

God's Purpose for You

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Does your life have meaning? Are you living for a purpose that is lasting, or are you just living so you can work, so you can eat, to live? For most people there is no true meaning to life, and they just wander through life hoping for something--yet never being really sure what it is. If this has been your experience, this pamphlet is written for you. The message is for those who desire to find meaning for life, and to direct them back to the *purpose of God* for their lives.

It is our prayer that you will be able to evaluate your own life in the light of the Word of God and find a renewed direction in life. Man was created for one purpose, and he can only find fulfillment in that purpose. A car is designed to carry people down the road, and a boat is designed to travel in water. Trying to reverse their uses brings everything to a stop. The reason we see so much chaos in the world around us is that man is pursuing purposes other than that for which he was created. Since God brought man into existence, He is the only authority we can turn to for direction. So we must go back and see what His purpose is for man.

God's Purpose is for You to Know and Have Fellowship with Him

Do you know God? I don't mean, do you know about God? Do you know Him? In John 17:3 we read, "*And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*" There is a great difference between knowing a person, and just knowing about him. You may know certain facts about God, but that is not enough. God wants you to know Him.

Who is God? The first step in coming to know God is to know who He is. Genesis 1:1 says, "*In the beginning God...*" We do not attempt to prove the existence of God. A discerning look at His creation proves that He exists. He was, is, and always will be. He created all that we see, and actually holds it together. He is the beginning and the end--the ultimate source of all life. In John 1:3 we read, "*All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being.*"

From other scripture we come to know that God is sovereign, righteous and holy, just, and personal. He is always the same--He has never changed His purpose and goals. He exists for eternity, and everything He is doing is with eternity in mind.

Because of His nature, God cannot tolerate sin in His presence. Yet God is love, and there is no true love apart from Him. God is truth, and no truth can be known apart from knowing Him. It is impossible for us to comprehend how absolute truth, love, holiness, justice, mercy, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, power and wisdom can dwell in one Person, but in God all of these and more exist simultaneously. He is the one and only God, and we must all face Him sooner or later. God desires that we know Him. He is infinite, yet He is concerned with each individual person.

Before we consider more about this, let us see where man came from. The nature of God is such that He desires to share life with others. In order to do this, there had to be somebody of the same order of life with whom He could have fellowship. In Genesis 1:27 we read that God created man in His own image. This statement alone has tremendous implications. Man did not just happen by some chance chemical occurrence, but was created in the likeness of the God of this universe. No other created being that we know of enjoys this privilege.

In the beginning of creation, God walked and talked with man. God established man as the ruler over His whole creation. There was no sickness, no aging, no death, no sorrow, and nothing to come between God and man. They shared the beauty and glory of God's creation together, and experienced that intimate fellowship with each other which only those of like life and like mind can enjoy.

One look around us today tells us that something went wrong. Man was created to find fulfillment in fellowship with God, with God being the center of authority. Man was given a free choice by God when he was created, and he chose to be independent from God. That free choice has never been taken away from man, but only a moment's thought will tell us that there cannot be more than one center if there is going to be harmony. The result of two people moving independently of one another is disorder. Even in the natural world, we know there must be central authority for a cooperative effort of any kind to succeed. If every man is an authority, nothing gets done.

In spite of this, man chose to be an authority in himself. This is the basis of all sin: functioning independently from God: Sin is rebellion against the rule and authority of God. God does not take away the free choice of man, but to accomplish God's purpose, man must voluntarily submit his will to God's will. God desires that man choose to submit to Him, but He does not force him to do so; otherwise fellowship would be meaningless. Fellowship with God was broken in the beginning by man's rebellion.

Because of the nature of God, He was required to judge this rebellion. Death, disease, sorrow, animals devouring one another, and all kinds of other unlovely things are the result of man's rebellion against God. Since God is holy, He cannot tolerate rebellion in His presence and was forced to drive man from His presence. Also, on the day man sinned, he died in two ways. First, the spirit of man (that part of man which is able to commune with God) died immediately. Secondly, death in the physical body began, a process that man has tried for centuries to stop but has never been able to reverse.

From that day until this, man continues trying to live apart from God, seeking to be his own authority and rule apart from God. The world we see today is the result. In the laws of the universe, like begets like. Thus a dead man (in God's eyes) reproduces a dead man. Since God is forced to judge rebellion, each person born today is born in condemnation. We are condemned men, assigned to the lake of fire for eternity because of our rebellion against God. As much as God might like to overlook sin, He cannot do it and remain true to His nature. Sin brings death, and there is no escape. Is there no hope then? Praise God, the story does not end here, for if it did, there would indeed be no hope.

God Has Made Provision for the Way Back

The Bible tells us that God is a merciful God, but also a just God. The nature of God is such that it cannot overlook sin. Even if we could live from this moment on never sinning again, we would still have to die for our past sins. From the Bible we also learn that God is a God of love, and that His great love led Him to make a way, at great cost to Himself. He provided another to take the judgment that we deserved--none other than His only Son, Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 6:21 we read, "*He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (Christ).*" This is the greatest message the world will ever have. Apart from God's provision in Christ, there would be no hope. Jesus is the only one who could take the judgment that we deserved, because He is the only one who did not have to die for His own sin. He was perfect.

Jesus Christ has always existed with God, but He laid aside His rightful place and took on Himself the form of a man. As a man, He lived the life of God here on this earth, and then took the judgment for our sin upon Himself. If this does not make you shout for joy, then nothing will! Never in the history of

the universe has such love been demonstrated. True love, God's love, is not just a surface emotional influence that causes people to smile and laugh. It is rather a driving motivation that spares nothing in giving so others may live. God did not spare anything in His giving, but gave all that we might live.

God has paid the debt for us which we could not pay, and has redeemed us for Himself. His provision is complete, and includes not only spiritual healing, but physical healing as well. As wonderful as all of this is, however, it is not automatically ours because we learn about it. Although God has made a way for every person to be redeemed, most men will not be saved. There is one vital element that must be added to make the provision yours, and that is faith.

Faith is not some mystical wishing, open only to a few who seem to us a little "odd," or open to mysticism. Faith is real. Faith is a response to the word of God which He speaks to our hearts. It is obedience to the commands of God to us. It begins as a purposeful intention in the heart and ends in outward action in our lives. Faith is believing what God has spoken, determining in the innermost person to take action on what God has spoken, and following through in obedience to receive the provision of God. We are told that faith pleases God, and that in fact it is the only way we can please God. Everything in the kingdom of God is made yours by faith. God deals with you in mercy and grace, and in response He asks you to believe Him, to receive from Him by faith. *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17).

How do you make this provision of God for your sin to be your own? The first command of God to respond to by faith is, "Repent." In Ezekiel 18:32 we read, *"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,' declares the Lord God, 'Therefore, repent and live.'"* This message has never changed. It was the message of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2), the message of Jesus (Matthew 4:17), the message of Peter (Acts 2:38), and the message of Paul (Acts 17:30, 20:21). Down through the ages, this has been the beginning message of God in His dealings with men--the foundation which must come before all else.

Repentance is a turning from the direction we are going, toward God. It is a change of mind about the whole matter. It points our whole being in the right direction, looking only to God. It is an act of faith in response to the word of God when He reveals to us our helpless condition of death and sin. Repentance is a complete change of heart resulting in outward obedience (2 Corinthians 7:10,11). Satan will tell you that you can't repent, but he is a liar. God commands you to repent, and He never commands us to do anything without also providing the power to do it. Acknowledge your sinful condition before God, and turn from your sin to the Lord Jesus. You will find Him there to meet you at the throne of mercy (Hebrews 4:16).

Do not delay as you sense God speaking to your heart. Tomorrow may be too late--settle your account with God now. God never promises you another chance besides this one. It can all happen in a moment, but until you act, you are still bound to die in judgment for your own sins. Let Him wash you with His blood. He has promised He will do this for anyone who will come. Come now. *"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the scripture said, from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water'"* (John 7:37-38).

Baptism as an Outward Testimony

When God does something, He does not do it in a corner and hide it so nobody can see what He has done. When Christ died so that we might be redeemed back to God, He died on a hill before the entire city of Jerusalem. The judgment of God on His own Son for our sake was visible to the whole world. Likewise, when we turn to God, it is not a secret matter. Our confession is first before God and then before men. *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 10:32,33).

Baptism is a sign of identification with Christ. To the early Christians, entering into baptism was an open testimony that they accepted Christ as the Messiah. It brought immediate persecution from the Jews. Even today, many governments and religions use the act of a person submitting to water baptism as the basis for persecution of the believer. On the day of Pentecost, when the first believers realized they had crucified the Christ, they were smitten in heart and cried out, "What shall we do?" Peter's answer was, *"Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38). There were about three thousand that gladly received his word and were baptized that day.

It is not the physical act of water baptism that washes away our sin, but rather the blood of Christ, as we repent and turn to God for cleansing in our hearts (see 1 Peter 3:21 and Romans 4:9). Godly repentance produces a clearing in our lives. It also brings a desire to be openly identified with Christ before men. Baptism is God's chosen way of doing this. If we have experienced a true work of repentance in our hearts which clears our relationship with God, it will be a joy to acknowledge our Lord in this way. In one sense, it also helps to seal our own choice. We are testifying before all, "I am going with Jesus, and not turning back." We are stepping out onto the water, and Jesus is there to hold us up.

The symbol of baptism speaks of death to the world, sin, and our old lives. Coming up out of the water also speaks of a new life in Christ. It is only a type, however, since the reality is brought when we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ (Galatians 3:27). In the same way we are immersed in water, we must be immersed in the life of God. Physical baptism points us to the one true spiritual baptism which brings us into union with God. The Holy Spirit brings within our lives all that Jesus is. Baptism is still a command of the Lord, however, and we should not try to bypass this part of God's purpose. Seal this decision in your own heart before God and before men and obey the Lord in this matter. Do not turn back, for *"No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"* (Luke 9:62).

Receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit

When you repented and came to Jesus and submitted to Him as Lord, God cleansed you from your sin. He did this based on the work that Jesus did on the cross on your behalf. This cleansing was for a purpose, however, and that is that God might come and dwell within. Many have experienced the freedom of being forgiven and cleansed of their sin, reconciled to God out of a place of estrangement, and thought that was the end. But that is only a step of preparation to God's greater purpose which is to come and dwell with men (see John 14:23).

We have already quoted John 1:37-38, but the following verse reads, *"But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."* In other places, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as "the gift of promise." It is important to

note that the Holy Spirit is not a gift separate from God but rather God Himself. If we miss this aspect of God's purpose, we miss everything because we miss God.

As we have already seen, the main thing that went wrong in the beginning was that man chose to live independently of God. Before we can go on, we must come back to where we left God. When we receive God (the Holy Spirit) into our lives, we are made alive to God. We are joined to the Lord in the Spirit and made one with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). Apart from God we can do nothing (John 15:5). To be made alive in the Spirit is really our beginning place in God. Everything that God does before this is preparation for this marriage (union), and everything afterwards is living out of our union with God. Our whole life now is to be lived in the ability of His life.

In Acts 2:39 we are told that the promise of the Holy Spirit is for *"as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."* If you have come to Jesus and been washed in His blood, then you are included in those for whom the Spirit has been given. It is not automatic, however, since all things in the kingdom of God are appropriated by individual faith. The Holy Spirit is no exception. Perhaps you are like the men at Ephesus in Acts 19 who had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit. If this is the case, then know for certain that the Holy Spirit has been given, and according to the words of Jesus in Luke 11:13, He will give the Holy Spirit to all who ask.

What should you expect when you receive Holy Spirit? In three different accounts of believers receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4, 10:34-48, and 19:1-7) we read words similar to these: *"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying."* Many have said that these signs are not for today, but the Word of God does not say that. When you ask: for the Holy Spirit, do not doubt, but receive from God those spiritual manifestations that He gives you. He would not give them if they were not important. Do not let unbelief rob you of the full blessing that God has for you in Christ Jesus.

In Acts 1:8 we read, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria; and even to the remotest part of the earth."* With the Holy Spirit comes the power to live the life of God as a testimony unto God. He calls us to be witnesses of those things which we have seen and heard, and it is in the Holy Spirit that we find the *power* to do the will of God in our lives. In Galatians 5:22-23 we read, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."* These are attributes of one who has received the Holy Spirit and is allowing the life of God to manifest itself through him. If we want the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, then we must first have the Spirit.

How then do you receive the Holy Spirit? *"If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink"* (John 7:37). Hunger and thirst for the reality of God in your life, and then come to Jesus. He is the one who will give you the Spirit. Many have missed this aspect of the purpose of God for their lives. Do not be numbered among them, but be included in those who pleased God by faith. Be not unbelieving. Receive today.

God's Purpose for You is That His Will Be Done

In the beginning, God required of Adam that he do the will of God. God laid down certain requirements and said that Adam could do certain things but not others. Adam disobeyed, and thus died. God has never changed, although sometimes we'd like to think He has. It is still the requirement of God that you do His will. *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). God does not redeem you to do your own will, but to do His will. He paid the price for your redemption, and He is your new master. This is not a legalistic bondage, but rather that of a "love slave." You owe your very existence to Him; therefore out of a loving heart you delight to do His will.

Some have made the mistake of *trying* to do the will of God, thinking that they can please God enough to cause Him to save them. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Trying to please God and do His will can never produce life. It is like commanding a dead man to rise up and walk. He is dead and cannot respond to your commands! It is the same before you come to Christ. God's commands are there, but you cannot obey them because you are dead. Christ must first give you life.

Others have made the opposite mistake, saying that since we are saved through faith and faith alone, it does not matter what we do. This also is far from the truth. True faith is revealed by our works (James 1:17-20). If your faith does not produce works in your life, it is not saving faith. The proof that you have the life of God is that it is now revealed in your daily life. The Holy Spirit that God gives you now makes it possible for you to do the will of God in all aspects of your life.

What does it mean to do the will of God? First, it means that you stop sinning. This does not mean that you cannot sin or stumble occasionally, but it does mean that the normal pattern of your life will be free from sin. *"No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him"* (1 John 3:9). God has placed within you the power to walk in victory over sin. Furthermore, if you do continue to sin, you will die (Romans 8:12-14). This is not physical death, but spiritual death--separation from God. Sin breaks your fellowship with God, and the only solution is repentance, which is to turn from it in heart and deed. If you do not, the truth of God's law: "The soul that sins shall die," again takes over. God cannot dwell with sin.

On the positive side, however, doing the will of God is not just refraining from sin. That is only the beginning. God wants to express His life through you. This begins in a love relationship between you and God, and continues on until God has touched every part of your life, bringing it into conformity with His desires and purposes. You will find many things being put out of your life, not because they are sin in themselves, but because you just don't have time or a place in your life for them. You will find your life being taken up completely with how you can please Him, because He is your first love.

Life will take on a new meaning to you, as you grow in your relationship with Jesus. You will find that He will put more and more demands on you, but never more than you can bear. You will find it easy to say "yes" to Jesus, since you realize that everything He speaks to you is spoken out of a heart of love and concern for you. Your heart will be burdened for others, that they too might know this relationship. You are a "new creation," and your whole life has changed, because it is now hidden in God. You are living in fellowship with the God of this universe, and you know there is no turning back, because His great love has found you out.

God's Purpose is to Express the Body of Christ

Certainly the calling of individuals to God is a high calling, and after you have once seen this in some small measure, you may wonder how there could be anything more. But God's Word reveals that there is more, and if you want to go on in the purpose of God (and all who have truly experienced God's great salvation will have this desire) then you will soon find God beginning to reveal more of His fuller purpose to you. In 1 Corinthians 12:27 we read, *"Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it."* This is a tremendous truth. You by yourself are not the body of Christ, but you have been made a member of His body, and together with other members, God will reveal His life and do His will here on earth, just as he did 2000 years ago in the physical body of Christ.

God's purpose is that in each locality a company of believers will be raised up who have given their lives to God for the express purpose of being made part of this body, as a testimony to people living in that area. God has promised to indwell each company of believers by His Holy Spirit in a greater measure than He could indwell each individual believer. Each member will contribute his part as designated by God, who puts members into the body as it pleases Him. This body of Christ becomes a temple of God in the Spirit, and is what the scriptures call "the church."

Many have fallen short of this calling, thinking of the church only as a meeting place, a program, a place to preach the gospel, an organization, or various religious activities. None of these is what the Bible calls "the church." The Bible teaches only one concept of the church, and that is this body, this family life, this expression of the life of God which we have been speaking about. You cannot "join the church," because only God can make you a part of His church. You can express what God has done, however, and show the unity of the Spirit by coming together with other believers under the headship of Christ. Christ is the head of His body, and this is only true as each member submits to Christ as head, or the Lord of his life, and then begins to find fellowship with others of like heart who have also submitted to Christ as Lord. God will then build them together as His body.

Do not try to live the life of God in isolation, because God intended for you to be part of His body. You need the other members in your locality. If you are truly experiencing the love of God, it will reach out to others who have the same life, to love and have fellowship with them. You cannot love a person and stay separate from him. Natural love looks for every opportunity to be with the loved one, and this is true in an even greater measure with the love of God. You may not understand all of this right now, but the first step is for you to reach out and begin to look for fellowship with other believers. Search the Word of God for guidance, and let the Holy Spirit teach you. Realize that the purpose of God is for you to be built together into a temple of God in the Spirit. God is yearning to have an expression of His life in your locality. Accept this purpose of God for your life.

God's Purpose for You is Eternal

We have seen that God desires fellowship with others, because that is His very nature. What God is doing, however, is for eternity. This is hard for us to understand since with our finite minds we tend to see life as being only for a few years. We must see that this life is only the testing ground for the life to come. Life does not end at the grave; it only begins there! God can only take those into fellowship with Him for eternity who have chosen Him here and been tried and proven in their devotion to Him.

Not only does God want us to have fellowship with Him for eternity--the Word of God tells us that we shall also reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12). This age is not the age in which we are called to rule in

this world, but there is coming a time when we will reign with God. We must see our lives now in proper perspective if we are going to fulfill God's purpose for us here on earth. Realize that you are being prepared for an even greater calling than you have now, and that that calling is in the future.

If we are to be chosen for that calling, we must be faithful in small things here on this earth. You may not feel that your calling in the body of Christ is very important, but it is of utmost importance, because God is testing you to see if you will be found faithful in the "little things." Actually, they are not so little; they just seem so to us.

Remember that in this world you will be hated, as Jesus was (John 15:18-20). This should cause you to rejoice! Just keep your eyes on Jesus, and realize that what little persecution you have to endure now is nothing in comparison to the coming glory that you will share with Jesus Christ if you endure. So fix your heart on Him, and you will not lose your purpose or your courage. Let Him be your joy!

The High Cost of Rejecting the Purpose of God

When we go back and look at the message of Jesus, it will soon come to our attention that time and time again He spoke the words, "Follow Me." Perhaps there are no words that sum up His total message better than these two. Following has a beginning, but it also implies a continuing. We dare not stop at any point, even if it seems to us that the cost is too great. It cost God everything to purchase us back for Himself, and it will cost you also when you set your heart to follow Him. He has not promised an easy road, but He has promised strength for every day, and He will not make any demands upon you that you cannot obey.

If we turn from the pathway of God to our own desires again, it can only bring the judgment and discipline of God. He will first bring discipline to try to turn our hearts back to the straight and narrow way (Hebrews 12:7-11). God will bring everything into our lives that He can, short of death, to turn us from our own ways back to His way. He loves us, and because He loves us, He disciplines us. It is an evidence that He has not given up on us, but rather that He still cares for us. Our part is to recognize that discipline quickly, and repent. God deals with us in mercy, but we must not be slow to respond.

If we refuse to respond to the discipline of God, we leave God with no other choice in the final day but eternal judgment, and this is the lake of fire. This may not be pleasant to think about, but we must consider the consequences of turning from God at any point in our lives. There is a final price to pay. God does not delight in casting a man into this lake of fire, as we have seen earlier, but His nature of complete justice requires that He do so. He has made every provision, but if we continue to reject His provision, we bring the wrath of God upon ourselves.

Perhaps all of this makes you feel too weak, and you say you can never make it. God does not ask you to make the journey all at once. We have pointed out the pathway to help you see where God is leading you, but all He asks is that you take one step at a time. Every journey is completed in that way. Wherever you are in God at this time, make the next step. You will find God is enabling you to make it. He is not against you, but for you. You must come God's way, however, as there is no other way. It is a narrow way, but it is also a straight way. It is the only way of life--all other roads lead to death. Heed the word which God has brought to your heart, and take a step in God. You will never be the same again.

"See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25).