

BIBLE STUDY

Discovering Your Divine Purpose: Living a Life of Significance

By Stephen Judd

Have you ever found yourself pondering the age-old question, "What on earth am I here for?" It's a query that has perplexed humanity for centuries, often because we tend to approach it from the wrong starting point – ourselves. We ask self-centered questions like, "What do I want to become?" or "What are my goals and dreams?" However, true purpose begins not with us, but with God.

The Bible tells us in Colossians 1:16, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." This profound truth reveals that we were created with intention, by God and for God. Our purpose extends far beyond personal fulfillment, peace of mind, or even happiness. It reaches past our families, careers, and our loftiest dreams.

Understanding this divine origin is crucial because, as Job 12:10 states, "In whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?" We cannot tell ourselves what we were created for – we must start with our Creator. Only in God can we find our true identity, meaning, purpose, significance, and destiny.

Life can be lived at three basic levels: Survival, Success, and Significance. Many people exist at the Survival level, merely getting by, living for weekends, and punching the time clock. Others strive for or achieve Success, accomplishing personal goals and gaining worldly acclaim. However, it's crucial to understand that success does not equate to fulfilling your life's purpose. You can achieve all your personal goals, become hugely successful by worldly standards, and still miss the purpose for which God created you.

True satisfaction and fulfillment are found only when we reach the level of Significance – when we discover and live out our God-given purpose. As Jesus said in John 10:10, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." God's ultimate intention for us is to live a life filled with purpose!

Embracing our divine purpose brings numerous benefits:

1. It gives meaning to our lives. Proverbs 16:4 reminds us, "The LORD has made everything for its purpose." Regardless of the circumstances of your birth or your current situation, you are not an accident. God has a plan for you, as stated in Jeremiah 29:11:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

2. It simplifies our lives. Being purpose-driven helps us determine what to do and what not to do. It acts as a compass, guiding our decisions and priorities. Without a clear purpose, we often make choices based on circumstances, pressures, or our current mood, leading to stress and burnout.

3. It keeps us focused. Proverbs 4:25-26 advises, "Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established." A life driven by purpose concentrates our efforts on what truly matters, helping us avoid distractions and maintain our priorities.

4. It increases our motivation. Purpose generates passion and enthusiasm. The word "enthusiasm" comes from two Greek words meaning "in God." When we center ourselves in God's plan, we discover a natural enthusiasm for life and our calling.

5. It attracts cooperation. People are drawn to those with a clear sense of purpose. As Proverbs 11:27 states, "If your goals are good, you will be respected." A life lived on purpose has the power to inspire and influence others.

Understanding our purpose also reveals a fundamental truth: we were created to serve. God designed us not merely to consume resources, but to make a difference with our lives. As Jeremiah 1:5 tells us, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations." This calling applies to each of us – we are all set apart for a special work.

In God's kingdom, every believer has a place, a purpose, a role, and a function to fulfill. This gives our lives great significance and value. We are saved to serve, blessed to be a blessing, and healed to help others. The concept of "ministry" isn't limited to formal religious roles; every member of the church is called to minister in their own unique way.

Jesus emphasized this in Mark 8:35, saying, "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it." We will all give our lives to something – the question is, what will it be? A career? A hobby? The pursuit of fame or wealth? None of these will have lasting significance. It is through service that we discover the true meaning of our lives.

The Apostle Paul exemplified this focused, purpose-driven life. He wrote in Philippians 3:13-14, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Paul's singleness of purpose enabled him to spread the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire and author a significant portion of the New Testament.

As we reflect on these truths, let's ask ourselves: Are we living at the level of Survival, Success, or Significance? Are we merely existing, or are we fulfilling the purpose for which God created us? Remember, what matters is not the duration of our lives, but the donation of them. Not how long we lived, but how we lived.

God wants to use each of us to make a difference in His world. He wants to work through us. We are only fully alive when we are engaging in ministry and serving others. This is the pathway to real significance and the key to unlocking the divine purpose woven into the fabric of our being.

Will you answer the call to live a life of purpose and service? The journey to significance begins with recognizing that you were created by God, for God, and your ultimate fulfillment lies in aligning your life with His divine plan. Embrace your purpose, serve others, and watch as your life transforms from mere existence to one of profound impact and meaning.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

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Opening Prayer:

Ask God to open your hearts and minds to understand His purpose for your lives and to guide your discussion.

Key Takeaways:

1. True purpose begins with God, who created each of us with intention.
2. Life is meant to be lived at the level of significance, not just survival or success.
3. Knowing your purpose gives meaning, simplifies life, keeps you focused, increases motivation, and attracts cooperation.
4. We are created, saved, and called to serve God and others.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to you that you were created "by God's purpose and for His purpose"? How does this perspective change how you view your life?
2. The Bible study mentions three levels of living: Survival, Success, and Significance. Where do you currently find yourself, and why?
3. How has pursuing success without purpose affected your life or the lives of people you know?
4. In what ways has knowing (or not knowing) your purpose impacted your ability to make decisions or set priorities?
5. Discuss a time when you felt truly motivated and enthusiastic about life. How was this related to living with purpose?
6. What are some practical ways we can shift our focus from self-centered questions to God-centered ones when seeking our life's purpose?

7. How does the idea of being "created to serve" challenge or affirm your current lifestyle and choices?

8. Share an experience where serving others gave you a sense of fulfillment. How did this align with God's purpose for your life?

Practical Applications:

1. Purpose Reflection: Spend 15 minutes each day this week in prayer and reflection, asking God to reveal more of His purpose for your life.

2. Simplify and Focus: Identify one area of your life that needs simplification. Make a plan to align this area more closely with your understanding of God's purpose for you.

3. Serve Others: Choose one way to serve someone else this week, whether in your family, church, or community. Reflect on how this service aligns with God's calling for you.

4. Purpose Statement: Draft a personal purpose statement based on your understanding of God's plan for your life. Share it with the group next week.

5. Enthusiasm Check: Each morning this week, note whether you wake up saying "Good morning, Lord" or "Good Lord, it's morning." Use this as a barometer for how well you're living in your purpose.

Closing Prayer: Thank God for His purposeful design in creating each person. Ask for His guidance in living lives of significance and service.

Scripture for Meditation:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." - Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Encourage group members to continue reflecting on the Bible study's message throughout the week.