written life purpose revealed by God, shaped by God and designed to bring all the glory to God is the ultimate Declaration of Dependence.

YES! It is definitely to your advantage to capture in writing God’s revealed purpose for your life. Writing crystallizes thought and allows for your *expression* of God’s impressions to you.

You realize incredible benefits *in the process* of writing your life purpose:

1. Focus Just as a high powered lens renders a clear image and a magnifying glass converges the sun's rays to a central point to burn a hole in a piece of paper and a laser converts mixed frequencies into a more discrete frequency with much improved visibility and amplification...so a written life purpose focuses in on God's *summum bonum* (the chief good) for your life.

2. Momentum One of the greatest challenges in the life purpose process is simply *getting started*. There is a tendency to procrastinate on this contemplative project. Writing gets the ball rolling. It also keeps the ball rolling. It is far easier to steer an object that is moving than one that is standing still. A written life purpose helps you gain and sustain momentum.

3. Commitment A written life purpose is a commitment of the deepest kind. It communicates to the world your *reason for being*. It is a declaration of a most virtuous nature that paves the way for excellent living. A written life purpose revealed by God, shaped by God and designed to bring all the glory to God is the ultimate Declaration of Dependence. You not only communicate who you are, but more importantly, you boldly state *whose* you are.

4. Boundary A written life purpose provides a built-in boundary line to help you say no without feeling guilty to people and organizations that tug at your time blocks. It is easy to get *off purpose*, especially if you are an accommodating type of individual. The best way to *say no* is to have a *stronger yes*. A written life purpose is a very strong *yes!*

HOW DO I CRAFT A LIFE PURPOSE STATEMENT?

A life purpose statement is a deep thing of God revealed by the Holy Spirit. It is essential that you gain the right posture before coming to the LORD with your request for His most Holy Life Assignment. Several questions to ask at this point would be:

- Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your LORD and Savior?
- Have you made an unreserved commitment to do His will, no matter what?
- Have you dealt with God on *all* unresolved sin in your life?

If you have a sense of peace and there is no check in your spirit on any of these questions, then write this statement. "I exist to _____." The next step is simply to allow the LORD to fill in the missing part(s). Your answer (His revelation) may come in a word, a scripture, a prompting, a circumstance, through a friend or in some other way you would least expect. His ways are not your ways and His timing is not your timing. Your answer (His revelation) may come in a week; it may come next month or it may take several months or years. The important thing at this point is that your heart is right before the LORD and your commitment is with an unreserved abandon.

A life purpose statement might look like this:

“I exist to know and understand God as a prophet to nations and kingdoms and to go to everyone to whom God sends me and to say whatever God commands me to say to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.” --Jer. 1:7-9, 9:24

A more traditional life purpose statement might read:

“My purpose is to consistently experience God through study and prayer and to reflect His light into dark places by helping children solve real life problems through hope in Jesus Christ.”

My personal life purpose is:

“To daily seek the face of God, to exhort people to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and to minister refreshment along the way.”

The process of writing a life purpose statement can be one of the most meaningful experiences of your life and it can also be one of the most challenging experiences. Here are some questions to help you effectively navigate the process:

1. Is your prayer time with God in order? If not, why not?
2. Is there any unresolved sin as you reflect on your past? What are you doing about it?
3. Have you identified your strengths? When was the last time you took advantage of an aptitude test?
4. What is your temperament? When was the last time you took a personality assessment?
5. Do you know your spiritual gift(s)?
6. What do you really care about? Who are the people and what are the causes that interest you? If money were no object what would you do with your life?
7. What do you think about the most? Does this mindset need to be changed? Does it need to be acted upon? Is your current mindset a positive one? Is your current mindset pleasing to the LORD?
8. Does your life purpose statement include both a vertical and horizontal dimension?
Vertical--knowing God more and more
Horizontal--making Him known to others
9. Does your life purpose statement include a *distinctiveness*?
10. Does your life purpose stand the test of time, cultures and job functions?

Who are three people in your life that God has used to make you a better person? Would you be willing to share a rough draft of your life purpose statement with each one?

Are you willing to re-write and re-shape your life purpose statement as often as necessary until God finally confirms it with a sense of excitement in your spirit and a sense of peace in your soul?

When you are asked, “What on Earth are you doing for heaven’s sake?”...you will have an exciting answer, won’t you?

Amen (It is and shall be so)

LIFE PURPOSE BUZZWORDS

Attitude	A <i>habit</i> of thought; a state of mind.
Burden	A heavy load; something that is carried; anything you must bear or put up with; a load carried or toil borne to the point of exhaustion.
Consecration	An <i>expression</i> of your willingness to be in the hands of God; to dedicate; to make new; to renew; to perfect.
Fear	Holding a picture of what you <i>don't</i> want to happen; a negative vision.
Giftedness	Divine endowments (<i>special</i> abilities) given by God to you at your conversion to minister to others and to build up the body of Christ.
Goals	The <i>specifics</i> of what God would have you accomplish as you live out your unique purpose; specific and measurable purposes.
Importunity	An earnest and persistent request.
Mission	What you do as a result of who you are and why you exist.
Momentum	The movement of your ideas; the impetus of your purpose.
Motivation	Your motive expressed in action; goal-directed activity.
Passions	The people, issues and things you really care about.
Pertinacity	Constancy of purpose; holding firm to your course of action.
Planning	The process of crystallizing optimum solutions to foreseeable problems in order to reach your predetermined goals.
Prioritizing	The process of giving yourself a number of choices then assessing which ones you prefer and <i>why</i> .
Purpose	The general aim toward which you are moving; understanding the <i>why</i> in order to better endure the <i>how</i> of what you do.
Temperament	Your personality type; your manner of thinking, behaving and reacting.
Values	Your beliefs, ideals and worthwhile standards influenced by your parents, relatives, friends, teachers and society.
Vision	A picture of you achieving your purpose; your mental image of something new and/or the rearranging of the old in a new way.
Wisdom	Living life now in light of eternity; skill at living.

LIFE PURPOSE PRINCIPLES

1. In order to discover God's unique purpose for your life, you must first be committed to doing it. Commitment precedes revelation.
2. Life purpose does not come by human reason; life purpose comes through God's divine revelation.
3. Life purpose is a deep thing of God revealed by the Holy Spirit.
4. Discovering your life purpose often requires a clear passageway between you and God; therefore, it becomes quite necessary to remove the blockage of unresolved sin.
5. God's unique life purpose is often revealed in silence; therefore, it makes sense to create blocks of stillness in your schedule.
6. The way to be a blessing to the world and to experience the full measure of the joy of Jesus Christ is to cry out to God Most High who fulfills *his purpose* for you and to have a will completely yielded to God's will.
7. Life purpose often requires amendment of life.
8. Jobs do not give people purpose; people give jobs purpose.
9. In absence of purposeful goals, feelings will dictate your behavior.
10. The life purpose process is a slow, tenderizing process where the Holy Spirit is allowed to remove all that is still wrong and to supply all that is still wanting in order that your heart truly seeks to know and to do the will of God.

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Gary's life purpose is to daily seek the face of God, to exhort people to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and to minister refreshment along the way.

O'Malley Associates

O'Malley Associates is a Georgia-based training and consulting company dedicated to helping people excel at living. Seminar topics include:

Do It On Purpose—a biblical approach to discovering life purpose delivered in half-day, full-day and two-day formats.

Advanced Techniques For Personal Productivity—principles and processes to maximize time, reduce stress and get organized.

Five Ultimate Truths of Servant Leadership—an examination of proven principles to effectively lead others.

How to Get Unstuck—a motivational presentation to help individuals and organizations gain and sustain momentum; ideal for spouses, students, ministers, executives and anyone else who might experience an occasional rut.