

Putting Purpose In Your Life

Introduction. Even with all of the negatives of lockdowns, sickness, and death caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been some unforeseen positives.

Stories abound of neighbors helping neighbors. Relationships are being rekindled. Families are spending more time together. Preachers and elders are finding new and innovative ways to minister. There's been an increase in people reading the Bible and spiritual material. And, of course, people are becoming Christians.

Apparently, according to a new Lifeway Research survey, Americans have been thinking more about the meaning of life during the pandemic. 57% of adults, a number that had increased in just one year, said they ponder the question "How can I find more meaning and purpose in my life" at least once a month.

"A large majority still lean toward there being an ultimate purpose for a person's life," said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research.

"During Covid-19, many experiences, pleasures, and metrics of success became irrelevant overnight," McConnell added. "It is not surprising that more people thought about their purpose and what matters in life."

As people ponder and pursue the ultimate purpose in life, let me suggest that the Bible offers definite and concrete answers.

I. The Origin Of Purpose

- A. It's not about you. Too often we start at the wrong place asking selfish questions that center around my dreams, my goals, my ambitions, my life, and my future.
- B. "Every living creature is in the hands of God," Job asserted (12:10). To the Athenians, Paul affirmed that we live, breathe, and are daily sustained by God our Creator (Acts 17:25-28; cp. 14:15-18). Thus, it's reasonable to assume that we're created for a higher, nobler purpose than self-absorbed pursuits and pleasures (Ecclesiastes 12:7-8, 13-14).

II. The Explanation Of Purpose

- A. In 1988 Hugh S. Moorheard released a book entitled *The Meaning of Life According to Our Century's Greatest Writers and Thinkers*. He wrote to 250 well-respected scientists, authors, and intellectuals asking them, "What is the meaning of life?" The book reveals their answers.
 1. One Amazon reviewer correctly concluded that the book was just a collection of opinions, and while interesting and entertaining, it fell short of having real meaning.
 2. Fortunately, we have a reliable source: the Bible, God's word. These scriptures contain "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).
- B. For seekers, I often recommend they begin by reading Luke's gospel, and then his second book, Acts.
 1. The gospel of Luke is a carefully researched presentation of Jesus as a man, in contrast to the imaginary gods of the Greco-Roman world. He is shown to be a real son of Man (5:24) of compassion and worthy to be obeyed as the

- son of God (3:38). The theme of the gospel is in 19:10 where Jesus came “to seek and save that which was lost.”
2. The Acts of the Apostles traces a 30-year period from Pentecost to Paul’s first Roman imprisonment. It chronicles how Peter preached the gospel to the Jews and later to the Gentiles. It also records Paul taking that message further into the whole world (cp. Colossians 1:23).
- C. If you follow these two books with Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, you will learn about God’s eternal plan and purpose before the world began:
1. Redemption in Christ (1:3-14).
 2. Paul gives thanks for the Ephesians (1:15-23).
 3. Reconciliation with God through grace and faith (2:1-10).
 4. Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile (2:11-22).
 5. The mystery of the Gentiles’ inclusion (3:1-13).

III. The Person Of Purpose

- A. Jesus Christ came to reveal the will of the Father (John 5:30; 12:48-50).
1. He left us an example so we can follow in His footsteps (1 Peter 2:21-25).
 2. He consummated the divine plan for our salvation from sin through His death and resurrection (Colossians 2:9-12).
 3. Thus, Paul could confidently affirm that by the power of God man is saved and reaches his fullest potential (2 Timothy 1:8-12).
- B. As we come to know God through Jesus and the revelation of His word, we discover our identity and find our purpose in life that God intended for mankind.
1. That purpose can be summed up in the word “discipleship” (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 6:7).
 2. Followers of Jesus are identified as “disciples” 270 times in the New Testament. What does it mean to be a disciple?
 - a) A disciple is one who learns (John 6:45).
 - b) A disciple is one who is trained (Luke 6:40).
 - c) A disciple is one who follows (John 1:23).
 - d) A disciple is one who serves (John 13:12-17).
 - e) A disciple is one who loves (John 13:34-35).
 - f) A disciple is one who is committed (Luke 14:23-26).
 - g) A disciple is one who bears fruit (John 15:8).

Conclusion. Acts 13:36 says, “For David, after he had served God’s purpose in his own generation, fell asleep, and was buried among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.” The NASB uses the terms “plan” and “purpose,” while the NKJV uses “will.”

Are you ready to do the will of God? If you are, then tell us today. Be ready to obey the gospel by repenting of sins, confessing Jesus as God’s Son, and being buried with Jesus in baptism. That will open the door to purpose in your life like never before. For the Christian, if the weight of sin is dragging you down, release it today through repentance while we give you the chance during our invitation song.

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