

WHAT ON EARTH AM I HERE FOR?

Based on Rick Warren's

The Purpose Driven Life – Part 1

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February 22, 2004

The Scripture

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has
blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and
blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his
sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to
the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One

he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

The Sermon

Welcome to *40 Days of Purpose*! Julie and our *40 Days* team have been working hard to prepare our congregation for this moment. Last week we had our kickoff. Today we begin our journey together.

We're not alone. Tens of thousands of churches and millions of people have taken this journey before us. 2,900 churches and hundreds of thousands of people are walking this same path with us today. They will be reading the same book at the same time and, right now, they're hearing a similar sermon on the same topic. Pastors are different, of course, so the sermons they **preach** will vary. Churches are different, so the sermons they **need to hear** will also vary. We are all human beings made by the same **God**, however, and we will be traveling the same path together. Are you ready? Then let's take out our outlines and begin!

Today we and all those other people will be looking at the three great questions of life:

- 1) The question of **existence** – **Why** am I alive?

2) The question of **significance** – Does my life **matter**?

3) The question of **intention** – What is my **purpose**?

In other words, “What on **Earth** am I here for?”

Let’s start with **why** we’re here. That’s the question of **existence**.

Jeremiah asked thousands of years ago, “*Why was I born? Was it only to have trouble and sorrow, to end my life in disgrace?*” (Jeremiah 20:18)

Have **you** ever felt like that? **I** have! Why **were** we born? You’ve heard it said – “You’re born, you suffer, you die. In between, you pay taxes.”

Is life a cosmic accident? Is it a tragic joke?

Hugh Moorhead, Chair of Philosophy at Northeastern University, once wrote 250 philosophers, scientists, writers, and other famous thinkers and asked them, “What is the purpose of Life?” Rick Warren shares several of their responses. Some of them, among the smartest people in the world at the time, admitted that the purpose of life was a mystery to them. Some even asked Dr. Moorhead to share with them what he discovered. Carl Jung said, “I don’t know the meaning, the

purpose of life, but it looks as if something were meant by it.” Isaac Asimov replied, “As far as I can see, there is no purpose.” Joseph Taylor even wrote a book entitled, “I Have No Answers To The Meaning of Life And I No Longer Want to Search For Any.”

These comments by some of the smartest people in the world are both tragic and sad. Aristotle said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” That’s even more true of the **purposeless** life. If there is no purpose, no meaning to life, then existence itself is a sad, cruel joke.

That’s where God comes in. **God** is our Creator. That very **fact** brings **meaning** to our **existence**. God **made** us and “God don’t make no junk.” If you want to know the purpose of a complex piece of equipment, then ask its inventor or read the owner’s manual. If you want to know the purpose of **your** life, then ask your **Creator** or read your owner’s manual. God knows what He’s doing – He knows Hwhy He made you. His **design** for your life **is** your purpose. If you take away **God**, there **is** no meaning, there **is** no purpose.

Life is not about accomplishment or fulfillment, Warren continues. It's far greater than happiness or peace of mind, though all four come from finding and fulfilling God's plan for your life. "You were made by God and ... for God," Warren says, "and you were put here for His purposes. . . . Until you understand that, life isn't going to make sense."

The Bible says in Proverbs 16:4, "*The Lord has made everything for His own purpose.*" Unless you **truly** are a self-made man or self-made woman – unless you **actually** made yourself – you don't get to pick your purpose. God never makes mistakes and He never makes anything without a purpose – not skunks, not snakes, not even scorpions. Every rock has a purpose, every plant has a plan, every animal has a reason for being here. If you're **alive**, God's got a **purpose** for your life. In fact, God has **5** purposes for your life and we're going to look at them together over the next 40 days.

First, however, let's see why God **made** us. The Bible says in Ephesians 1:4, "*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.” If you get nothing else from these *40 Days of Purpose*, understand this – God may have **5 purposes** for your life, but He **made** you because He **loves** you. Write that down, carry it with you, pull it out of your pocket and read it on those “terrible, horrible, no good, very bad days” when **everything** is going wrong and **no** one seems to care. God **made** you to **love** you.

“God is love,” the Bible says in 1st John 4:8. He didn’t **need** you. He wasn’t **lonely** like Adam in the Garden, but He **wanted** you and He **made** you to **love** you. God had the world, but He wanted **you**. When you ask “What on Earth am I here for?” the first answer is, “To be loved by God.”

The second question is **significance**, in other words, “Does my life matter?” The Bible says in Isaiah 49:4a, “*My work all seems so useless. I’ve spent my strength for nothing and for no purpose at all.*” Have you every felt like that? I have, but the fact remains that you and I were

made for a purpose – 5 of them in fact – and, if you don't know the meaning and purpose of your life, if you don't know **why** God put you on this planet, then your life makes no sense at all.

During the Second World War, prisoners in a Nazi concentration camp in Hungary were put to work processing human waste at a sewage plant. Now, no offense to those who work at modern septic treatment facilities, but what a terrible job! You think your job stinks? You should try theirs! Then the Allies bombed the plant, leaving the prisoners with nothing to do. The Nazis refused to let them do nothing, however, and so they made them take the rubble from the treatment plant and move it to a field. The next day, they made them move it back again. The following day, they moved it to the field again, and back the day after that. They had to move the rubble back and forth, day after day, with no purpose to their work. Then something strange began to happen. The prisoners, who had endured so much with remarkable resilience, began losing their will to live. Some threw themselves in front of the guards just to get

shot. They tried to kill themselves because they would rather haul, well, sludge with a purpose than building bricks without one. Their lives had lost their meaning.

Which brings us to Question 3, the Question of **Intention** – What is my **purpose**? God says in Isaiah 44:2, “*I am your Creator. You were in My care, even before you were born.*” Psalm 139:16 says, “*You 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 wrote your biography before you were born. God **made** you, God **loves** you, God knows **everything** about you – the good, the bad, and the ugly – and He loves you anyway. You **matter** because you matter to God.

And **because** you matter to God, God wants you to **know** His purposes for your life. He wants you to **know** them, not because He **needs** you to fulfill His plans, but because **your** life finds **meaning** in **fulfilling** God’s purposes. God’s done everything He can to teach us those purposes, including **providing** us with an owner’s manual called

The Bible and **becoming** one of us, to the point of suffering, not only **life** with all its struggles, but even a tortuous **death** on the cross.

Corporations talk about “long-range planning.” Well God has an extremely long-range plan for your life. Psalm 33:11 says, “*His plans endure forever; His purposes last eternally.*”

When we talk about the five **purposes** God **put** you on this **planet** to **perform**, we need to stress that you’re here to **practice** them so that you can **do** them for eternity. Let me say that again. God has 5 purposes for your life that He wants you to practice on earth so that you can **keep doing them** forever. This life, while important, is just a warm-up. This is kindergarten. This is preschool. This is dress rehearsal. God says, “I have plans and purposes for your life, but they don’t end at your death and, if you stick with me, neither will you.”

If we stretched a line from Chicago to Los Angeles, right down Route 66, right past the back door of this church, the first brick in that highway would not equal how **tiny** your life in comparison to all the

time you're going to spend in eternity. **This** life can be very good, of course, but its **primary purpose** is to **prepare** you for eternity. Even **diamonds** don't last forever, despite the commercials, but (1) God, (2) God's love for you, and (3) God's purposes for your life do. The Bible says in 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.*" Look at Proverbs 9:6, "*Leave your impoverished confusion and live and walk up the street to a life with meaning.*"

God answers the question of Existence by saying, "I made you to love you." God answers the question of Significance by saying, "You matter so much to me that I want to keep you with me for eternity." As for the third question, the Question of Intention, that's what we're going to spend the next 40 days looking at.

In your program is a *40 Days of Purpose* card. Please take it out and look at it with me. I want everyone to have and sign one of these. If

you didn't do so last week, I want you to sign and return your card as a symbol of your commitment. If you already did so, great! You can give your card to someone who needs it or you can put it on your refrigerator as a reminder of the commitment you've made.

I'm confident that these next 40 days will change your life, if you let them. Please look at your card and 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 God's five purposes for me.

- I will participate in a 40 Days of Purpose small group. They are more than 30 of these all around our area. If you're not in one, it's not too late. You can go into the Fellowship Hall right now, immediately following this service, and find one that meets your needs and schedule. It's not too late.
- I will read each day's chapter from *The Purpose Driven Life* book. Everybody needs a book. The retail price is \$19.99, but you can find them on sale at Barnes and Noble, Sams, Wal-

Mart, and Family Christian Bookstore for between \$10.75 and \$16.00 or from us for \$10. If you can't afford one, please indicate that on your Sunday Stub or see Julie Baliva and we will **give** you one free of charge. If you'd like to help someone **else** who can't afford a book, just put some money in an envelope and write "*40 Days of Purpose Scholarship Fund*" on it and put it in the offering plate or in the *40 Days of Purpose* baskets at the back of the church.

I suggest you schedule a daily appointment with God to read this book. If you've got a PDA, set an alarm. It could be in the morning, at lunch, before supper, or before you go to bed. I don't care. **Just do it every day for the next 40 days.**

Depending on how fast you read, it should you take about 15 minutes a day. You can find that time by skipping half a TV show you didn't want to watch anyway or by reading a little less Spam on your computer. I suggest you get a partner you can call

on the phone and discuss what you've read. Don't walk this journey alone. Get 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 say on Sunday will set the theme for what you study during the week. What we've talked about today, hundreds of people here and hundreds of thousands of people around the country are going to study more in depth this week.

Even if you're not much of a reader – and there's nothing wrong with that – this book is an easy read. When you add up everything I'm asking you to do – the book, the group, the 7 sermons – it will take you less than 48 hours total. If *48 Hours* was good enough for Nick Nolte and Eddie Murphy, surely it's good enough for you and me.

Here's the question – is the rest of your life and the rest of eternity worth 48 hours of your time spread out over the next 40 days? I think it is. Hundreds of people in the Springfield area and hundreds of thousands

of people around the country agree.

I realize we're at different stages in our spiritual journey. That's OK. We're going to walk this path together, no matter what stage we start at. Some of you are **seekers**. You're saying, "I'm not sure I can buy all this, but I'm intellectually honest enough to check it out."

Congratulations! We're glad to have you with us on this journey. Some of you are **new believers**. You're getting off to a good start – better than many of the rest of us got. Some of you are what Rick Warren calls **stumblers**. You say, "I consider myself a Christian, but I'm not very close to God and, to be honest, I prefer to live life by **my** plans, not God's." Well, this *40 Days of Purpose* has a built-in amnesty program. It's a chance to learn God's 5 purposes in less than a month and a half and to give them a try. Some of you are **strong believers**. You're going to have fun with this program. You're going to draw closer to God between now and Easter than you've ever been before and you're going to bring others along with you. Regardless of **where** you are in your

spiritual journey, let's look at that verse from Acts 10:35: *"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."*

Will you pray with me?

"Dear God, if it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be here. You made me, so you must have a purpose for my life. I admit that I've focused on my own plans for far too long, but now I want to know your purposes for my life and I commit the next 40 days to learning them. Thank you for making me so that you can love me. Thank you for caring for me before I even knew you. Thank you for making me last forever. I want a life filled with meaning. I want to start by getting to know you better. Come into my life, Lord Jesus, and help me understand your purposes for me. Today I take the first step. In your name I pray. Amen."