
rodentivity



Breaking the Cycle
of Busyness

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by the author of *Realign* and *Seventy*

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CHAPTER ONE

Purposeful or Purposeless

This morning is like most: I awaken with great expectation. I am excited about today, especially the next hour or so. I am doing something I love to do—write. There is, however, one slight difference—my environment. My wife and I are in Camden, Maine, celebrating our wedding anniversary. Looking out from our balcony, I have a beautiful view of the harbor. Several of the boats have already been winterized. The tourist season is coming to a close and some of the stores and restaurants have been boarded up for the winter. Beyond the harbor I see the Atlantic Ocean. The waves are choppy this morning, and the storm clouds are brewing.

Such is life. Things change. Seasons come and seasons go. People come and people go. Storms arise and winds blow. At times, hunkering down and riding out the storm is the right thing to do. At other times, moving inland is a much better option.

Jesus offers some insight on how to handle change and deal with storms. He told His disciples to get in a boat and meet Him on the other side of the sea. While on their way, the disciples encountered a storm. Fearful for their lives, they thought they would perish. Jesus, however, was never

going to allow that to happen. His purpose was greater than their circumstance.

Perhaps you are facing a season in which your circumstances are not the most favorable. Are you aligned with your purpose? If so, it is greater than your circumstances. You will be fine as long as you hold on to your purpose.

The value of purpose is enormous. Most fail to understand its significance. Purpose rises above disarray and chaos and declares, “This is the way.” Purpose says, “I can do this. I can make it.” Purpose stands in the face of difficulties with an encouraging word: “I can get to where I am headed.”

Purpose empowers people to weather storms. It gives meaning to the changing of seasons. “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”

Purpose is why I arose early this morning. I wanted to spend a few hours writing. I wanted to spend some time engaged in my purpose.

A Person of Purpose

Unfortunately, many people live hollow lives. Aimlessly wandering through life, such people are void of purpose. This is not the way God meant for people to live. God’s intention was quite different: God meant for people to live a purpose-driven life.

Most people desire significance. Consequently, most people are busy. But being busy is not the same thing as being purpose-driven. People can be busy and waste the most precious thing given—the gift of life.

Ironically, filling one’s life with less than ideal things makes obtaining significance impossible. What a sad way to live life—to have things, to be busy with things only to

discover that such things do not generate a life of significance. A life of significance is a life aligned with purpose.

But rather than discuss what others are doing, let's talk about you. What is your purpose? Can you articulate it? Do you awaken each day with excitement? Do you possess a zeal for something you envision, something that has yet to come to fruition? Are you moving forward, making progress in achieving your dreams?

If you are actively engaged in your purpose, it shows in your conversation. You can't help but talk about it. It is exciting. You want to share it with others. It causes you to get up early and stay up late. It drives you. It motivates you. It energizes you. Alignment with your purpose influences your decisions. What you do day in and day out is impacted by purpose; purpose causes you to do things differently than those who are not purpose-driven. Are you a person of purpose?

More Than Dust

I was twelve years old when a song written by Kerry Livgren titled "Dust in the Wind" was released. Upon hearing it, my immediate reaction was one of disdain; I didn't like it. Years later, my feelings haven't changed; I still don't like it. Its title and lyrics disturb me, even though both are rooted in Scripture.

The song is a paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 2:14 (NET): "I reflected on everything that is accomplished by man on earth, and I concluded: Everything he has accomplished is futile—like chasing the wind." These words were written by a despondent and disheartened king who had given himself to the pursuit of things, earthly things, things that held little value in comparison to purpose. Solomon, by his own

admission, had absorbed himself in things that ultimately did not matter.

Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor.
(Ecclesiastes 2:10)

What a waste. What a travesty. Untold potential lost in meaningless activities. It was nothing more than dust in the wind. “Everything I gave myself to was meaningless,” said Solomon. “It was a waste.”

We don’t have to live like Solomon did. He might have been the wisest man ever to live, but he didn’t live a wise life. You and I can do better. We don’t have to waste our lives on things that don’t matter. Our lives can be more than dust in the wind. Our lives can be aligned with purpose.

Yet for many, life is nothing more than dust in the wind. Many people live like Solomon—void of purpose.

Why are so many chasing things that do not matter? Do they honestly believe it will satisfy? If so, they are mistaken. Things will never satisfy. A bigger house or a new car may be nice, but they won’t satisfy. A better job, a grand vacation—such things are nice, but they will never satisfy.

Purpose is not obtained through the accumulation of things. A person can attain all sorts of stuff and never be aligned with purpose. Purpose is bigger than material things. Pursuing things is to waste life. Stuff cannot take the place of purpose. Solomon found that out. Stuff is meaningless. Purpose, on the other hand, offers meaning. A life of purpose is a life worth pursuing.

Interestingly, Solomon accomplished many things. He built a temple and several great palaces. But he was a man void of purpose nonetheless. Like Solomon, we too can accomplish many things and still be void of purpose. We can live in such a way that at the end of our life we look at what we have accomplished only to realize it was nothing more than dust in the wind. We can spend a lifetime on things—pursuing things, chasing things—not necessarily bad things or evil things, but things nonetheless. Or we can invest our lives in fulfilling our purpose.

Purposeless Pursuits

The hunger and desire within people to discover purpose is seen in the popularity of the book *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. The book was published in 2002, and it simultaneously hit number one on four major bestseller lists: *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and *Publisher's Weekly*. Within ten years it had sold more than thirty-two million copies worldwide and had been translated into fifty languages. Today, it is the bestselling hardcover nonfiction book in history, and the second most translated book after the Bible. It is safe to say, based upon its popularity, that the desire within humankind to find purpose is substantial.

Unfortunately, despite the popularity of *The Purpose Driven Life*, most people are not pursuing what's best. Instead, many people are investing time and effort into doing good things. There is a distinct difference, however, between good and best. And the impact is profound.

When pursuing good things, a person will seldom function in his sweet spot. *Sweet spot* is defined by Merriam-Webster as “the area around the center of mass of a bat,

racket, or head of a club that is the most effective part with which to hit a ball.” Hence, a person’s sweet spot is the area in which he or she is most effective. When pursuing good things, a person’s sweet spot is seldom invoked. However, when people are pursuing what is best, they are functioning in their sweet spot. Many never discover their sweet spot. Consequently, effectiveness, at least in a high level of functionality, is never attained.

Think about your answer to this question: When you obtain what you are reaching for right now, what will you be holding in your hand? Think about it. Will you have lived life functioning in your sweet spot? Will you have generated anything of significant value? Or will you discover that it was nothing more than dust in the wind?

Angel of Purpose

She was my angel—at least that is what I came to refer to her as. She was an elderly widow, a fellow member of our church. She also was a person aligned with purpose, and she helped me to align with mine.

About every other week, I would stop by her house for a visit. Due to her deteriorating health, she didn’t get out much and was unable to make it to most church services. I would call to let her know I was headed her way, and she would always tell me to just come on in when I arrived. And she would add, “I will get your hot tea ready for you.” (She knew I didn’t like coffee.)

When I would arrive at her home, I would knock first before slowly opening the door. She would holler from the kitchen, “Come on in. I’ve got your tea ready,” and would always add as I made my way to the kitchen, “It is so good to see you!” We would exchange a few pleasantries, then she

would say, “Well, let’s sit down and drink our tea before it gets cold. I want to share some things with you that the Lord has been talking to me about.” The conversations we would have over the next hour or so are some of my fondest memories.

She was a precious lady. Without exception, she would begin to share what the Lord was dealing with her about. I discovered they were things I needed to hear. She never said so, but I came to understand what she meant. What the Lord had been saying to her wasn’t for her as much as it was for me. Nearly every visit, while sitting at her dining table, I found myself fighting back tears, at times to no avail, because the tears would spill over and run down my cheeks. She was like an angel sent from above; she always had a word from the Lord for me.

Within a few years, she moved away. Not far, just across the river to another state to be closer to her family. Although I didn’t get to see her as often, I enjoyed the times when I was able to. A couple of years later, she decided to check herself into a nursing home. She felt she was a burden on her family and wanted them to be able to do the things they needed to do without having to worry about her. She didn’t give them a choice; she did it on her own.

Although she had moved another twenty minutes or so farther from me, I continued to visit from time to time. I cherish the memories. She had been in the nursing home for about a year when my wife and I stopped by for a short visit. After about an hour or so, I stood up to leave. After we prayed, I hugged her neck and told her I loved her. As my hand reached for the doorknob to exit her room, the Lord spoke to me: “Tell her how much she means to you.” So I stopped and did as I had been instructed. I told her she was like an angel to me. (I had never told her this.) I said, “Every

time I visited your home, you had a word for me. You have no idea how much I needed that, especially at that time in my life. You had no idea the things I was going through; God used you to minister to me.”

As I opened the door to leave, she spoke, and I stopped to listen. She said, “I see you standing at a crossroads. There are multiple roads leading out from where you are, roads in every direction. At the end of each road is something good. You can choose any road, but there is only one road that is best. If you will refrain from choosing and let God choose for you, you will walk that road and obtain what is best.” She then added, “Let God do the choosing.” (This was the only time she spoke to me in a way that it was a direct word from God.)

It was a profound God-moment in my life and helped shape my future. I have held on to her words and reflected on them multiple times. “Let God do the choosing; at the end of that road lies what is best.”

Jesus Was Aligned with Purpose

It is always best when we allow God to do the choosing. Why? Is it because if God does the choosing, we won't choose the bad? That could be one reason why. But she said at the end of all of the other roads there was something good. Could it be that many of our choices result in that which is good, but when God does the choosing, it always results in that which is best? It certainly seems so.

Jesus offered an example of diligently pursuing what is best. He was constantly surrounded with multiple opportunities to do good deeds and to meet urgent needs, and yet He was not driven by such things.

Jesus understood His mission. He was not driven by the needs of others, though He often stopped to help hurting people. He was not driven by the approval of others, although He cared deeply for the lost and the broken. Ultimately, Jesus was driven by the Spirit. He was driven by His God-given mission. He knew His priorities and did not let the many temptations of a busy life deter Him from His task. ¹

Unlike most people, Jesus was driven by a diligent and deliberate desire to fulfill His purpose.

Jesus' pursuit of purpose caused confusion among those closest to Him: His disciples. They could not understand why Jesus wasn't moved to accomplish good deeds and meet urgent needs. They said, "Everyone is looking for you" (Mark 1:37). In response, Jesus said, "Let's go somewhere else." This is not the response one would think Jesus would give. And yet it was the correct response. It was the response of a person who was aligned with purpose.

Take Control of Your Future

There is a purpose to this book. I aim to help people lay hold of purpose, to move beyond the mundane, to get past merely existing and step into the wonderful life of purpose. That is what this book is about; it is about intentional living as opposed to merely existing. It is about aligning with things that matter. If you are searching for purpose, struggling to align with purpose, or having difficulty overcoming obstacles to purpose, this book is for you.

I don't want to live life out of alignment with purpose. I don't believe you do either. The fact that you are reading this book tells me that you care. You care about your life.

You care about your future. You care about your purpose. You don't want to be dust in the wind. You want your life to matter, to make a difference, to be aligned with something bigger than self. You want to discover your purpose and align yourself with it.

The fact that you picked up this book tells me you are headed in the right direction. You have a desire that you want to see come to fruition; you want to align yourself with God's plan and purpose for your life. I applaud you. You will not settle for that which is good; you are committed to that which is best. Don't get sidetracked. Stay with it. God's plan for your life is huge. Don't fritter your life away on trivial, meaningless things. Don't get sidetracked trying to prove yourself valuable. His plans for you are too big for such nonsense. His plans for you are too important for you to waste time on things of far less value. His plans are what is best. Your life matters. It matters a great deal.

Although the eternal holds preeminence over the temporal, it is within the confines of a space of time that we lay hold on that which never ends. Yes, it is here during our *lifespan*, the short amount of time we have been given, that we discover our purpose and live life accordingly. Let it not be said of us that during our lifespan we squandered away the most precious gift we had been given—purpose. Instead, may we accelerate while aligning ourselves with God's plan and purpose for our lives.