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From

FROM *THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN*® LIFE

WHAT
on
Earth
AM I
HERE
for?

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What on Earth Am I Here For?

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It All Starts with God

It's not about you.

The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.

The search for the purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That's because we typically begin at the wrong starting point—ourselves. We ask self-centered questions like, “What do *I* want to be? What should *I* do with *my* life? What are *my* goals, *my* ambitions, *my* dreams for *my* future?”

But focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life's purpose. The Bible says, “*It is God who directs the lives of his creatures; everyone's life is in his power.*”¹

Contrary to what many popular books, movies, and seminars tell you, **you won't discover your life's meaning by looking within yourself.** You've probably tried that already. You didn't create yourself, so there is no way you can tell yourself what you were created for! If I handed you an invention you had never seen before, you wouldn't know its purpose,

and the invention itself wouldn't be able to tell you either. Only the creator or the owner's manual could reveal its purpose.

I once got lost in the mountains. When I stopped to ask for directions to the campsite, I was told, "*You can't get there from here. You must start from the other side of the mountain!*" In the same way, you cannot arrive at your life's purpose by starting with a focus on yourself. You must begin with God, your Creator. You exist only because God wills that you exist. You were made *by* God and *for* God—and until you understand that, life will never make sense. It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other path leads to a dead end.

Many people try to use God for their own self-actualization. They want God to be a personal "genie" who serves their self-centered desires. But that is a reversal of nature and is doomed to failure. You were made for God, not vice versa, and **life is about letting God use you for his purposes, not your using him for your own purposes.** The Bible says, "*Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life.*"²²

I've read many books that suggest ways to discover the purpose of my life. All of them could be classified as "self-help" books because

they approach the subject from a self-centered viewpoint. Self-help books usually offer the same predictable steps to finding your life's purpose: Consider your dreams. Figure out what you are good at. Clarify your values. Set some goals. Aim high. Believe you can achieve it. Be disciplined. Never give up.

Of course, these recommendations are all good and often lead to great success. You can usually succeed in reaching a goal if you put your mind to it. **But being successful and fulfilling your life's purpose are *not at all* the same issue!** You could reach all your personal goals, becoming a raving success by the world's standard, and *still* miss the purposes for which God created you. You need more than self-help advice. Jesus Christ once said, "*Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.*"³

This booklet is not about finding the right career, achieving your dreams, or planning your life. It is not about how to cram more activities into an overloaded schedule. Actually, knowing your purpose will allow you to do *less* in life—by focusing on what matters most. It is about becoming what *God* created you to be.

How, then, do you discover the purpose you were created for? You have only two options. Your first option is *speculation*. This is where most people are. They just guess or speculate or theorize about the purpose of life.

When someone says, “I’ve *always thought* the purpose of life is . . .,” they’re really saying, “This is the best guess I can come up with.”

For thousands of years brilliant philosophers have discussed and speculated about the meaning of life. Philosophy is an important subject and has its uses, but when it comes to determining the purpose of life, even the wisest philosophers are just guessing.

Dr. Hugh Moorhead, a philosophy professor at Northeastern Illinois University, once wrote to 250 of the best-known philosophers, scientists, writers, and intellectuals in the world and asked each person “What is the meaning of life?” He then published their responses—which were quite discouraging—in a book. Some of these famous thinkers offered their best guesses, some admitted that they just made up a purpose for life, and others were honest enough to say they were clueless. In fact, a number of these intellectuals asked Professor Moorhead to write back and tell them if he discovered the purpose of life!⁴

Fortunately, there is a better alternative to speculation about the meaning and purpose of life. **The easiest way to discover the purpose of an invention is to ask the creator to explain it.** The same method works for discovering your life’s purpose. You can find what God, your creator, has revealed about life in his Word, the Bible. *Revelation* beats *speculation* any day.

God has not left us in the dark to wonder and guess. He has clearly revealed his five purposes for our lives through the Bible. It is our Owner's Manual, explaining why we are alive, how life works, what to avoid, and what to expect in the future. It explains what no self-help or philosophy book could know. *"God's wisdom . . . goes deep into the interior of his purposes. . . . It's not the latest message, but more like the oldest—what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us."*⁵

God is not just the starting point of your life; he is the *source* of it. To discover your purpose in life you must turn to God's Word, not the world's best guesses. You must build your life on unchanging, eternal truths, not the ever-changing opinions of talk shows, pop psychology fads, or success-motivation seminars. The Bible says, *"It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone."*⁶ This verse gives us three insights into your purpose.

First, you discover your identity and purpose through a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you don't have such a relationship, I'll explain later how you can begin one.

Second, God was thinking of you long before you ever thought about him.

His purpose for your life predates your conception. He planned it before you existed, without your input! You may choose your career, your spouse, your hobbies, and many other parts of your life, but you don't get to choose your purpose.

Third, the purpose of your life fits into a much larger, cosmic purpose that God has designed for eternity. That's what this booklet is about.

Andrei Bitov, a Russian novelist, grew up under a government that denied the existence of God. But God got his attention one dreary day. He recalls, "In my twenty-seventh year, while riding the metro in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) I was overcome with a despair so great that life seemed to stop at once, preempting the future entirely, let alone any meaning. Suddenly, all by itself, a phrase appeared: *Without God life makes no sense*. Repeating it in astonishment, I rode the phrase up like a moving staircase, got out of the metro and walked into God's light."⁷

You may have felt in the dark about your purpose in life. Congratulations, you're about to walk into the light. Just keep reading.

Point to Ponder: If there were no God, and everything was a result of random chance, there would be no purpose to your life. It all starts with God.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ✎ Have you ever wondered about, or felt confused about, the purpose of your life?
- ✎ What ways have you tried to discover your life's purpose that haven't worked?
- ✎ Why do you think people try to discover their life's purpose without turning to God, their creator?

If you'd like to explore these questions, visit **www.purposedrivenlife.com**.



You Are Not an Accident

You are not an accident.

Your birth was no mistake or mishap, and your life is no fluke of nature. Your parents may not have planned you, but that doesn't mean God didn't plan you. He works even through human error and failings, and he was not surprised by your birth; in fact, he expected it.

It is not fate, nor chance, nor luck, nor coincidence that you are breathing at this very moment. **You are alive because God wanted to create you!** The Bible says, "*The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me.*"⁸

God prescribed every single detail of your body. He deliberately chose your race, the color of your skin, your hair, and every other feature. He custom-made your body just the way he wanted it. He also determined the natural talents you would possess and the uniqueness of your personality. The Bible says, "*You [God] know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something.*"⁹

Because God made you for a reason, he also decided *when* you would be born and *how long* you would live. He planned the days of your life in advance, choosing the exact time of your

birth and death. The Bible says, *"You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book!"*¹⁰

God also planned *where* you'd be born and where you'd live for his purpose. Your race and nationality are no accident. God left no detail to chance. He planned it all for *his* purpose. The Bible says, *"From one man he made every nation . . . and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."*¹¹ Nothing in your life is arbitrary. It's all for a purpose.

Most amazing, God decided *how* you would be born. Regardless of the circumstances of your birth or who your parents are, God had a plan in creating you. It doesn't matter whether your parents were good, bad, or indifferent. God knew that those two individuals possessed *exactly* the right genetic makeup to create the custom "you" he had in mind. They had the DNA God wanted to make you. **While there are illegitimate parents, there are no illegitimate children.** Some children may be unplanned by their parents, but they are not unplanned by God.

God's purposes take into account human mistakes, even sin. This does not mean that God causes or condones sin or evil—he does not—but it does mean God is able to redeem any and all situations and use them for his own good.

So regardless of the circumstances of your birth, you can celebrate the fact that God created you to be you. God never does anything accidentally, and he never makes mistakes. He has a reason for everything he creates. Every plant and every animal was planned by God for a purpose, and every person was designed with a purpose in mind, too. God's motive for creating you is his love. The Bible says, *"Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love."*¹²

God was thinking of you even before he made the world. In fact, that's why he created it! God designed this planet's environment just so we could live in it. We are the focus of his love and the most valuable of all his creation. The Bible says, *"God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the most important of all the things he made."*¹³ This is how much God loves and values you!

God is not haphazard; he planned it all with great precision. The more physicists, biologists, and other scientists learn about the universe, the better we understand how it is uniquely suited for our existence, custom-made with the *exact* specifications that make human life possible.

Dr. Michael Denton, senior research fellow in human molecular genetics at the University of Otago in New Zealand, has concluded, "All the evidence available in the biological sciences supports the core proposition . . . that the

cosmos is a specially designed whole, with life and mankind as its fundamental goal and purpose, a whole in which all facets of reality have their meaning and explanation in this central fact.”¹⁴ The Bible said the same thing thousands of years earlier: “*God formed the earth. . . . He did not create it to be empty but formed it to be inhabited.*”¹⁵

Why did God do all this? Why did he bother to go to all the trouble of creating a universe for us? Because he is a God of love. This kind of love is difficult to fathom, but it’s fundamentally reliable. You were created as a special object of God’s love!¹⁶ **God made you so he could love you.** This is a truth to build your life on.

The Bible tells us, “*God is love.*”¹⁷ It doesn’t say God *has* love. He *is* love! Love is the essence of God’s character. Now God is perfect and complete in himself, so he didn’t *need* to create you. He wasn’t lonely. But he wanted to make you in order to express his love. God says, “*I have carried you since you were born; I have taken care of you from your birth. Even when you are old, I will be the same. Even when your hair has turned gray, I will take care of you. I made you and will take care of you.*”¹⁸




If there were no God, we would all be “accidents,” the result of astronomical random chance in the universe. You could stop reading this right now, because life would have no purpose or significance. There would be no

right or wrong, no good or evil, and no hope beyond your brief years on earth. Life would be a meaningless existence, and death would be the end.

But there *is* a God who made you for a reason, and your life has profound meaning! We discover that meaning and purpose *only* when we make God the reference point of our lives. *“The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us.”*¹⁹

Point to Ponder: You are not an accident!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

-  What events or experiences in your life have “hinted” or suggested that maybe you were created for a specific purpose?
-  Have you ever really felt God’s deep love for you personally?
-  How would your life change if you began to live each day confident that God loves you deeply and has a purpose for your life?

If you’d like to explore these questions, visit **www.purposedrivenlife.com**.