

WHAT ON EARTH AM I HERE FOR?

The Purpose Driven Life – Part 1

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Sermon Outline Notes

LIFE'S 3 GREATEST QUESTIONS

1. QUESTION OF EXISTENCE: *WHY AM I ALIVE?*

"Why was I born? Was it only to have trouble and sorrow, to end my life in disgrace?" Jer. 20:18 (TEV)

"The Lord has made everything for His own purpose."
Prov. 16:4a (GW)

"Long before He laid down earth's foundations, He had us in mind, and settled on us as the focus of His love, to be made whole and holy by His love." Eph. 1:4 (Msg)

GOD: I WAS CREATED TO BE LOVED BY GOD.

2. QUESTION OF SIGNIFICANCE: *DOES MY LIFE MATTER?*

"My work all seems so useless! I have spent my strength for nothing and for no purpose at all." Isa. 49:4a (NLT)

"I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born." Isa. 44:2 (CEV)

"You... scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book!" Ps. 139:16 (LB)

"His plans endure forever; his purposes last eternally."
Ps. 33:11 (GN)

GOD: I WAS MADE TO LAST FOREVER.

"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." 2 Cor. 5:1 (TEV)

"Leave your impoverished confusion and live! Walk up the street to a life with meaning." Prov. 9:6 (Msg)

3. QUESTION OF INTENTION: **WHAT IS MY PURPOSE?**

"Why did you create us? For nothing?" Ps. 89:47 (NCV)

"Knowing God results in every other kind of understanding." Pr. 9:10b (LB)

GOD: I FIND MY PURPOSE BY GETTING TO KNOW GOD.

"For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible...everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him." Col 1:16 (Msg)

"It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for... part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone." Eph. 1:11 (Msg)

"It makes no difference who you are or where you're from—if you want God and are ready to do as he says, the door is open." Acts 10:35 (Msg)

Sermon Transcript

Take out your outlines. Welcome to 40 Days of Purpose. We're ready to start on this journey we've been planning for a long, long time. Today we're going to look at life's three greatest questions: 1) The question of existence – why am I alive? 2) the question of significance – does my life matter? and 3) the question of intention – what is my purpose?

Now this first question, the “Question of Existence: Why am I alive?” is not exactly a new question. It was asked thousands of years ago. In fact, Jeremiah asked it in Jeremiah 20:18, it says this “*Why was I born? Was it only to have trouble and sorrow, to end my life in disgrace?*” Now there've probably times in your life when you felt that way, too. Was I born just to have a bunch of problems? Was I put on this planet just to have heartache, grief and stress? Arthur Ashley Brilliant says “my life is a superb cast, but I can't figure out the plot.” Jack Hanley wrote, “I hope life isn't a joke, because I don't get it.”

A guy named Dr. Hugh Moorhead, who is the Chairman at the Department of Philosophy at the Northeastern University, once wrote to 250 well-known philosophers, scientists, writers and intellectuals of the world and asked them, “What is the purpose of Life.” And then he published all of their responses in a book. I read the book, and it was quite discouraging and depressing. Some of these people offered their best guesses. Some admitted they made up a purpose in life. Some admitted they didn't have any idea as to what the purpose of life was and if Dr. Moorhead knew, would be please let them know. Carl Jung, the famous psychiatrist said, “I don't know the meaning, the purpose of life, but it looks as if something were meant by it.” Isaac Asimov wrote, “As far as I can see, there is no purpose.” Joseph Taylor, the author of “I Have No Answers To The Meaning of Life And I No Longer Want to Search For Any.”

You know, those are tragic statements folks, because the life without purpose isn't a life worth living. It is no coincidence that the suicide rate in our society has gone up. It's now the No. 2 killer of teenage students. You see, if you take God out of the equation, you don't really have very many alternatives. You can try the Mystical approach – the mystical approach says “look within and find your purpose within.” You know if that really worked, all of us would know our purpose. I'm sure you've tried that. I have and I bet everyone else has, too. And I didn't find it there. It takes more than looking within.

I watched an Oprah Winfrey show a while back. Somebody told me she was going to do a session on discovering your purpose on life, so I taped it. I thought, this is going to be good. I want to hear what Oprah says is the purpose of life. At every single break during that hour show, she would say “Now, come back because we're going to tell you your purpose.” And so I came back every time and did they tell me it? – No. They didn't even come close. They didn't even attempt it. In fact, as the credits were rolling at the end of that Oprah Winfrey

show, she kind of looks at the credits and says, “And remember, you’ve got to figure it out by yourself.” Uh? I thought. I just wasted a whole hour. Looking within is not the answer.

Then you can try the Philosophical approach – the survivalist says, “The purpose of life is just to stay alive.” In other words, live as long as you can. The Naturalist says, “The purpose of life is just to perpetuate itself.” In other words, you’re just here for biological reasons. Rap artist, Ice T, wrote, “The only reason we’re here is to reproduce. Just chill out and reproduce. Keep the species alive.” Doesn’t that just motivate you to want to jump out of bed in the morning? It may motivate you to jump in to bed, I don’t know. The Hedonist writes, “The purpose of life is pleasure – have fun, party-hardy.” Those of you who have been in Orange County for a long time – do you remember that bumper sticker that read “It’s party time in Dana Point.” Remember that? The Materialist says, “Life is all about the acquisition of things.” Your life is measured by the things you own. You know the problem with that is that he who dies with the most toys, still dies. And so, these are not really satisfying answers.

The Mystical approach, the Philosophical approach or you can try the Self-Help approach. You can go into any bookstore and find hundreds of books, probably, that talk about discovering your life purpose. They all are basically the same thing. They say the same thing; “You’ve got to invent your purpose.” You’ve got to create your own purpose in life. And they all give the same basic approach – discover your dreams, go after your goals, have some ambitions, dream big dreams, aim high, believe you can achieve, have faith, figure out what you’re good at, never give up, involve other people. Now those are all good advice and they will, if you do those things, make you a success in life. But being a success and knowing your purpose in life are not the same thing. You can be a raving success in life and still never know, “What on earth am I here for?” What did God put me on this earth for? You see, the purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment. It’s far greater than your own happiness. Even your own peace of mind. You were made by God and you were made for God and you were put here for His purposes. And until you understand that, life isn’t going to make sense.

[OPTIONAL: SET UP AND INSERT SCENE ONE OF THE DRAMA. USE EITHER “THE FORTUNE” OR “THE INTERVIEW” FROM THE DRAMA SCRIPTS ON THE CAMPAIGN RESOURCE CD.]

Okay, why does God want us here? Why are we alive? Why are we on this planet? Is there a reason? Well, the Bible says this in Proverbs 16.4, “*The Lord has made everything (circle everything) for His own purpose.*” It’s for His purpose. Now God has never made anything without a purpose. Every rock has a purpose, every plant has a purpose, every animal has a purpose and if you’re alive, you have a purpose. If you want to know if God still has a purpose for your life, check your heart. If it’s still beating, God still has a purpose for you here on

earth. The truth is God has five purposes for your life. In the next 40 days we're going to look in detail at those five purposes. The five reasons God put you on this planet.

Today, though, I just want us to see God's motive. Look at this next verse, Ephesians 1:4, read it with me..."*Long before He laid down the earth's foundation, He had us in His mind and settled on us as the focus of His love to be made whole and holy by His love.*" Circle the phrase "*the focus of His love*". Cause if you don't get anything else as we start this 40 days, I want you to understand this, God says He made you, to love you. God made you to love you. You might want to write that down. You were created **to be loved by God**. God is love and God wanted to create something to love and so He created you. He didn't need you. He wasn't lonely. But He made you in order to love you. He didn't need you, He wanted you. And before we can talk about anything else, you have to understand this is what on earth you're here for – to be loved by God.

The second key question of life is the "Question of Significance: Does my life matter?" Isaiah asked this question in Isaiah 49:4a. He said, "*My work all seems so useless. I've spent my strength for nothing and for no purpose at all.*" You were made for meaning, and if you don't have a meaning and purpose in your life and you don't know why God put you on this planet, life doesn't make sense.

During World War II, there were prisoners in a Nazi concentration camp in Hungary, that were processing human sewage in a factory. The allies came along, bombed that factory and blew it apart. So the prisoners had nothing to do. The Nazi soldiers had the prisoners take all the rubble of that factory and move it to another field. The next day, they had them take that same rubble and move it back in reverse. The next day, they had to take that stuff and move it back and day after day they had no meaning, no purpose. It was just work doing the same thing over and over with no meaning and no purpose. Then something strange began to happen. The prisoners began to go crazy. They began to lose their will to live because there was no meaning, no purpose in their work. They were just moving bricks back and forth, back and forth. Many of them began to throw themselves in front of the guards trying to get shot. In essence, trying to commit suicide. Because you and I were made for meaning.

Now you're going to go through life living at one of three levels: The first and lowest level is what I call the Survival level. The Survival level is really where most live today. They're just in survival mode. They are just barely getting by. They're just existing. They're not living. They are controlled by their circumstances. They put in their time and live for the weekend. They're just in survival mode.

A step up from that, a better way to live, rather than the Survival level is the Success level. Honestly, this is where most of you are. By the world's

standards, you've got it made. You've got a comfortable living, compared to the rest of the world; you're extremely wealthy, compared to the rest of the world. So you have possessions, you have freedom, you have good health and you may have prestige and you may be quite successful. But today there are a lot of books coming out that say things like, "If I'm so successful, how come I don't feel fulfilled?" The reason is, it takes more than success and it takes more than status to satisfy.

You need to go to the third level of living, which I call the Significance level. Not a Survival, not a Success but step up to the level of Significance. How do you live at the Significance level? Well, you get there through three things:

#1: You know the meaning of life - that gives Significance.

#2: You know how much you matter to God - that gives you Significance.

#3: You know God's purposes for your life and you're living them out and that gives you Significance.

If you want to know how much you matter to God, look at the next couple of verses from the Bible, there on your outline. God says, "*I am your Creator. You were in My care, even before you were born.*" (Isaiah 44:2) God was caring for you even in His mind, as He thought you up. The next verse says, "*You (talking about God) scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book.*" That's how much you matter to God. He paid so much attention to your life that every detail was recorded in His book, before you even took a breath. That's how much you matter to God. Do you matter? – Yes. He made you. He made you to love you and the Bible says you do matter. He sees everything in your life, the good, the bad and everything in-between. You do matter to Him.

[OPTIONAL: SET UP AND INSERT SCENE TWO OF THE DRAMA]

Is God playing games with us? Is God intentionally trying to confuse us? Does He keep us in the dark so we don't know really why we're here and what we're here for and what our meaning is? Is that His plan? – No, not at all. God wants you to know how much you matter to Him. God wants you to know the meaning of life. He wants you to know His purposes. And He's done a lot to help you out in learning those. If you just stay with us the next 40 days, we're going to talk about that. God has extremely long-range plans for you. Look at the next verse, "*His plans endure (what?) forever; His purposes last (what?) eternally.*"

Now listen, the purposes we're going to talk about in the next 40 days are not just for the rest of your life on earth, they're for the rest of your life forever and ever, and ever and ever and ever. Because God's purposes are eternal. When we talk about the five things God put you on earth for, He just wants you to practice

here, what you're going to do forever and ever in eternity. Let me say it again – on earth, God wants you to practice the things you're going to do in Heaven forever and ever and ever. This is the warm-up act, this is the kindergarten, this is the preschool, this is where you do the dress rehearsal. God says, "I have plans and purposes for your life, but they don't end at death." Because when you die, your heart is going to stop and that will be the end of your body, but that's not the end of you. You're far more than a body. You were made to last forever. The Bible says this, Psalm 33:11 says, "*His purposes last eternally* (write this down). God says, "**I was made to last forever.**" I was made to be loved by God, and I was made to last forever. This life is not all there is. One of the biggest ways you can waste your life is thinking all there is, is here and now. You've heard me say this before, you're going to spend far more time on that side of death, than you do on this side. On this side, you may get to live 60,70,80 or 90 years or so. But that's just a drop in the bucket compared to eternity. The time you spend on earth really isn't that very long. It's like if you stretched out a line from Tokyo to Los Angeles, across the Pacific Ocean. The first millimeter of that line would not even equal how tiny your life is compared to all the time you're going to spend in eternity. You were made for eternity and life is preparation for eternity. You're not going to find that in a self-help book, but it's the truth. Life is preparation for eternity and in the next 40 days we're going to talk to you about how you prepare, because this is not all there is. Oh, no. God's purposes for you are eternal. They are forever. This is the key to the meaning of life. Realizing that life is preparation for eternity. The Bible says this.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:1, "*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.*" You want to know how much you matter to God. Well, I'll tell you – you matter so much to God; He wants to keep you with Him for the rest of eternity. For the rest of eternity – that's how much you matter to God. He wants to keep you with Him forever. That gives meaning. Look at this verse, "*Leave your impoverished confusion and live and walk up the street to a life with meaning.*" (Proverbs 9:6)

So the question of existence – why am I alive? God answers it by saying, "I made you to love you, that's why you're alive." In the question of Significance – does my life matter? God says, oh yeah you matter. You matter so much that I intend on keeping you alive for the rest of eternity. You're going to be around for a long, long time.

So then comes the third question, the "Question of Intention: What is my purpose?" What on earth am I here for? And that's what we're going to spend 40 days looking at. In Psalm 89:47 David asked the question, "*Why did you create us? For nothing?* Who is David talking to when he says that, himself? No, he's talking to God. Probably the greatest, atheist philosopher of the last century, Bertrand Russell, a great Englishman said, and he was an atheist (at least he was intellectually honest to say this) he said, "Unless you assume the

existence of God, the question of life's meaning and purpose is irrelevant." You see, if there is no God, if you're just a freak chance of nature, you're just complex pond scum – then guess what? – your life doesn't matter. If somebody wants to take it, they could. Because there's no real reason, meaning or purpose. There is a God. And God made you for a reason, and He made you for a purpose. The only way you're going to know your purpose is first looking to Him.

Now let's play a little game here [*Pastor displays several gadgets on table*] – do you know what these tools are? Here's the first one. I'll hold this one up. Anybody knows what this one here is? The purpose of this tool? No, it's not a hammer. I got this off Ebay. This is a kinetic bullet puller. "It will allow you to safely remove the bullet and powder charge from a loaded gun cartridge." On Ebay it says, "A must-have for any serious gun reloader." Ironic, it says, "Insurance is your option." Okay, you wouldn't know what that was. I asked our Medical Missions Team to loan me some tools. Does anybody know what this one is? Yeah, somebody got it. It's a cauterizer for cauterizing open wounds – yuk. Anybody know what this is? That is a surgical stapler. Does anybody know what this one is? I don't either. In fact I asked our Medical Team, "What is this?" and the direct quote was "I don't know, but don't ever use it on me!" Okay, do you know what this is? An internal surgical stapler. It's kind of cool, you can turn it and it can go around corners. Watch this, it even talks – "Just relax. This won't hurt a bit. Take a deep breath." You know I figured – maybe a guy uses it to retrieve lost sponges, or something. Okay, anybody know what this is? It's an apple, corer, peeler, slicer. You never want to confuse that [*slicer*] with this [*surgical stapler*].

Now, here's the point - if you don't know something's purpose, it is likely to be abused. You want to know why there are so many abused people today? Because we don't know our purpose. When you don't know the purpose of something, it is likely to be misused, or abused. That's the first point. Now here's the second point: the only way you're going to know what some things are is either a) you talk to the creator, or the inventor of it, or b) you read the owner's manual. The only way you're going to ever know your purpose in life – it's not by listening to the philosophers, because even the best ones are just guessing. It's not looking within, because you're not going to find it there. It's not looking within self-help books, because they're just saying create a purpose. You've got to talk to the Creator and look in the owner's manual. It's the only way you will ever know your purpose in life.

[OPTIONAL: SET UP AND INSERT SCENE THREE OF THE DRAMA. AFTERWARDS, TIE IN TO THE CHARACTER NAME FROM THE DRAMA YOU ARE USING.]

Now, in that sketch, [Steve] [the Wife] did two things right – 1) he/she went to the Bible; 2) he/she actually started with the right verse – Genesis 1:1, the first verse in the Bible... "In beginning, God (not in the beginning, you) created." If those

words hadn't been there, we wouldn't be discussing the meaning of life. We wouldn't be discussing your purpose in life. It all starts with God, it continues with God, it ends with God. *"In the beginning, God created."* The Bible says this, look in your outline, Proverbs 9:10 – read it with me. *"Knowing God results in every other kind of understanding."* You want to understand the meaning of life; you want to understand your purpose of life? Write this down. You find your purpose **by getting to know God**. It all starts with God. Look at this next verse, Colossians 1:16, *"For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible...everything got started in Him and finds (read it with me) its purpose in Him."* Look at the next verse, *"It is in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for...part of the overall purpose He (that's God) is working out in everything and everyone."* If you want to know your purpose in life, start getting to know God. The more you get to know God, the more you're going to understand the ways and the wisdom of God and the more you're going to understand the meaning and purpose of life. And the more you're going to understand everything else because the Bible says, knowing God results in every other kind of understanding. You're not going to learn it on some talk show. You're not going to learn it in some séance. You're not going to learn it reading tea leaves. You're not going to learn it going to a seminar. The only way you're going to learn the meaning of life and your purpose in life is to get to know God. It all starts with God, because it's all about God. *"In the beginning, God."* It's all about God.

If you're going to get to know God's purpose for your life, you have to get to know God. It's just that simple. [I love that line where the Wife says, "This may take a while."] Yeah, because understanding God's purposes for your life does take time. It's not just give it to me quick, and it's over. That's why we're going to take 40 days to look at God's purposes for you.

Right in front of you, there's a 40 Days of Purpose card. Would you take this out? I want everybody to get one of these. Now this is a different card, because you're not going to turn this card in, but I want everybody to get one. If you didn't already do this at the Simulcast, I want you to sign this card and take it home and put it on your refrigerator. So everybody get one. You may be asking, why 40 Days? Well, the Bible is very clear that God considers 40 days to be a spiritually significant time period. In fact, in the Bible, any time God wanted to prepare people for His purposes, He took 40 days. For instance:

- Noah's life was transformed by 40 days of rain
- Moses' life was transformed by 40 days on Mount Sinai
- The spies were transformed by 40 days in the Promise Land
- David was transformed by Goliath's 40-day challenge
- The city of Nineveh was transformed in 40 days
- Jesus was empowered for ministry by spending 40 days in the desert
- and the disciples were transformed by 40 days with Jesus after the resurrection.

The next 40 days are going to transform your life. I'm absolutely confident of that. I want you to look at this card. Notice, follow along with me.

Believing that God created me for His purposes and that the best use of my life is to fulfill those purposes, I commit the next 40 days to better understanding of God's five purposes for me.

- I will participate in a 40 days of Purpose small group. They have 3,000 of these across Orange County. If you're not in one, it's not too late. You can go out on to the patio. We have a thing called "Group Finder" tonight that will help you get into a group this week. It's not too late.
- I will read each day's chapter from the Purpose Driven Life book. Everybody who gets in a group, is going to get a free copy of that book. I want to suggest that you schedule a daily appointment to sit down and read it. Either in the morning, at lunch. I don't care when you do it. Schedule it and do it every day for the next 40 days. It will take you about 15 minutes a day. I would also suggest that you get a partner that you can call on the phone and discuss what you've read. Don't go through this journey alone. Get yourself a spiritual partner.
- I will do my best to hear all 7 messages in this series, *The Purpose Driven Life*. What I'm going to be saying, and our pastors are going to be saying on the weekend will set up what you're going to be studying during the week following. So what we're talking about today, you're going to be studying in a little bit more detail this week.

Now, look up here. The fact is, if you added up what time it would take you to do all those things – I took the time to add it all up and I was real generous. It would still be less than 48 hours total. So here's my question – is the rest of your life and is all of the rest of your eternity worth 48 hours of your time, now? I would think so. I want to ask you to sign this and I want you to take it home, and I want you to put it up on your refrigerator to remind you. Some of you have the dumbest stuff on your refrigerator, so put something significant up there.

I realize that all of us here tonight are at different stages in our spiritual journey. That doesn't matter. We're all going to go through this journey together, no matter what stage you are in. Some of you are seekers, and you're saying, "I'm not even sure I buy this, but I'm intellectually honest enough to check it out." Congratulations, great – we're glad to have you on the journey. Some of you are brand new believers and for you I'm very excited because you're going to get to start off right, like many of us did not. Some of you are what I call "stumblers." You say, "I call myself a Christian, but I'm not really very close to God. And I've been really, honestly, living for my plans and not God's." Well this 40 days is the time to come home. Some of you are strong believers, and you're going to go deeper with God than you've ever gone before and you're going to bring others along, too. Regardless of where you are in your spiritual journey, look at this last verse. *"It makes no difference who you are or where you're from – if you want*

God and are ready to as He says, the door is open.” (Acts 10:35) George Herbert once said, “It’s never too late to be who you might have been.” It’s not too late.

Let’s bow our heads – You know God had a purpose in bringing you here today. He wants you to know Him and He wants you to know His purposes for you. So talk to Him. You don’t have to use any fancy words. If you don’t know what to say, just follow me in this prayer...just go “Me too, God”.

“Dear God, I realize that if it weren’t for you, I wouldn’t be alive. But because you made me, you must have a purpose for me. I admit that I focused on my plans for my life, not yours. But I want to know your purposes for me, so I commit the next 40 days of my life to learning about it. Thank you that you made me so you could love me. Thank you that you cared for me even when I didn’t know you. Thank you that I was made to last forever. I want a life filled with meaning. I want to start by getting to know you better. So as best as I understand, I ask you, Jesus Christ, to come into my life and help me to understand your purposes for me. I want to take the first step today. In your name I pray, Amen.”
