

**Thank you for downloading this sample of
the Missions Journal edition of the NOW
devotional from YM360.**

The Missions Journal edition of NOW allows you to utilize the life-changing message of NOW for your mission trip experience. Challenge your students to impact their world for Christ as they serve locally, nationally, and around the world.

For questions or for more information on NOW, please call 1.888.969.6360, or live chat us on YM360.com.

NOW

NOW: Impacting Your World For Christ (Right Now!)
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NOW

BY ANDY BLANKS

PUBLISHED BY YM360

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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HOW NOW WORKS

NOW is a super interactive, highly creative book that's designed to take you on a faith-deepening journey as you process your mission trip experience. We wanted to share some thoughts on how to get the best out of the time you spend in NOW.

LIKE WE SAID, NOW IS A JOURNEY

NOW is designed to show you what it means to see your life as a powerful resource God wants to use to change the world. Not sometime in the future, but right now. This is accomplished through four weeks of devotional activities. Each week has a mix of different ways to challenge you to impact your world today. Start at the beginning and move from day to day, letting each day, and each week, speak to you.

BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER YOUR TRIP

Week 1 is meant to take place the week before your mission trip. Week 2 is during the trip, and weeks 3 and 4 are for after the trip. We encourage you to stay on track, since many of the questions apply to those specific stages of your mission trip.

HAVE A BIBLE AND A PEN HANDY

Borrow a real Bible, use one online, or download a Bible app on your phone or tablet . . . Whatever you do, it's important that you have one for this journey you're on. Make sure you have a pen or pencil. You'll need it!

THINK LONG-TERM

The goal of NOW is to help you change the world for the sake of Christ. That's a pretty big goal. The concepts and practices you'll learn in NOW are relevant for your life today. But, real, lasting change takes time. Keep this in mind as you work through this book. And don't be afraid to pick it back up months or even years down the road to revisit what you learned.

WORK THROUGH THIS TOGETHER OR ALONE

This book works perfectly as a stand-alone devotional book. If you're a group leader, you don't have to do anything in order for your team to engage with this awesome resource. It is a great tool for them to work through during their quiet times. However, it is also something that you can work through as a group if you prefer to utilize it in that capacity. You can read through the entry, prompt your team with questions, and allow them time to write down their thoughts and process their answers. You may choose to do week 2 together since you will be together on the trip, and allow weeks 1, 3, and 4 to be done individually.

SHARE WHAT YOU'RE LEARNING

One of the most important aspects of a mission trip is trying to process everything that is happening around you. Maybe you're experiencing culture shock, or maybe God is opening your eyes to the world around you, or maybe you're enjoying the fullness of living life on mission with God and desire to return home and live differently. Please, talk with those around you. Don't stifle what God is trying to teach you and do through you!

INTRODUCTION

HOW DO YOU VIEW YOUR LIFE?

It's a really important question. If you think about it, the way you answer this question could potentially impact every aspect of who you are.

When you step back and evaluate who you are, and the things and people you're choosing to invest yourself in, what do you see?

The question is so powerful for one simple reason: the life you have is the only one you'll ever get. Seems like a cliché, doesn't it? Maybe it is. But it's still true. The life you have been given is the only shot you'll ever get. Think about it . . . At some point today you'll go to sleep, and if God in His goodness has blessed you with another day on this earth, at some point you'll wake up. This simple truth has more power in it than you could ever imagine.

When you open your eyes each morning, it's another day God has allowed you to experience. More than that, it's another day God has looked at His creation and said to Himself that it's not complete without you. That's right. You read that correctly. I just said that if you are alive today it's because God decided He wanted you here. You may think that's an overstatement. I don't. And here's why.

The Bible teaches us that God is the all-powerful Creator. The Bible also teaches us that nothing happens by accident; the Lord is in control of all things. Furthermore, the Bible says that God's plan is perfect. If these things are true (and they are, BTW), then it means your life isn't an accident. You're here because God wanted you to be. God didn't have to create you. But He did. In fact, God's perfect plan called for you to be in it. Let that sink in . . .

While you're thinking about that, think back to my first question in light of what you just read. How do you view your life now, knowing that God specifically chose to create a world with you in it?

Maybe the better question is, "How does God view my life"? Let me take a crack at answering this for you . . .



**GOD SEES YOU
AND YOUR LIFE AS
AN INVALUABLE
RESOURCE, A
POWERFUL FORCE
OF INFLUENCE
CAPABLE OF
DRAMATICALLY
IMPACTING THE
WORLD AROUND
YOU, ALL FOR THE
GLORY OF GOD.**

It's a truth so powerful it bears repeating. "God sees you and your life as an invaluable resource, a powerful force of influence capable of dramatically impacting the world around you, all for the glory of God." This is one of the primary ways God sees you and your life. No matter how you view yourself, God sees unlimited potential in you to use your passions, experiences, and gifts to impact the world around you.

You see, God's primary plan to share the message of salvation to a lost world is His Church. The Church is simply just the global body of people who have professed faith in Christ. And if you have come to a saving relationship with Christ, you're the Church. Which means you're God's plan for sharing the Gospel with the world. Boom! That's huge, right?

But here's the deal, and it's the main reason we've written this book. You often receive mixed signals about your life and its potential for impact, especially if you're still a student. Sometimes, adults can mistakenly imply that your opportunity to make a difference is sometime in the future. A lot of adults imply that your life now is really preparing you for life after high school. And that your life after high school, whether you choose to go to college or the military or take a gap year, is all about preparing you for the career you'll choose. And choosing a career is all about preparing you to raise a family. And if you're not careful, whethwe you're a student or adult, you may just start to believe that "life" is always somewhere out in the future. "If I can just make it to the future, my life will count for something . . ."

I'm here to tell you that this is 100% false. The future is not your only chance to make a difference. Your life today, right now, is full of amazing potential to have a very real impact on the world. Now. Not just tomorrow, not just a year from now. But today. Every single day presents opportunities to make your life count.

But you have to decide if you're ready to do something about it.

AND SO, LET ME ASK YOU THIS QUESTION: “ARE YOU READY”? ARE YOU READY TO CHANGE THE WAY YOU SEE YOURSELF AND YOUR LIFE? ARE YOU READY TO FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF YOU? ARE YOU WILLING TO SEE YOUR LIFE AS A RESOURCE IN GOD’S HANDS TO DO WITH AS HE WISHES?

If you’re not ready, honestly I’d encourage you to put this book down. Because this book is for people who are tired of wasting the precious moments of their lives NOT making an impact for Christ. If you are ready, and you keep reading, this book is going to help you see your life in a new way. As you embark on this mission trip, you’re going to be challenged to embrace the **purpose** God has for you and your life. You’re going to be asked to define the **vision** you think God is putting in front of you. You’re going to define the **practices** that will help you put your vision to work. And you’re going to be challenged to take **action**, committing to living your life on mission for God, today. Right now.

I wouldn’t say this if I didn’t mean it: If you take this book seriously, I believe it will change the way you see your life. Not because I’ve done anything special. But because my goal is to show you in God’s Word just exactly how He thinks of you and your ability to truly change the world for His sake.

Are you ready? I hope you are. If so, let’s get moving.

PRE-TRIP

Who owns you? Who sets the course of your life's path? Who is in charge?

Some people have a plan, a thought of where they're headed. They have goals and steps to achieve them. Some people don't have a clue. They go with the flow, not worrying about what's next. But most people probably find themselves in the middle. They have a general idea of what they want to accomplish, but the day-to-day of their lives sort of takes care of itself.

You most likely find yourself somewhere near the middle of this spectrum. You probably have an idea of what you want to do with your life. But I want to challenge you with a thought. How often do you consider what God wants to do with your life? And how much does this impact your plans?

This week's devotions all center on one theme: Purpose. It's an important theme for our discussion of how you're impacting the world around you for Christ, and it's important to consider before you engage in a mission trip. Because the truth is that God has an amazing purpose for your life. He created you in part to utilize your life as a walking, talking billboard for telling the world how awesome it is to know and be known by Him. This is the purpose He has in mind for you. Your challenge this week is to learn what the Bible says about this purpose and to begin asking how you can join God on His mission to redeem the world.

Turn the page to begin learning what God has in store for you.

WHAT TO EXPECT THIS WEEK

DAY 1

Four principles from Jeremiah 29

DAY 2

Understanding God's purpose and how your life intersects with it

DAY 3

A super-cool Greek word study

DAY 4

An encouraging word from Jeremiah 1

DAY 5

An insider trick for HOW to know God's plan for your life

DAY 6

An important truth to keep in mind about purpose

DAY 7

Review and reflect

Today we're going to take a look at a familiar verse. But understanding this verse better will in turn help you better understand God's purpose for your life. Turn in your Bible or Bible app to Jeremiah 29:10-14. Now before we get to the verse you've no doubt heard before, I want to fill you in on what's happening in this passage.

God is speaking through Jeremiah to a group of people called the "exiles." The exiles were Israelites who had been captured by the Babylonian empire and taken from their homes in Jerusalem to Babylon. They had been in captivity for years. And it would be understandable if they thought God had forgotten them. Jeremiah was writing to give them hope in God's plan for them, and to remind them that God had not abandoned them.

Now, read Jeremiah 29:10-14. In Jeremiah's words to the exiles, you can learn some true principles that you can apply to your own life, especially when it comes to God's purpose for you. Let's look at these a little closer.

PRINCIPLE 1: GOD HAS PLANS FOR YOUR LIFE. (V. 11)

God is all-knowing. He knows the path your life will take. And God is also all-powerful. He is in control of all things. This means that He has plans for your life. Your life isn't just happening by accident. God is in control.

How does it make you feel knowing that God loves you so much that He cares how your life unfolds?

You have plans for your life. God has plans for your life. How do you know if your plans match up with God's?

PRINCIPLE 2: GOD'S PLANS ARE FOR HIS GLORY AND YOUR GOOD. (V. 11)

First, God's plans for all things are mainly about bringing glory to Himself so that all people will know that He is the one true God. But in verse 11, God lets us in on a little secret: His plans for you are awesome!

How does Jeremiah describe the plans God has for you and your life?

God's purpose for your life is to bring about good through you. What are some examples of how God may utilize your life to bring His goodness into this world through you?

PRINCIPLE 3: YOU HAVE TO WANT TO FOLLOW GOD. YOU HAVE TO SEEK HIM. (V. 12)

God knows you. He hears your prayers. He is invested in your life. But we have to want to follow Him. To experience God's purpose for our life, we have to WANT to serve Him, and to see His purpose come alive in us.

Through Jeremiah, God tells us how to stay connected to Him. What does He say we should do?

How does it make you feel that the God who created the universe knows you and listens to your prayers?

PRINCIPLE 4: GOD WANTS TO REVEAL HIS PLANS FOR YOUR LIFE. (V. 13)

God doesn't keep Himself or His plans a secret. He says if you seek Him, you'll find Him. In other words, God isn't trying to play a guessing-game with His purpose for you. He wants you to know Him. He wants you to know what His plans are for your life.

Why does it sometimes feel like God's plans for your life are hard to know?

How does verse 13 give you confidence in God's purposes for your life?

YOU'VE LEARNED THAT GOD HAS A SPECIFIC PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE. TOMORROW WE'LL SEE HOW YOUR PURPOSE AND GOD'S PURPOSE INTERSECT.

So, we've established that God has a plan and a purpose for your life. Hopefully that's something that made you feel loved and valued. And pumped up to see how God wants to use you. What we're going to do today is answer a couple of questions: What is God's purpose? And how does my life intersect with it?

WHAT IS GOD'S PURPOSE?

Looking at Scripture is the best way to figure out what God's purpose is. So that's what we're going to do now. Look at the list of Bible passages below. Take a moment and look each of them up.

John 3:16-17	1 John 4:9-10
Romans 5:8-10	Colossians 1:21-23
Ephesians 2:4-10	Matthew 28:18-20

Did you read them all? I hope so. Because what I want you to do now is go back and pick the one that stood out to you the most. Re-read that passage. Then, in the space below, summarize in your own words what you think the verses say about God's purpose.

If you're reading this book, you most likely have a saving relationship with Jesus. You know that humankind has a sin problem that not only separates us from a holy God, but earns us death. You most likely know that God sent Jesus, His perfect Son, to die as a way of satisfying the punishment that our sin earns us. And in the process, purchasing for us peace with God. And you also know that Jesus arose from the dead, conquering death, and ensuring for all His followers that we will live forever in Heaven with Him. He commissioned us to make disciples of all nations and to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. These are all aspects of God's purpose. But the question remains, how does your life's purpose intersect with God's?

HOW DOES MY PURPOSE INTERSECT WITH GOD'S PURPOSE?

I want to remind you of a quote from the introduction of this book: "God sees you and your life as an invaluable resource, a powerful force of influence capable of dramatically impacting the world around you, all for the glory of God." I'll remind you of this a few more times throughout the book, because it's true and it's essential that you learn this.

I want you to begin to define the landscape of your influence. The "landscape of your influence" is a way of saying "the places where you have the most opportunity to be a messenger of God's mission." This page has several different sized blank spaces. In the top space, write the area of your life where you have the most influence. In the below spaces, write the other areas where you also have influence. Consider your trip next week as one area, but also think about your school, your sports team, etc. and all the place that God can use you.

This is the landscape of your influence. This is a picture of the places in your world where your life has the most potential to intersect with God's purpose. These are the areas where you are most likely to make a difference in the world. Tomorrow, we'll begin to get into a little of the HOW you'll make a difference. But for today, spend some time in prayer asking God to give you the courage to influence these areas for God's sake.

I want to introduce you to a really cool Greek phrase today. Remember, the New Testament that you and I read today was translated from Greek manuscripts. And occasionally, in the act of translating the Greek into English, we can lose the richness of certain words or phrases. The phrase I want to teach you is one of these.

The passage I want you to look at is found in Acts 9. Here's the back story: Paul (referred to by His Greek name, Saul, in this passage) is the number one enemy of the Church, until Jesus appears to Paul in a vision outside the city of Damascus and radically changes Paul's life. The passage I want you to look at comes immediately after Paul has seen Jesus.

Read Acts 9:10-16. Here, God appears to Ananias in a vision (which is pretty awesome in itself). God wants Ananias to go chat with Paul. Ananias asks God to pump the brakes a bit. After all, up to this point, Paul has earned a reputation as a pretty rough guy. But God knows better than Ananias. And He gives Ananias a message in vs. 15: "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." This phrase "chosen instrument" is what I want you to focus on. Because believe it or not, I think it has great relevance in your life.

Just for the fun of it, what do you think of when you hear the phrase "chosen instrument"? Write down your answer in the space below:

The transliteration of the original Greek phrase used here is “eklogese skeuos” (pronounced “ecklo-JEESE SKYOO-os”). The phrase “chosen instrument” used here implies the exact right tool for a specific job. For example, if you wanted to ask your friend what he/she was planning on wearing to the party, your “eklogese skeuos” would most likely be your smartphone. The “eklogese skeuos,” the exact right instrument for the job, wouldn’t be a handwritten letter. Make sense?

Here’s the cool thing: God has a purpose for your life. This purpose is made up of specific tasks. And for each of those tasks, you are God’s “eklogese skeuos.” You are the exact right person for the tasks God has in mind for you. Pretty cool isn’t it?

I want you to spend a few minutes brainstorming a bit. I want you to look back at the “landscape of your influence” activity from yesterday and copy down three of the areas of influence you listed out, including your upcoming mission trip. Write them at the top of the columns below. And in the space below each, I want you to begin to brainstorm tasks, practical things you can do to impact your world for Christ. Remember, you are God’s chosen instrument to impact the world around you. Begin to think about what this looks like.

**SPEND SOME TIME PRAYING THAT GOD
WOULD SHOW YOU SPECIFIC WAYS YOU CAN
IMPACT THE WORLD AROUND YOU WHILE ON YOUR
TRIP AND WHILE AT HOME.**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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