

# DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE

Preparing for 40 Days of Purpose

January 1, 2023

1. We live in an epidemic of hopelessness, depression, and suicide. Every metric is up, and it's getting worse. Why? There are two major reasons. (1) People have lost sight of their purpose, their reason for living. (2) What they believed was their purpose was not a big enough purpose to satisfy the soul.

2. Our secular culture has helped fuel this by denying any purpose that is God-given, and instead telling everyone you have to create your own purpose. To put it as nicely as I can, that is absurd.

3. That is like telling people that you can live a great life without traveling by car, bus, train or plane because it uses fossil fuels. "Just create your own transportation!" I can briefly imagine a world where I could live without a car, bus, train or plane. I have a bike. Am I going to the ATM machine to get some cash in a driving rainstorm? Or, if I live in the mountains, am I going to ride my bike along a slushy road with melted snow? You won't be seeing your adult parents in Idaho, or your adult children in Orlando. The inevitable and cumulative consequences will catch up with you. It's one thing to make a claim like, "You just need to decide your own purpose." It's quite another thing to find a purpose big enough to satisfy the human soul. Apart from God, that cannot be done.

## **DAY 1: Understanding the will of God.**

*Eph. 5:15-17 (NLT) "**Be careful** how you live, not as fools but as those who are **wise**. Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but **try to understand what the Lord wants you to do.**"*

a. "**Be careful.**" We won't live out our real purpose if we just live on auto-pilot or if we are driven by our feelings and emotions. Paul says, "Be careful." Too often we are careless when it comes to our purpose.

b. "**Be wise.**"

What do you think Paul means by "be wise" in this context?

c. "**Understand what the Lord wants you to do.**"

*Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

4. What strikes you from today's devotional?

## **DAY 2: What does God want from my life?**

1. When human beings think about their purpose we always start with ourselves. That is a wrong starting place.
2. We were made for a God-sized purpose.
3. Under each of the verses below, jot down what strikes you about a God-centered purpose for your life. What is needed?

*Romans 6:13 (NLT) "Give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God."*

*Deuteronomy 10:12 (NCV) "This is what the Lord your God wants you to do: Respect the Lord and do what he has told you to do. Love him. Serve the Lord your God with your whole being."*

*Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

*Proverbs 3:6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.*

4. We will not understand a God-sized purpose starting with ourselves. We must be willing to live for God's purpose!
5. What strikes you from today's devotional?

### **DAY 3: What does it take? Discipline.**

1. When we are willing to do God's will, and to surrender ourselves to Him, we are now on the right road toward God's purposes for our lives.

2. The problem we are going to encounter lies within us. We will naturally feel a resistance to doing what God wants us to do.

3. A few of the great purposes of God involve learning to walk with Him, live like Jesus, and relate like Jesus. You will often find these things "counter-intuitive" to your feelings!

*1 Timothy 4:7 (NASB) "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness."*

*1 Timothy 4:7b (LB) "Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit."*

4. We can only grow closer to God, learn to live like Jesus, and relate like Jesus when we are in fellowship with Jesus. This just doesn't happen "naturally."

5. In the same way that going to the gym or getting regular cardio helps us become physically fit, there are disciplines that help us be spiritually fit.

*Hebrews 12:1b (NLT) "Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress."*

6. One of the disciplines we need is some kind of regular self-evaluation. The writer of Hebrews identifies two areas for self-reflection: "weights" and "sins." The imagery is of a marathon runner running on a hot day. There are things that slow him down. If he can shed extra weight, his marathon will go better. Ask God to help you identify your current "weights" and "sins" that slow you down.

a. "Weights" are unnecessary things. Examples would include things like, too much TV, too much time on-line, too much time and/or money on hobbies. These steal away portions of your life, bite-size chunks every week.

b. "Sins" are things you should not be doing.

c. What things come to mind for you regarding your weights and sins?

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

#### **DAY 4: Learning to walk with God.**

1. Two adult sisters and one adult brother were siblings. They were close friends of Jesus. They lived in a small town near Jerusalem.

*Luke 10:38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"*

*<sup>41</sup> "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, <sup>42</sup> but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

2. Describe the setting of this story.

3. What do you learn about Martha?

4. What do you learn about Mary?

5. Which of the two sisters are you most like? How so?

6. What was Jesus' evaluation of the situation?

7. Granted, there are times when responsibilities have to get done, but Jesus is not making a statement about responsibilities. He is making a statement about priorities.

8. Martha was "distracted," angry, and accusatory to both Mary and Jesus. Why? What was Jesus wanting Martha to understand about herself?

9. Making Jesus our top priority begins to affect the rest of our life and our responses. Martha's purpose had less to do with Jesus and more to do with how she wanted to see herself and how she wanted everyone to see her. This was the chief cause of her anger.

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

**DAY 5: The paradox: more of Him, less of me helps me tie in to God's purpose for my life.**

1. By now you may be asking yourself why you should be making knowing God your top priority. Why should knowing God, walking with God, living like Jesus and relating like Jesus be your top purpose?

*Mark 8:34 Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?*

2. Jesus says there is a great paradox in the gospel. The more we try to make life and our purpose about ourselves, the more we lose our sense of ultimate purpose. The less we make our life about ourselves, the more we sense our divine purpose!

3. Under each of the following verses, jot down your thoughts.

*2 Corinthians 5:15 "He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."*

*Ephesians 1:7 (GW) "Through the blood of his Son, we are set free from our sins. God forgives our failures because of his overflowing kindness."*

*Romans 12:1 (GW) "Brothers and sisters, in view of all we have just shared about God's compassion, I encourage you to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, dedicated to God and pleasing to him."*

*Habakkuk 3:2 (NCV) "Lord, I have heard the news about you; I am amazed at what you have done. Lord, do great things once again in our time; make those things happen again in our own days."*

4. What strikes you from today's devotional?