

on

purpose

living
life
as it
was
intended

Jonny Ivey

on purpose

living life as it was intended

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To Josiah,

This book is two days older than you. We pray that you too would come to enjoy life as it was intended, like all else, to the glory of God.

– Jonny Ivey

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“It is an inescapable aspect of the human condition to reflect on the meaning and purpose of our lives. Many strive to achieve status or attain happiness, whilst others conclude that life is ultimately meaningless. Combining faithful biblical exegesis with engaging creativity and personal honesty, Jonny Ivey helps us to understand that we were created to glorify God and enjoy him forever. This is a liberating book that will help Christians to find true joy whilst they are being restored into the image of God and wait for the glorious new creation to come.”

John Stevens, National Director, Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (UK)

“To understand one’s purpose, one must understand the One who designed and created us in his image. Too often, we disconnect our purpose as human beings from who God is. To help bridge that gap, Jonny Ivey has written a book that helps readers navigate some of the most important questions we ask. Ivey packs a punch in this short but brief book. Don’t let it’s brevity belie the immensity of the subject at hand; take up and read, and be refreshed and reminded of the beauty of being made in the image of God.”

Jonathan D. Holmes, Pastor of Counseling, Parkside Church; Executive Director, Fieldstone Counseling

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These are books you can afford, enjoy, finish easily, benefit from, and remember. Check us out and see.

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For All Intents and Purposes

Hi. We've not met. I know almost nothing about you. I don't know your name or your age or even your gender. I don't know how you like your tea or if you even like tea. (I hear that some people don't?) I certainly don't know what you believe about the bigger questions of life. But there is something I know about you.

You believe in purpose.

I mean, you're reading a book, right? You picked it up for some purpose or another. Not just because it's about purpose—the same would be true if you'd watched a movie. Or put some bread in the toaster. Or brushed your teeth. Nobody brushes their teeth for no purpose. That would be weird. Why not finish up by brushing your knees? No. We don't do stuff at random. We do it *on purpose*.

This morning I got out of bed, not aimlessly, but because I had things to do. I ate some breakfast, not arbitrarily, but so that I'd have energy for the day. I chose this coffee shop because I like the coffee here, better than the one next door. I ordered a flat white because it tastes better than the cappuccino. I'm now writing this sentence, like everything else today, for a particular reason—to show that whatever we do, we do it purposefully.

Purpose in a Box

Or so I thought. One day I was just happily wandering back to London Waterloo train station when I saw him. A man sitting in a glass box suspended thirty feet above the River Thames. Seemingly unaware of the screaming crowd below, he was staring across the river toward the iconic Tower Bridge. An American tourist, I assumed. In a box?

“It's David Blaine, the American magician guy,” said a voice from my left. The balding man must have noticed the confusion on my face. “He's spending six weeks in there with no food, just water,” he said, opening a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich.

Now, you can call me conservative but it's not glaringly obvious to me why someone would sit in a box, thirty feet in the air, with no food, for six weeks. Or six days. Or even six minutes. If there was ever an act of

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supreme pointlessness this was surely it, right?

Wrong.

Blaine wasn't a prisoner. Before he began his stunt, a London journalist asked him why he would put himself through it and he responded calmly and candidly:

“I think when you have nothing, when you're living with nothing, there's no distractions, you're just there as you are, almost struggling. I think that's the purest state that we can be in.”¹

Looks can be deceiving. It turns out that Blaine wasn't doing his self-starvation, jack-in-a-box stunt for nothing. Quite apart from the fact he has built an international career on these exercises in the unusual, I believe him when he suggests that his reason for doing this ran a little deeper than my choosing a flat white or your decision to pick up a book. Blaine climbed into his glass box to escape everything that wasn't his mind, body, or soul in order to experience his “purest” humanity. That is, the ultimate purpose of being human. No frills. No extras. No iOS updates. Which all sounds very profound but it's actually what you and I are doing every day. We all climb into our glass boxes. We just call them something different.

What Are You Living For?

To experience his purest human purpose, Blaine climbed into an empty box; we normally fill ours to the brim. Experiences. Approval. Pleasure. Success. Stuff. Comfort. Technology. Relationships. Recognition. Reward. What is true of picking up a book is true of our lives as a whole. We're living for something. We are trying to achieve something. We're desperate that our lives are not pointless, that they count for something. *We want purpose.* Well, what about you? What are you living for?

I remember that question well. During my first month at university, the student pastor offered to take me out for coffee. Because flat whites didn't exist yet in the UK, I sat down and began to draw patterns in the frothed milk of my cappuccino. Then he just came out with it.

“What are you living for, Jonny?”

Now, for anyone who doesn't originate from this neck of the global woods, let me just fill you in. We Brits like to talk about the weather. We discuss tea and cricket (Wikipedia it—or just imagine the Queen playing baseball). We're not so great at saying we're happy or sad, much less discussing the existential foundations underpinning our broken lives. But he asked it. And the same silent glare of youthful naiveté would have come his way in response had he asked in

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Arabic. I had no idea. Something about Jesus, maybe?

His question didn't go away. It did the rounds in my mind for some months. What *was* I living for? I knew I had come to university in order to get a degree. In order to get a job. In order to have a family. In order to, in order to, in order to, but then what? In order to ultimately do what? To be what? To have what?

I wanted to be married. I wanted children. If possible, they'd be better behaved than other children, on their way to Oxford or Cambridge. I wanted a respected job where I would demonstrate enough leadership to be thought of as successful, and enough subordination to be deemed humble. I wanted a house, big enough to speak of God's undeserved kindness, but small enough to be seen as living radically. I wanted a church, blessed enough by good teaching to call it home, but needy enough that I'd be considered necessary. I wanted to have friends I could speak to about trivial struggles so that in comparison I would look godly, honest, and accountable. This was the glass box that I had entered in order to achieve a purposeful life—not in front of crowds of people, but in the depths of my own hungry heart. In short, I wanted to be someone to others. I wanted people to celebrate me. That's what I was living for. "*Who* are you living for, Jonny?" may have been a better question.

Even twelve years on it feels brutally arrogant writing that down on paper. It would feel even more

brutal to say that I still seek purpose in many of the same ways. I still want people to like me and think that I'm a godly, successful, humble kind of a guy. I even want you to like me—and I haven't even met you. I still want to be recognized. To achieve stuff so that people will notice when I enter a room. How could I feel like my life is purposeful if nobody knows me? If the world is unchanged by my existence? If I have nothing to show for my days? Sound familiar at all? Maybe. But if nothing had changed in twelve years I would tell you to close the book now. It wouldn't be worth your time. But fortunately, that's not the end of the story. For me, it was just the beginning.

The Purposeful God

This is a book about purpose. More than that it's a book about what the God of the universe says about purpose. "In the beginning, God created" (Genesis 1:1). It's hardly surprising that as those made in this God's image, we all pursue purpose. The first line of Scripture speaks of a purposeful God. *He created*. Have you ever created something for no purpose whatsoever? Not even because you enjoyed creating it? Have you ever cooked a meal with no regard for how it tastes? Decorated a bedroom, paying no attention to how it looks? Built a Lego house with no care that it should look like one? No. We create meals, homes,

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computer games, paintings, even Play-Doh models for all intents and purposes—from mere enjoyment, to nourishing our bodies, to making things beautiful. In the same way, God created the world on purpose and stamped his purposeful image all over it.

You only need to read on a few verses to see what he says to us humans, whom he'd just created. We'll see shortly how God told them to subdue the earth and rule over it. God's saying, "Go do something." Go make culture. Make milkshakes. Work and play, eat and drink. Do.

But why? For what purpose? For any we choose? Can we really do whatever we want in his world?

Thankfully God doesn't just give us his world. He gives us his word, in a book. In it he tells us what his world is for. Why he created us. What *we* are for. Have you ever stopped and asked yourself that question? *What am I for?* Is what you're *living* for actually what you're *for*? Are you sure? Well, you *can* be because God's word gives us answers. It doesn't leave us unsure. This is the purpose of God's book: to understand the purpose of books. And everything else in God's world. Including your life and mine.

Can you imagine how David Blaine must have felt coming out of that box after six weeks? The vast expanse must have felt like pure freedom. The first morsel of bread must have been a feast. The first sip of juice like honey. You see, God doesn't invite us to

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switch from one little box to another. He invites us to step out of our own constricting, claustrophobic box and into our truest, purest human purpose—to enjoy life as it was intended, to come to the feast of his finest produce and the sweetness of eternal joy. It's quite an offer, I'm sure you'll agree.

What Am I For?

I was one of *them*. You know the type, right? The guy who first stumbles across clear Bible teaching only to stumble over his pride, thinking he's found something nobody else has. That was me; the abrasive, let-me-help-you-out-with-that-speck-in-your-eye, ESV-carrying Christian type. And, I'd just arrived back on campus. Bible in hand.

That night we ferried to church a group of freshmen—"the Fresh," as we called them. We were going through the motions, chatting about what course they'd chosen and where they were from. Before long, an Australian freshman, impatient with the niceties we Brits feel bound by, piped up from the back.

"So fellas," unaware of the three girls walking next to me, "my roommate saw my Bible last night and asked me to show him a verse about the purpose of life." We'd suddenly erred a few steps from social convention. "Anyone got any ideas?"

Readjusting from the sudden turn of conversation, I judged myself the man for the job. It just so happened that I had a few ideas on a vast array of topics I knew nothing about—not least, the purpose of humanity.

“The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever,” I smiled, glorifying myself and enjoying the precision of my response. I’d read it somewhere. It sounded good. Tuition fees well spent and all that.

“OK,” he said with his thick, Sydney accent. “So, what does that mean?”

The truth? I had no idea.

Glory is a spiritual-sounding word that we often use yet know little about. As a kid, I was told once to give God the glory, unaware that I had taken it from him, or where I’d put it. But whenever we speak about human purpose, we can’t avoid glory. It sounds erudite, but it’s not. It’s actually quite mundane. Whether I realized it or not, my wanting to answer the Australian guy’s question was all about glory.

The satisfaction of tucking into a Krispy Kreme original glazed donut is all about glory. Glory is about something or someone being good or worthy of praise. We get annoyed or angry when something lacks glory—the car that keeps breaking down, the latest terrorist attack. Glory is about as common to us as the air we breathe. Your eyes see these words because of God’s glory. His glory is the reason the sky hasn’t fallen in on itself and your lungs still feed on oxygen.

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He created the world and us for one purpose—to glorify him.

What does *that* mean?

Well, without giving free rein to my inner grammar geek, when you see the word *glory* in the Old Testament, it has the sense of something—or Someone—being heavy. In the New Testament, the word also carries the sense of reputation. Therefore, we “glorify God” when we make God heavy in our own sight, and in the eyes of others. Jesus commands, “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). He’s commanding us to bring others to an understanding of God’s transforming work in our lives, so that they will give him the full weight of honor and credit he deserves. When we do everything for God’s glory, then, whatever we do, we do in such a way that God’s weighty splendor shines through and he is given all the credit.²

To many people, God is a lightweight. It doesn’t really matter what he wants or thinks, or even that he exists. But the purpose of all his creation, especially humanity, is for him to receive glory. And one of the primary ways we as humans glorify him is *to be like him*.

God's Artwork

My Grandad was a professional artist based in South Africa. He did portraits and sketches, oil paintings and pastel scenes. Everything you'd expect of an artist, I guess. He was good—not so good at passing the genes down this direction, but good at his trade nonetheless. My parents hung many of his landscapes on the walls of my childhood home. But one painting stood out. It wasn't a pastel scene or a landscape. It was a large portrait. In prime position overlooking the stairs hung the profile of an elegant woman in her twenties. It was my Gran. His wife. His masterpiece. It was arguably his best work, but that's not why we hung it there. We did so because it was a picture of someone supremely valuable to us. By painting her, my Grandad was saying, "Here's someone worth looking at." By hanging it up, we were enjoying her, honoring her, thanking her, and in a sense glorifying her. Which brings me to the point.

God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (Genesis 1:26)

God's an artist. He too did landscapes. In the beginning he painted the heavens and the earth. But like my

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Grandad, his masterpiece was a portrait. He made us in his own image. We are each a kind of self-portrait of God. Of course, this describes what we are, but it also explains what we are *for*. Our purpose is to be visible pictures of the invisible glory of God. That is, our humanity inevitably looks outward, to God. You exist for the same reason as the picture above our stairs—to enjoy, look to, honor, praise, thank, and resemble someone supremely valuable. To glorify God is to resemble him, to *be* like him. *That* is what you're for.

Maybe the thought of being like this God doesn't excite you. Perhaps all this talk of God creating us and the world for his own glory makes him sound like a lonely egocentric who tapes Polaroid selfies to every wall of his home. But that's not what the God of the Bible is like. He's the unchanging, eternal Reality, of which you and I are a kind of copy. Being made in his image means that whatever you think is good and glorious you'll ultimately find *in* him and by being *like* him. And that's pretty exciting.

But consider this: if *your* inherent nature is to look outward to God, how much more the God you image? In fact, this God is beautifully other-centered. Here's what I mean.

Did you notice how God said, "Let *us* make mankind in *our* image"? That's because, even though he's one God, he's a loving community of three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. It's impossible to

be other-centered without community. God didn't create us because he was lonely or bored. Before he created the world, the persons of this community were enjoying the gloriously sweet and satisfying intimacy of relationship with each other. Nor did he create us because he was selfish in that grubby, grasping way people can be. The Father, Son, and Spirit have eternally been praising, blessing, serving, and glorifying each other (John 17:24). It's this other-centered, outward-looking God who gave us his image. This joy and other-centered nature are of the essence of who he is.

For us, sharing in this joyful union goes well beyond our wildest dreams. It's where all our dreams come from.

So get excited, because here's where it gets good. God, being who he is, wanted to share his joy and the glory of his character. God's glory literally overflowed when he created the world. That's why everything exists for his glory; why we exist for his glory. He stamps his glorious image on us and says, in effect, "Here is your purpose: *to be like me*, because it's so gloriously good" (see Genesis 1:27, 31).

The Bible speaks of many specific ways we can glorify God, but in this book I will be focusing on those two aspects: glorifying God by being like him *in his joy*, and *in his loving character*. I believe they are of primary importance and can serve as a summary of all the Bible says about glorifying God.

Be Like Him in His Joy

How can we be like God in his joy? Well, God has given us this amazing piece of art called the world so we can take joy in it, and thereby be like him. In his joy.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. (Psalm 19:1–2)

Both you and I know that we can read about the joy and glory of the Trinity, have a yawn, then go do the dishes. It's impossible for us finite beings to grasp the fullness of the infinite God. So God gives us the gift of his creation so we creatures can understand and participate in his joy. According to Psalm 19, it's an amazing gift that reveals his glory and communicates to us who he is and the joy of being in relationship with him.

This means that the world has real purpose. The purpose of fruit, Oreos, and honey is to reveal to us the sweetness and satisfaction of God. The skies, stars, and seas exist to reveal his power. The green grass, pink sunset, and Neptune's blue were designed to reveal his beauty. Our communities, marriages, and friendships are intended to reveal the glory of his faithful, other-centered character. And in creating all this, he has also given us eyes and ears, hearts and minds, so

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we can begin to have some grasp of the joy of sharing his image: joyful, satisfied, full. When we open our eyes, ears, mouths, hearts, and hands to the glories of the creation, and especially our fellow image-bearers, we are literally participating in God's glory.

Being like God means that we should enjoy his creation as a way of enjoying *him*. This is what the Father, Son, and Spirit have always been doing. We shouldn't eat a Big Mac and then worship Ronald McDonald. Our satisfaction in the Big Mac reminds us of our satisfaction in God. So we praise him. The beauty of our spouse doesn't mean we should worship him or her. It points us to how beautiful our God is. So we praise him. Our joy in creation is not an end in itself. The joy of country walks, cake, sex, video games, money, literature—they allow us to participate in his joy by praising him. They are glorious gifts that God has given to us so we can give him the glory for it all, and thus enjoy life as he intended. Our purpose is to glorify him by being like him in his joy.

So you're allowed to enjoy it, folks. More than that, you're meant to. God created you on purpose—for *this* purpose.

Be Like Him in His Character

But there's more to glorifying God than being like him in his joy. Remember, God shared his glory because

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of who he is—generous, loving, other-centered. Being made in his image also means being like him in his character. God demonstrated his character in his work of creation, so he gives us a job to do.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:28)

God commands us to establish his kingdom on earth. God worked to create the world and reigns over it. As self-portraits of him we must work to create culture and reign over creation as he reigns over us. Just as art reveals something about the artist, so too does a kingdom resemble its king. Establishing God’s kingdom is about extending his humble, serving character throughout the world. *What* we choose to do in God’s world isn’t the be-all and end-all. He gives us freedom to eat from “any tree in the garden” that is good for us (Genesis 2:16). God gives us desires and concerns and gifts and opportunities and, most importantly, the freedom to go and pursue them for his glory.

You like working with kids? Great. Why not become a teacher? You did an economics degree? Do you fancy working in a bank? I mean, there’s no pressure either way. You’re free to glorify God however

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you want—free to build cities, draw insights, pursue relationships, develop technology, set up charities, experiment with flavour combinations, paint works of art, compete in sport, serve communities, design games, *play* games, pursue business ideas. Whatever. Feel free to go reign over creation by creating, sharing, and blessing. Just like God did.

But note this: God’s kingdom is only built when we reign *in his image*. While *what* we do isn’t crucial, *how* and *why* we do it certainly is. Our purpose is to be like him in the glory of his Trinitarian character. So whatever we do must be done with the same spirit of lavish generosity, humble other-centeredness, and loving service that God has enjoyed within himself forever, and that he blessed us with when he created the world. We must image his other-centeredness. That’s the *how*.

And there are no prizes for guessing *why* we should do whatever we do. We do it for the same reason that God created—for his glory and the good of others. It’s good that you’re going to be a teacher. But teach in a way that resembles the lavish love of God for the good of your students. If you want to work in business, well and good. But you’re there to work in such a way that shows that God is your supreme treasure by working to glorify him and bless others. Whatever you do, glorify him by being like him in his character.

God gives us commands on how to do this. You know the kind of thing—what to do, what not to

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(Genesis 2:16–17). Without a net and some lines on the ground, a game of tennis isn't much fun. I mean, I haven't tried it, but maybe I should. Ironically, many think that these commands—God's good gift of a net and some lines for our lives—ruin the game. In actual fact, they free us to play it the way it was intended, the way it works, the way it brings us joy. These commands tell us how to be like him, to create like him, to serve like him, to work like him. Because *that's how we enjoy the purpose of our lives*. I don't know about you, but I'll take the net and lines, thank you very much.

So that's it. Most of what the Bible teaches about glorifying God can be summarized in this way: *Glorify God by being like him in his joy and his character.*

The Calling of God

You might feel let down. Like the title of this book was a good bit of false advertising. I'm with you. Picking up this book, I'd also want to know what I should go and do (not be told that *what* we do isn't all that important!) We're *doers*, aren't we? We almost think the word *purpose* is synonymous with tasks, jobs, or callings. We pray God would reveal his will for our lives—meaning we want to know what to go and *do*. Forgive me if I have you wrong, but this was certainly my story.

I was no longer that fresh-faced first-year sipping at his cappuccino, stumbling over a response about Jesus. I now knew what I was living for. I may have become a self-exalting member of the doctrine police, but after a few years of good Bible teaching I'd at least understood that the gospel changes everything. I knew it affected every part of my life and future—of everyone's future. "What else is there to do," I reasoned, "than love and serve God for the rest of my life?" Indeed. Not many Christians would disagree. Jesus, for one, would certainly tip his hat (Matthew 22:37).

But what I meant by this was not what Jesus meant at all. In my mind this new purpose, this new calling in life, had to do with what job I would do. The phrase, "I feel called to full-time ministry," was never far from my lips. Surely this would be a purposeful life? I became fixed on the *what* and not the *how* or the *why*. I took my eyes off what God had actually said my life was for and I exchanged my God-ordained purpose for one I thought sounded about right.

I had a plan. First, I was going to move to another city to become a languages teacher. I'd earn some money so I could marry and support my wife. I'd work a few years as a teacher and then the real stuff would begin. I spoke to my new pastor about my desire to do a job like his. He was patient in listening to me, but he asked me to wait. To serve in church. To love and learn from people. But I was young. *Rest-*

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less. In my discontentment, I saw my future calling as something it wasn't. Seminary became the new Disneyland. The church I would pastor would provide a platform for me to air all those ideas I had and my people would lap it up and say, "Great sermon today, pastor!" And I would say, "Praise God you found it helpful." The only thing is that I wouldn't mean it. I wasn't looking outward. All of my dreams to do God's work were about my own praise: to glorify myself and use God to that end. I called it "pursuing my calling."

You have your own story. Maybe you feel called to be a stay-at-home mom or a businessman or a coffee barista. Maybe you have no idea what you should do with your life and that's why you picked up this book... and are now about to put it down. Maybe you suffer from FOMO, the fear of missing out on what God intended for your life. Well, if you're starting to feel sleepy from all this reading, now's the time to perk up because this is important.

So long as you answer the question, "What am I for?" with a task, a job, or something you do—even if it sounds really spiritual—you will never enjoy life as God intended.

What you are *for* is about who you are *like*, not about what you *do*. You're a portrait of God. But of course, this doesn't mean God has called you to nothing.

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Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. (1 Corinthians 7:17)

God hasn't hidden your calling away somewhere and told you to go find it. He's assigned to you whatever he has put in front of you—your current situation. That's your calling, for today at least. But wrapped up in this verse is not only a reminder that our purpose isn't to do something wild, beyond our current situation; it also affirms our true purpose. Did you see it? "Live as a believer." Glorify God in whatever situation you're in. *That* is God's primary calling on your life.

If you'd hoped that by reading this book, you'd become clearer on what you should do in your five score and ten, perhaps you'll be disappointed. But I have better news for you. Whether you're a minister in Manhattan, alone in Antigua, a butcher in Bulgaria, a dad in Denmark, a widow in Warsaw, a church planter in Chile, or on holiday in Honduras, *you're not missing out on your calling*. There's no need to fret that your real purpose is somewhere else, somewhere other than where you are. No need for perplexed, guilt-riddled discontentment. God has called you to enjoy your humanity—your purpose to glorify him—exactly where you are now. Isn't that liberating?

The Full Picture

In many parts of the world, this reminder would be less necessary. Equating our purpose with our job or vocation is a very Western, first-world thing. After all, what's the go-to question when we first meet someone? "Nice to meet you, Jonny. What do you do?" Do you get that as well? Sometimes I feel like responding, "Nice to meet you too. Well, every night, what I do is dive into bed. You?"

Even if we grasp that God's purpose for our lives isn't to *do* something specific, but rather to be *like* him, we're still at risk of over-emphasizing how that plays out in whatever aspect of life we feel is most central to our purpose. But that's like doing a personality test and only answering one really important question. Even the hundred or so questions in the Myers-Briggs online tests only scratch the surface. When my wife and I last did one, we had a good laugh seeing what it claimed to be true about us. Funnier still, once each of us answered the questions and pressed "Submit," a picture appeared of a famous person with whom we apparently share many important traits. I think we were supposed to be flattered.

If there were a similar test—but a reliable one—to determine if you enjoy your life as God intended, it wouldn't ask only superficial questions about what job you do or where you live. It would be informed by

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Scripture. God's word cuts to the very heart of who we are (Hebrews 4:12). It judges the extent to which every pleasure and passion, dream and desire, work and worry, response and reason, emotion and envy, task and tantrum, every creed and concern, glorify God by rightly reflecting him—being like him—in his joy and character.

A test of this kind generates a picture too. We could take one now.

- » *What is your greatest love?*
- » *What gets you out of bed in the morning?*
- » *What makes you happy?*
- » *Who are you working for?*
- » *What do you dream about for the remainder of your life?*
- » *What is the end point you hope to arrive at?*
- » *What do you use your body for?*
- » *What do you offer your eyes to?*
- » *What do you do with your hands? Why?*
- » *What does your schedule indicate about your life?*
- » *What does the way you use your possessions say about what you treasure?*
- » *To what end do you use creation?*

What Am I For?

- » *What do your relationships say about what you value?*
- » *What does a simple breakdown of your bank statement show about where you're investing your life?*
- » *Click "Submit"...*

After I finished my last Myers-Briggs online test an image of Jim Carrey appeared... Say no more. But seriously, can we say we live truly purposeful lives *only* if our answers to these questions (and a thousand more) combine to generate a crystal-clear and gloriously brilliant image of God himself? Must we have a *perfect* joy in him, a *perfectly* outward-looking character? Maybe you feel your life rises to that level—if so, please don't waste your time with this book. It's for the rest of us dawdlers who recognize, beyond any question, that there's a great chasm between what we use our lives for and what God says they're actually for. The good news for us, however, is that no matter how faint, even seemingly non-existent, is the image of God that our lives generate, that isn't the final word. That's why there are still five chapters left.

Don't Waste It

Metaphors can be helpful, but let's talk frankly, because this stuff really matters. I don't want to be one of those guys who discovers on his deathbed that

on purpose

he lived his life for all sorts of things and in all sorts of ways that God didn't intend. I'm scared of getting it wrong. I'm scared of missing out, of wasting my life. I think we're all scared. So we get down to work, plumbing the depths of our own little world. We climb into glass boxes, doing this or that job. We're constantly on the lookout for where God may have hidden a more fulfilling life, a truer purpose—our *proper* calling. But here's the thing, because in one sense this question is far simpler than we often think.

Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

This is what you need to know: Whatever you do, whether you write to-do lists or avoid them, whether you work or play, create or dismantle, visit family or go shopping, drink coffee or tea, live in Sydney or Silicon Valley, become a missionary or a miner, spend or save—*what* it is doesn't matter half as much as we think it does. God calls us to mundanity—the everyday things of his world—and he calls us to glorify him in *how* we navigate our lives through his world. Whether you eat or drink, you were made to be like him in his joy and character. He's been full, lacking nothing, for all eternity past, before there was a whiff of oxygen and before one drop of ink was spilled on the topic of human purpose. And he's shared himself *with you*. So

What Am I For?

enjoy him. Praise him. Glorify him. Be like him. This *is* a purposeful life. This, right now, *is* what you and I are for.

THREE

Meaningless, Meaningless!

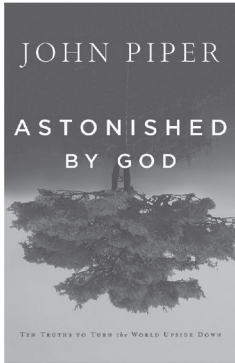
It was risky ending the previous chapter like that—*enjoy God; go enjoy life!* It sounds patronizing, doesn't it? Like we haven't tried it. As if Genesis 1 has given us a golden ticket for Wonka's land of cocoa rivers and candy trees, so now all we have to do is run wild. But we know the world is no chocolate factory. We've learned that much. There are no free passes to enjoying a purposeful life, no golden tickets.

I'm under no illusions. Since finishing that last chapter, I carried on with life the same as before. I came home to eat a chicken-filled baked potato before driving to a meeting. But I forgot to praise God for the potato, his reminder of what it feels like to be satisfied in him. And I wasn't like him in his character when I got annoyed at other drivers slowing my progress. Clearly, understanding our purpose is one thing;

enjoying it in the day-to-day is something entirely different.

So I'm just going to come out and say it: it can often seem like our purpose to glorify God doesn't work. We can try our best to enjoy God and his creation, but we don't feel the joy he promises us. And the truth? No matter how much we read about purpose, even if it's from the Bible, there's still a hole in our humanity that aches to be filled. There's still a failure to relate rightly to God, to baked potatoes, and to the rest of his creation. At best we feel discontentment. At worst, despair. Our purpose to glorify God—to be like him in his joy and character—may sound amazing. But the reality of our lives makes that vision, that purpose, seem somewhere between misguided and malicious. The hole goes unfilled. It doesn't appear to work.

I don't know about you, but if God revealed nothing more than Genesis 1, I'd put my Bible on the shelf next to Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and Alice in Wonderland. But he reveals more. Far more. Scripture is real and raw about the tension we feel. Its inspired writers deal honestly with our sense of frustration, grappling to find life's purpose. For me, one particular Old Testament figure springs immediately to mind.

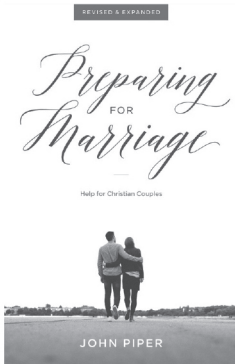


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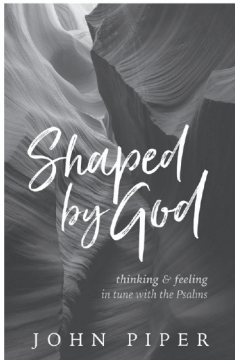


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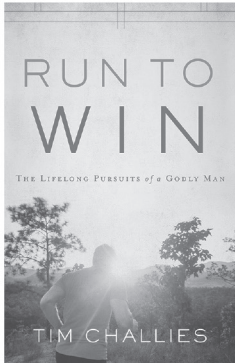


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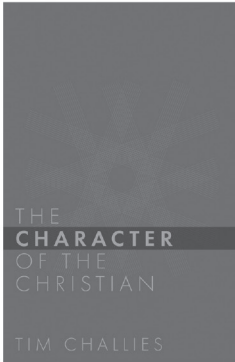
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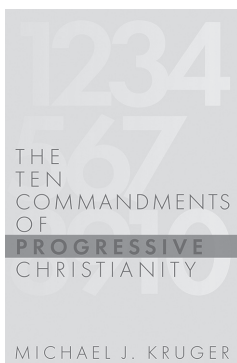
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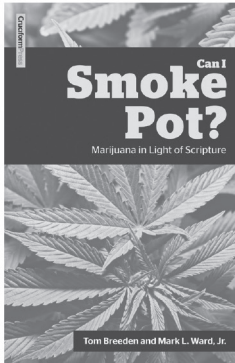


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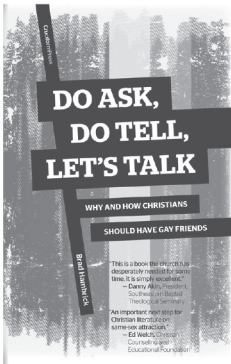


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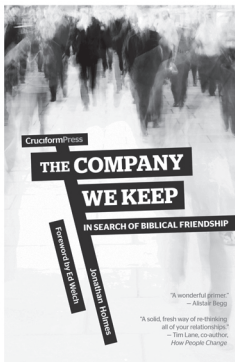


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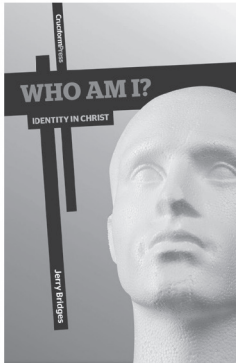


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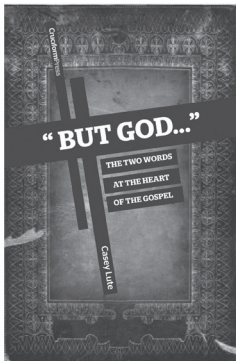


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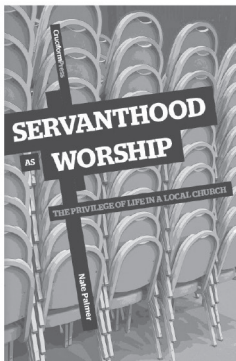


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