

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Based on Rick Warren's

The Purpose Driven Life – Part 7

Dr. Thomas R. Logsdon, Pastor
Sugar Creek United Methodist Church
1022 New City Road

Chatham, Illinois

April 4, 2004

The Scripture

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Sermon

It's hard to believe that we've come to the end of these *40 Days of Purpose*. We're going to celebrate that milestone but, before we do, let's look at what we've learned. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 11:2, "*Remember today what you have learned about the Lord through your experiences with Him.*" It's been said that "those who will not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." The book of Judges is full of people who had to learn their lessons over and over again, but some things can **only** be learned through experience.

What an experience these *40 Days* have been! Through our reading, our worship services, our study groups, our sharing, and our Mission and Ministry Fair, we've learned so much. Today we're going to look at what we've learned.

What **have** we learned? First of all, we learned that it's all about **God, not me**. Not you, not me, but God. The Bible says in Hebrews 2:10, "*God is the one who made all things and all things are for His*

glory. He wanted to have many children share His glory.” The purpose of your life is far greater than your own happiness. It’s greater than your fulfillment. It’s greater than your success. It’s greater than your dreams and ambitions. You were made by God and for God and, until you understand that, life just doesn’t make any sense. God made you for Himself and He made you to be part of His family.

A second thing we learned is that God **still does miracles**. The Bible says in Psalm 77:14, “*You are the God of miracles and wonders! You still demonstrate Your awesome power.*” Let me share just one of those miracles with you. When we first started talking about *40 Days of Purpose*, many said it wouldn’t work. In fact, it was their **confidence** that it wouldn’t work that led some folks to approve it in the first place. They said that, if we got 5 or 6 groups going, we’d be lucky. Instead, we have 39 groups with more than 300 people attending regularly. **That’s** a miracle. Even more miraculous, many of these groups are talking about continuing after the *40 Days of Purpose* are over.

We've also learned that life is **preparation for eternity**. This world can be **cool** and it can be **cruel**. Thank God this world is not our home. Why do people suffer? Because this isn't heaven. God put us here to prepare us for eternity. We know this deep inside. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 3:11, "*God has planted eternity in the human heart.*" Everyone looks forward to eternity or tries to ignore the **voice** of eternity whispering in their ear. The *Purpose Driven Life* **prepares** us for eternity.

Part of that preparation is learning and living our **5 purposes for life**. The Bible says in Proverbs 16:4, "*The Lord has made everything for His purpose.*" We've learned that God made us for **five** purposes: we were Planned for God's Pleasure, Formed for God's Family, Created to Become like Christ, Shaped to Serve God, and Made for a Mission. The Bible calls these: Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, and Evangelism. That's what we were **made** for.

The remarkable thing is, that's **also** what our **church** was made for. Jesus said, "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; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31) We call this "The Great **Commandment**." Loving God is **Worship**. Loving others is **Ministry**. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20) We call this "The Great **Commission**." Making disciples is **Evangelism**. Baptizing them, in other words, incorporating them in the family of God, is **Fellowship**. Teaching them to obey all that Christ commanded is **Discipleship**.

At Sugar Creek, we do things in Bs. We call ourselves, "A Place for Beginning, Becoming, Belonging." That's Christ's Great **Commission** in a slightly different order. It's **Evangelism**, **Discipleship**, and **Fellowship** – pure and simple. If we add two more Bs

– **Blessing God** and **Benefiting Others** – for Christ’s Great

Commandment, we have the **sum total** of what God is calling us to **do** and to **be**, both as individuals **and** a church. The **order** doesn’t matter.

What matters is our **faithful response**.

Many of us have grown spiritually these *40 Days*. That’s why we did this study during Lent. The Christian faith has **always** used Lent as a time for spiritual growth. What did we **learn** about spiritual growth?

Well, we learned that we grow through **making commitments** and through **fellowship**. **Going** to church is important, but it takes more than going to church to grow. You have to **act** on what you’ve learned. The Bible says in James 2:17, “*Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead.*” **Going** to church is good, but you could go to church for the rest of your life and, if you don’t **do** anything with it, it won’t do you any good. It might keep you off the streets, but it won’t get you onto the streets of gold. It won’t get you into heaven. Make your commitments to

God and others – live up to them – and you’ll become more and more like Christ.

We also grow through fellowship. If you want to be holy, then hang around other people, because holiness only comes through love and you can’t love others unless you’re with them. You can worship God in a crowd, but you can only **grow** in a small group.

To demonstrate that, I’d like to ask everyone who’s been in a small group these *40 Days* to stand. Look around you. These are the people who know what I’m talking about. They’re the ones who get it. We’re going to give each of you a certificate for your commitment to the program – many of you already have yours – but your greatest gift will be what you **learned** and **experienced** in your small group. I want you to read a verse of scripture with me while you’re standing, because you’re living proof of what it says. It’s from Proverbs 27:17. Will you read it with me? *“As iron sharpens iron, so people can improve each other.”* I’d like to ask you a question, “How many of you can honestly

say, ‘I grew more with other **people** than I would’ve grown on my own?’” Can I see your hands? I thought so. You may be seated.

This is why we’re not going to stop talking about small groups at Sugar Creek, not until **everyone**’s connected **somewhere**, because you can’t grow without other people. You need **lots** of people in your life who can help you grow, develop, and feel the love of Christ. For those of you who are new to Sugar Creek or just didn’t get into a group, we’re starting new groups in a couple of weeks. Please watch the program and join any group that interests you. Better yet, pick a time, a topic, and a place to meet – gather a group of like-minded people – and Julie Baliva, our Director of Small Groups, will help tailor a group just for you.

Please read that next verse with me. It comes from Philippians 4:9. *“Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard, and the God of peace will be with you.”* Why would you stop doing what helps you the most? You need to **stay** in a group. You have three options, okay? You can stay in the group you’re in and that’s fine.

If you do, you'll probably want to take a couple weeks off for Easter, but stay in touch with each other and plan what you're going to do next.

Second, you could always join a new group. We've been listening to what you tell us and we'll be starting new groups in response to your needs. Most of them will have to meet off-site until we've added onto our building, but that's OK. Many of you have discovered the joys of meeting in homes, schools, workplaces, and so on. Some of you have been ingenious in picking where you met. Keep up the good work!

Finally, you can start your own group. Some of you were halfway through these *40 Days of Purpose* when you said, "I could've been a host. I could do that." If you want to host a small group, in your home or someplace else, just let us know. You can call the church office, write it on your Sunday Stub, or send us an email. Julie will follow through.

Look with me at Hebrews 10:25. It says, "*We should not stop gathering together with other believers. Instead, we must continue to*

encourage each other even more.” Why? Because we grow through fellowship.

What else have we learned? Well, we’ve learned something about our community. We’ve learned that people are **hungry for spiritual truth**. Many of you were surprised at who said “Yes” when you invited them to your group. You didn’t expect such a warm response; but the fact is, the world is **hungry** to know God’s love and to understand God’s purposes. The big myth is they’re not interested. Jesus said in John 4:35, *“Look around you! Vast fields of human souls are ripening all around us and they are ready now for reaping.”* God will use you if you make yourself available. He’s already used many of you.

Where do we go from here?

Well, let me share a couple things I think God wants us to do. First, He wants you to **start living what you’ve learned**. Put it into practice. All the knowledge in the world is worthless unless we practice

it. The Bible says this over and over again. I could give you dozens of passages to prove it, but let me give you three:

John 13:17 says, *“Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”* The blessing doesn’t come from **knowing** the purposes of life. It comes from **doing** them.

Ephesians 5:15 says, *“Live life with a due sense of responsibility, not as those who do not know the meaning of life but as those who do.”*

You now know what life is all about. Don’t go back to your old ways of living for things, pleasure, power, prestige and success. You know the meaning of life now. You were planned for God’s pleasure, so worship God in all you think and say and do. You were formed for God’s family, so fellowship with other believers. You were created to be like Christ, shaped to serve God, and made for a mission, so build your life on these truths. The Bible says in Philippians 3:16, *“Now that we’re on the right track, let’s stay on it!”*

Let me give you a couple suggestions for doing that. One, how many of you remember **everything** you read in the book? Can I see your hands? That's what I thought. Our minds have an amazing ability to forget things. I suggest you reread *The Purpose Driven Life*, a chapter a day, for the next 40 days. Today is Palm Sunday. It's a week until Easter. You can have the whole thing read by Memorial Day. This time, jot down your learnings in a journal. Warren is pretty sharp, but you're smart too. What you write might contain things Warren never thought of.

If you want to do this in a group, great! There are questions for groups at the back of the book we didn't use during these *40 Days of Purpose*. They were saved for now.

I further suggest that you review this book from time to time – perhaps once a year – because these purposes are important and we all forget things. It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day things of life and forget what our purpose and goals are.

Number two, **pass it on**. God doesn't want you to be a reservoir. He wants you to be a funnel. Warren said a lot of cool things that might have touched your life. Share them with others. Warren may have said some things you disagree with, but they got you thinking. Share them as well. You've come up with some pretty cool things on your own, because you're smart and so is God. Share those things with people who mean the most to you. Write them in a letter, include them in a conversation, send them in an e-mail, give someone a copy of the book, bring them to church with you, pass on your learnings to other people. 2 Timothy 2:2b says, "*Now I want you to tell these same things to followers who can be trusted to tell others.*" (CEV)

As we close this service, I want us to pray with our eyes open. Inside your program is a *Purpose Driven Life* card. Please pull it out. There's nothing for you to sign, nothing to sign up for. I just want you to put it in a prominent place to remind you of the purpose for your life. Put it on your dashboard, on your mirror, in your office, on your

refrigerator, someplace like that. Right now, let's read it together as a prayer.

“Since life is preparation for eternity, I want to use my time on earth fulfilling God’s five purposes for me. I was planned for God’s pleasure,” that’s worship, “so I will use this day to get to know and love God better. I was formed for God’s family,” that’s fellowship, “so I will use this day to show love to other believers. I was created to become like Christ,” that’s discipleship, “so I will use this day to make choices to grow my character. I was shaped to serve God,” that’s ministry, “so I will use this day to serve God by serving others. I was made for a mission,” that’s evangelism, “so I will use this day to share the Good News.”

The Bible says in Psalm 126, “*The Lord has done spectacular things for us.*” And truly we are on holy ground. Amen.