

Made For A Mission

Based on Rick Warren's

The Purpose Driven Life – Part 6

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Planned for God's Pleasure = Worship

Formed for God's Family = Fellowship

Created to Become Like Christ = Discipleship

Shaped for Serving God = Ministry

The Scripture

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion,

while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus,

who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

The Sermon

Do you know your reason for living? Do you know why God put you on this planet? Today is the last Sunday of our *40 Days of Purpose*. Next week we'll celebrate what we've learned but, before we do, we need to review our purposes and learn one more.

The first four purposes are printed on your outline. You were **Planned for God's Pleasure, Formed for God's Family, Created to Become Like Christ, and Shaped for Serving God**. The Bible calls this **Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, & Ministry**. All four are cool. All four bring meaning to our life as we respond to God's love. We learn and practice them on earth so we can continue them for eternity.

The fifth purpose is different. It is the **only one** that we can **only do** on earth. By the time we get to heaven, it'll be too late. That purpose is printed on your outline. You were **Made for a Mission**. Jesus said to

God in John 17:18, *“In the same way that you gave Me a mission in the world, I give them a mission in the world.”* He said in John 20:21, *“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”* St. Paul said in Acts 20:24, *“The most important thing is that I complete my mission, the work the Lord Jesus gave me – to tell people the good news about God’s grace.”*

Please write this down on your study guide: my fifth purpose is to **share the Good News.**

As a pastor, I’ve often asked to be there when bad news is shared. A loved one has died, someone is very sick, and someone else needs to be told about it. “Pastor,” they say to me, “Can you go with me while I tell so-and-so about such-and-such.” My first night on call at Methodist Medical Center in Peoria, I had to wake a new mother with the terrible news that her baby had died of Sudden Infantile Death Syndrome. That’s one reason I’m not a chaplain today. I hate giving bad news, but comforting God’s people in the **midst** of bad news is an important part of my job.

As a Christian, you have the God-given joy of sharing **Good** News. Everyone knows the world is messed up. Everyone knows that people will do almost anything if they think they can get away with it. People are constantly hurting themselves and others. That's the bad news. The Good News is that God loved us too much to let that go unchallenged. When nothing else would do, God sent His Son save us from our sin. They nailed the carpenter to two blocks of wood. As he stretched out his arms upon the cross, he embraced us – you and me – with his love. How much does God love you? He loves you this much! [*demonstrate with arms held out as if on a cross*]. New life, abundant life, eternal life are all possible through Him. We just need to **accept** His love.

Good News like that is too precious to keep to ourselves. There's plenty of room in heaven for other people. Telling others about God's love is not going to crowd us out, it's only going to make the party

better. It's fun to share Good News. The Bible has a word for this. It's called **Evangelism**.

Like **Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, & Ministry**, the word **Evangelism** has been so abused that it turns many of us off. What do **you** think of when you hear the word "evangelist?" Some guy on TV with big hair and a loud voice who shouts [*loud, Southern accent*] "Send me your money!" That's not evangelism. That's marketing. That's spiritual prostitution. Evangelism is Greek for "good news." That's all it means – sharing the Good News. The Bible says that, once we **know** the Good News that God loves us, has a purpose for our lives, and all the others things we've learned these *40 Days*, God wants us share that Good News with others.

Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "*You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*" He was saying, "Start where you are." Start with the people closest to you: with those in your home, your school, your workplace, and your community. Then go

to those who are nearby, but different. Finally, go to the ends of the earth to reach everyone for Christ.

Notice that Jesus didn't say, "You will be my defense attorney." He didn't say, "You will be my prosecutor." He didn't say, "You will be my salesman." You don't have to **defend** God. You don't have to **attack** your neighbor. You don't have to **sell** God to anyone. All you have to do is tell others what God has done for you. What's a witness? A witness is someone who tells others what he or she has seen or heard or otherwise experienced. No one can be a better witness to your life than **you** are. No one can be a better witness of what God has **done** in your life than you. **You** are the expert. **You** are the authority. You don't need some fancy speech. You don't have to make anything up. Just tell others what God has done for you. Jesus said, "Start with those closest to you; then go to those who are near you, but different; and, finally, tell your story to everyone else.

Remember the man healed by Jesus who wanted to follow him. That passage from Luke 8:39 is printed on your study guide and projected up there on the wall. Will you read it with me? Jesus said, *“Go back home and tell people how much God has done for you.’ So that man went all over town telling how much Jesus had done for him.”*

I know about missionaries. For 7½ years, it was my job to recruit, train, deploy, and supervise missionaries all the world. **Your** mission starts right where you live, in your home, your neighborhood, your community and school. Start right here in Jerusalem, or Chatham, or Springfield, or Divernon, or Auburn, or wherever else you find yourself.

That’s what many of you have been doing in your host homes. You’ve invited into your homes friends, relatives, and neighbors to talk about God. Along the way, you’ve drawn closer to God and each other. That’s what church is all about!

What if people think you’re crazy? **That’s** why you start with those closest to you. They already **know** you. They trust you. They

respect you. They'll listen to you. They won't **think** you're crazy unless you **act** crazy. Even if they're skeptical about what you have to say, most people will **listen** to it so long as you share it in an open, honest, non-judgmental manner. Don't tell them what **they** should do. That's **God's** job. Don't **preach** at them. That's **my** job. Just **tell** them what God has done for you and the difference Christ has made in your life.

You wouldn't **be** a Christian if someone hadn't shared the Good News with you. The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:9, "*God doesn't want anyone to be lost, but He wants all people to change their hearts and lives!*"

Every so often someone will say to me, "I think Sugar Creek is big enough." I agree. In fact, I think we're too big. We've outgrown this building. We don't have room for all our Sunday school classes. You can't **find** a room to meet in most nights of the week. We're **already** too big, but we don't grow for **our** benefit. We **grow** because people need the Lord. They need to know Jesus. The question is not, "How **big**

should we get?” The question is, “Who are we willing to leave behind?” Are you willing for **any** of your family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers to be left behind? If so, you aren’t much of a friend! Rick Warren says, “The church that doesn’t want to grow and reach out is basically saying to the world, ‘You can go to hell.’ . . . And when you don’t ever share your faith, you are saying to the world, ‘You can go to hell.’ Beats me. I’m in. Best of luck to you.”

That’s not Good News. That’s selfishness. It’s saying, “I’ve got mine and you’re on your own.” D. T. Niles once said, “Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where there’s bread.” I don’t know about you, but I care too much for my family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers to let them starve to death. I care too much about them to let them go to hell. I care too much about them not to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Preach at them? No! Shove it down their throats? No! Tell them what God has done for me and could do for them? Yes! Yes! Yes!

If you read a good book, you'd share it, wouldn't you? If you saw a movie or TV show that touched your life, you'd tell others about it, wouldn't you? God made you for a mission. That mission is to tell others what God has done for you. Start with those you know and then **reach beyond** your personal world to people who are different. Love demands that we move beyond our comfort zone to people of different backgrounds, education, language, economics, and skin color. We all bleed red, after all, and Christ died for all of us.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 9:22b, "*Whatever each person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.*" In other words, Christians are called to build bridges, not walls. We must take the first step, like God took the first step in reaching out to us. Sometimes we need to take the second and third steps as well. And sometimes, before you can **tell** someone about Jesus, you need to share their burden and help ease their pain. Galatians 6:2 says, "*Stoop down and reach out to those who are*

oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law." What's Christ's law? You already know it: Love your neighbor as yourself.

Your owner's manual says in James 1:27, "*Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: reach out to the homeless and the loveless in their plight.*"

Here at Sugar Creek, we're involved in dozens of ministries. We saw that last week at our Mission and Ministry Fair. People from our church have traveled all over the state to build new churches and clean up after disasters. Our youth have traveled to Jackson, Kentucky and Jackson, Wyoming on mission trips. We support a missionary and his family in Africa. We provide food for the hungry in Chatham and Springfield. We've cooked for the families of sick children at Ronald McDonald House and for the homeless at Helping Hands and St. John's Breadline. We've provided food, clothing, and love through Serving Jesus Willingly and sent shoeboxes full of gifts to children all over the world. We've supported Sojourn House, a shelter for abused women and

children, and the Mini O'Beirne crisis nursery. Hundreds of tons of food, medical supplies, school equipment, and relief materials have been shipped from the Midwest Mission Distribution Center and we've provided food for children in Haiti, wells for families in Cambodia, and rehabilitation for child soldiers in Liberia.

Jesus said in Matthew 25 that there are two types of people: sheep and goats. To those who show love, he's going to say, "*I was hungry, and you fed Me. I was thirsty and you gave Me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited Me into your home. I was naked, and you gave Me clothing. I was sick and you cared for Me. I was in prison and you visited Me.*" These are his faithful sheep, those who'll share his glory because, as Jesus put it, "*When you have done it to one of the least of my brothers or sisters, you've done it to Me.*" When you give a cup of cold water to somebody who's thirsty, a shoebox of toys to children who have nothing, food to someone who has nowhere to live, it's like you did it for Jesus himself.

Is it worth it? Jesus said in Mark 10:29, “*Let me assure you that no one has ever given up anything for love of Me and to tell others the Good News who won’t be given back a hundred times over.*” Let’s be honest, however. Most of us don’t help others because of what we’re going to get. Most of the time, we don’t even **think** about what we’re going to get. We simply see someone in need and reach out to help. That’s why the faithful sheep asked Jesus, “*Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or sick or in prison.*” They didn’t think that, by helping someone else, they were helping Christ and he would reward them. They simply saw someone in need and reached out in love. That’s what it’s all about.

If I’m going to be like Christ, I need to care for the world like Christ did. How much did he love that world? He loved it this much! [*demonstrate with arms held out as if on a cross*]. I’ve got to **share** with those in **my** world, **reach out** to those **beyond** my world, and **care** for the **whole** world because God’s got the whole world in His hands.

I'm tired of hearing people say, "I don't see why we have to worry about people in other countries. We've got needy people right here."

The fact is, we **do** have needy people right here and we **need** to help them, but that doesn't **free** us from **responsibility** for people overseas. There are people eating out of garbage cans in the United States. That's unacceptable. There are people overseas who would love to **have** garbage cans to eat out of. That's even less acceptable. The people who do the **most** to help people overseas seem to be the same ones who do the most to help people right here. Those who **say** we should help people here first usually don't do anything. They're just hypocrites looking for an excuse for their own hard-heartedness. Their argument sounds good to themselves and their fellow hypocrites, but someday Jesus will show them the holes in his hands and his feet and his side and their arguments and say, "This is what **I** did for **you**. This is how much **I** cared. What are **you** going to do about?"

Jesus said to His followers in Mark 16:15, “*Go everywhere in the world and tell the Good News to everyone.*” He said in Mark 8:35, “*If you insist on saving your life, you will lose it. Only those who throw their lives away for My sake and the sake of the Good News will ever know what it means to really live.*” It all comes down to this: Is anybody going to be in heaven because of you? Over the next 365 days, 2.4 million Americans will die. How many of them will join you in heaven because of **your** words and actions? Over the next year, 54 million people in the world will die. How many of them will go to eternity knowing Jesus because of **you**? If there was any other way for people to get into heaven, don't you think God would've used it? The **only** reason He sent His Son to die was because **that** was the only thing that would work. Christ has died. You can't stop that from happening, but you **can** keep him from dying in vain.

You do that by telling others what God has done for you!

Will you pray with me?

Thank you, God, for making me for a mission. There's so much that needs to be done that I often feel overwhelmed. Thank you for making me not have to do it all. Thank you for teaching me to reach out in love, sharing the Good News with those closest to me, those different from me, and those at the farthest corners of the world. Teach me to love in action, not just words. I give my life to you so that you can use it to change the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.