

Living
The Maximum Life
With
Power and Purpose

What Am I Doing Here?

Steve Flatt

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Once there was a fellow who whenever he went to speak, wherever he went, he began each speech by asking the question; Why are you here? It didn't matter where he went, wherever he went, he got up and said, "Why are you here?" Well, one day he spoke at a mental institution. He stood up and began like he always did. He said, "Why are you here?" There was a long pause, a fellow stood up in the back and said, "Well, we're all here because we're not all there."

How would you answer that question today? Why are you here and where are you going? Oliver Wendell Holmes, the famous Supreme Court Justice, was known for being absent-minded. One time he was on a train, the conductor came up to him and lo and behold, he had lost his ticket. The conductor recognized him and said to him, "Now, your honor, don't you worry about it. You'll find that ticket later. When you do, just mail it to us." Oliver Wendell Holmes looked at him and said, "My good man, I'm not worried about you getting your ticket." He said, "I need it to know where I'm going."

The good news is God knows why you're here and He knows where you need to go. He wants to empower you to live the life. God has a very clear and distinct purpose for your life. God does not make anything without a purpose. If you are alive, He has a purpose for you. The tragedy is that most people live their entire life never learning what that purpose is, never discovering their niche and never finding out where they fit.

People tend to live out their lives on one of *three levels of living*.

1. Plodders

Almost half of this world are plodders. They are people whose lives are robotic. They don't really live; they just exist and just eke it out. They plod through life. If you were to ask them, what do you live for? They'd say, "The weekend" or "my two weeks vacation in August." They're plodders. They plod through life and they miss it.

2. Pushers

Almost the other half of the population are pushers. The pushers are the carrot chasers, they're the ladder climbers and they're the ones the world deems successful. These are the folks that the plodders envy because they've made money, possessions and prestige. To a plodder, the pusher's life looks pretty good. But the fact is, eventually the pusher feels the emptiness of the plodders. Because after they've earned so much money, many nice cars and given their kids everything, they ask themselves: Why don't I feel fulfilled?

It's amazing the number of books that fill bookstore shelves in the last couple of years that show the emptiness of success. Here are four or five titles of some books that have come out: *The Price of Success, Is it Worth It?* Or how about these, *If I'm So Successful, Why Do I Feel Life a Fake?* and *The Success Trap, ReThinking Your Ambitions*. Here's one. *The Search for Meaning*. Let me give you one more, *Beyond Success, Coping With the Fast-Track Blues*. You don't even have to read those books to know what they're saying, do you?

What are they saying? They're saying that what this world calls success does not satisfy. Why? Because it's not our purpose. God didn't put you on this earth to make money. His motto for living is not: "Get all you can and sit on your can." That's not God's purpose. God didn't make you to climb some arbitrary ladder of success that He did not build.

3. Purposeful Living

Only a precious few in this old world ever realize it. It's called purposeful living. These are the few folks who've discovered God's plan for their lives and as they tap into that purpose, they find power, they find significance and they find satisfaction. What's more, these are the people who make the greatest impact on this old world.

When you look across history at the people who've made the greatest impact on this world, they are not the ones who are the brightest, not the best educated and not the wealthiest. No, the people who have made the biggest difference in this world, for good or for bad, were those with the deepest convictions that stem from a genuine purpose. Whether it was Lincoln, Buddha, Marx, or Jesus, right or wrong, good or bad, the ones who've made the greatest difference are the ones who were driven by a purpose. Great lives are purposeful lives, they're not plodders and they're not pushers.

If you want to live the maximum life, you need to tap into God's purpose for your life and discover, develop, and maintain it.

The following are a couple of references to men who found and lived life at the third level - purposeful living. First is David, King of Israel from the Old Testament. The New Testament says in Acts 13:36 "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep (died); he was buried." Isn't that a great verse? Somebody says, "What's so great about that? He served God's purpose and then he died." What more could you say about somebody? He did what God wanted him to do with his life. Then he died. He died, great, nothing else to do. He was what God wanted him to be and then he died—what an epitaph. He served God's purposes in his generation.

Another example is the Apostle Paul. Now there was a man who knew his purpose in life. He said in Acts 20:24 "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me." Underline those words in your Bible: Complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.

In this series, I want you to discover the task that the Lord wants you to complete. It won't necessarily be exactly the same as Paul's, in fact, it will not. But by the end of our series, my goal is for you to have something that you don't have right now. I want you to have a written out life plan, Yes, a written out life plan! You might say "Well, I've never done that." Maybe that's why you're a plodder. Maybe that's why you're stuck on that pusher treadmill. I want us to Bible study and pray. I want you to write out your own life plan. It amazes me how many business people will spend weeks crafting out a written business plan for their corporation. Or how many teachers will spend countless hours working on lesson plans for their classes, and yet would never think about actually constructing a life plan. That's not just ironic, that's foolish.

Let's get started developing a life plan for the maximum life by considering God's general purposes for people. In the other lessons in this series, The Maximum Life, specific application for our own lives will be made as they are revisited.

What are God's purposes for his people?

1. To be loved by God.

In Ephesians 2:4-5 Paul said, "But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive..." He made us to love us. 1 John 4:10, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent His own Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." That's the whole motivation behind the crucifixion. Now folks, if you miss that, you really miss the core reason for living. I'm amazed at how many people who miss that tend to think that God doesn't like them and that God put them here to run through a maze to see how he could trip them up. NO! Rid yourself of the kind of thinking that says God does not love you. Otherwise, you'll never discover your purpose in life. God loves you more than anything or anyone else possibly could.

2. To manage his Creation.

He set that purpose forth in the Garden of Eden. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:27-28)

People, this is the concept of stewardship. Our God owns everything that is and we are put here as stewards. In other words, we're put here as managers. It's like the fellow at the big grocery store. He doesn't own all of the stock on the shelf, but he's responsible for it. He was put there by the owner of that store to be in charge of it. God made humans to prudently manage the whole earth, then and now. That's part of why we're here.

3. To do good things.

He made us to do good things. Ephesians 2:10 makes that perfectly clear, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Now later we're going to look at what kind of good things that God created for us to do, and you'll even have the opportunity to analyze your own life and to prioritize the good works that God really wants you to do within the context of your own existence because all of us have different existences. We live different lives.

4. To enjoy life.

John 8, Jesus tells us the devil is a liar; in fact, he is the father of all lies. Surely, the biggest lie that Satan has ever gotten humanity to buy into is that our God wants us to be miserable. In the Garden of Eden, Satan essentially told Eve as she was looking at that fruit, "Oh, God doesn't want you to have any fun. God doesn't want you to really enjoy life." He's been destroying us by the millions with that old lie ever since. Jesus said "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10) That is our theme verse for this whole series. "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full." Read that again "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full."

Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:17 "put your hope in God who richly provides for our enjoyment." Hear me because this will bash some of the lies that Satan has had you believe. God made you to have fun. He made you to enjoy life, but that comes by living out his purpose for us, not by believing all the devil's lies. That's part of the key that we are going to discover over the remaining lessons. People mark these four purposes well because we will come back to them.

Why living out God's purpose so important?

1. It increases my motivation.

It increases my motivation because purpose provides motivation. When you discover the answer to the question, why am I here? It will amaze you how much more energy you have. You will hop out of bed saying, "Good morning, Lord!" instead of, "Good Lord, it's morning!" God said in Jeremiah 29:11, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope for a future.'" How does that make you feel?

When you plug into God's purposes for your life, you get enthusiastic. In fact, do you know where we get the word enthusiasm? Enthusiasm comes from two Greek words put together—*en theos*, meaning "in God." When you are in God, in His will, in His plan, and in His purpose, you are enthusiastic. It's automatic.

Now obviously, I'm not just talking about being a Christian. I hate to say this, but you already know it, way too many Christians aren't enthusiastic at all. The reason is, after obeying the gospel which is the foundation of God's purpose for their life, they quit looking for God's purpose. They quit looking here. They quit looking through other believers. It's like they obeyed the gospel, by believing, repenting, confessing and being baptized into Christ and say, "Thank you Jesus, for forgiveness and salvation, I'll take it from here." They jump in and they drive off into the desert of plodding, or the desert of pushing until they run out of gas. But by living within God's plan for your life everyday your tank stays full and you stay motivated. It makes all the difference in the world.

2. It eliminates distraction.

This is key! One of the pitfalls of this generation is we just have too many options, don't we? When I was a boy growing up, we had three TV channels we received on our old black and white television. Only one came in clear with rabbit ears. With cable and satellite and hundreds of channels, many devoted to news, sports, movies, pornography, comedy, or cartoons we have many options. Now Ipods and cell phones provide even more options. Distractions are plentiful.

We've enhanced technology with mobility. The options to fill our time are limitless, but our time is limited. We still have 24 hours a day. Frankly, many of us don't have time to do everything. I don't have time to do everything. Pushers, and there are a lot of pushers out there who need to hear this. Pushers think the more they get done, the more satisfied they will be. Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! Selection is the name of the game for effectiveness. Concentrate your energy on what God wants you to do, not what everybody else wants you to do. When you hone in on what your real purpose for life is, it not only tells you what you need to do, it also tells you what you don't need to do.

Too many of you are very efficient, but you're not effective. Do you know what the difference is between efficient and effective? Efficiency is doing things right, effectiveness is doing right things. I want to make sure I'm doing the right things, rather than just doing things right. If you're not careful, you'll end up arranging deck chairs on the Titanic. Have you ever thought about that? It looks good, it's all neat and it's in order, but the ship is sinking. Effectiveness!

Peter Drucker was perhaps the leading management guru of this past century. He was asked one time: What's the basic thing that every business owner needs to know? Drucker said, "There are only two

questions related to business that the owner needs to know. Number one, what is my business? And number two, how is business?" That's what you need to ask. What is my business in life? And question number two, how's business?

Life focus has tremendous power; it's like a light that is focused. Take a light and focus it through a magnifying glass. You will concentrate the energy of the light to where it can set a piece of paper on fire. If you take it and concentrate it even more you create a thing called a laser that can cut through anything. Light concentrated has power, light diffused doesn't have that power—the same way with life. Life concentrated has power. Life diffused has no power at all. Paul understood this, he said in Philippians 3:13, "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on to win the goal." The number one game in America right now is Trivial Pursuit and I'm not talking about the board game. I'm talking about life. The ridiculous way we fill our lives with things that don't matter.

The average American who will live to about age 85 will spend about ten years watching television. Tell me, of all the things that you have watched, have you seen enough that's worth giving up 10 years for? Some of you are too busy. Some of you, some of us, are pulled into too many directions, not doing bad things, but chasing trivial things. The end result is disappointing. The maximum life eliminates distractions.

3. It attracts assistance.

There are so few people who know where they're going in life that if you'll figure it out; they'll want to go with you. That's the nature of the beast. If they sense you have purpose, they'll want to go. That's true with even purpose-driven people who are headed in the wrong direction. There are lots of folks, David Koresh's, Louis Farrakhan's and Shirley MacLaine's of this world, leading others in a wrong direction. They've got followings just because they've got a purpose. If you follow God's purpose for your life, you will be respected, you will be emulated and you will be followed.

The greatest way to help other people is to BE what God made you to be. That's the greatest way to help other people, to just BE what God made you to be. If like David, you serve God's purposes in your generation. God will bless many, many lives through you.

4. It prepares me for God's evaluation.

This is really the most important of all. One of these days, we are going to die. One of these days, I'm going to die. One of these days, you're going to die. One of these days, all of what we call history is going to end and we will stand before God's judgment seat, so says Hebrews 9:26-27, Romans 14:10 and a host of other passages in Scripture. I've heard some people say that when we stand before that judgment seat, that's going to be the final exam of life. No it's not, that's when you get your test paper back. We're in the final exam right now because we've already got the questions. We're working on the answers. Every day, we are filling in the blanks.

You say, "Wait a minute, I don't know what questions are on the final exam." Well, there are just two. When you stand before the judgment seat of God, I will tell you right now what they are. There are only two questions. They are, paraphrased and stated generically, "What did you do with my son Jesus Christ?" And "What did you do with your life?" Our God is the Creator and the Master. He has invested certain talents, abilities and gifts in you and he has planned certain functions within the Body, the Church, for you to do.

How are you doing on your exam? What answers have you filled in last week? What are you going to write down by your actions this week?

Our goal is that by the end of this series, you will have a life plan, genuinely based on God's purposes for you. But, to close this lesson I want to ask the second question first. "What did you do with your life today?" Because living life to the best that we possibly can by our own initiative and power will not rid us of a single sin. We are so contaminated by sin that we cannot live with God forever in heaven because He is all Holy. In Him is light and there is no darkness at all. We will not go to heaven with our iniquities, and all of us have iniquities. So, what is your answer to God's first question "What did you do with my son Jesus Christ?" The good news is, He sent His son to die on that cross, so that if by faith we connect to that cross, trusting and believing that Jesus is God's Son, being willing to confess that before anybody, repenting, which means turning; i.e., turning your life away from the trivial and worldly things, changing your worldly and sinful life saying, "I want to follow Him." Then culminating that faith response by being baptized, reenacting the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, so that you can be free from your sin. That's the beginning, that's the birth. From that point forward, it is loving Jesus, loving Jesus for saving you, loving Jesus because He loved you first.

Question number one on the Judgment Day is: "What did you do with my Son Jesus Christ?" Are you willing to make the commitment to Him now? Remember this is the cornerstone, it is the purpose that God has for your life. This is where it starts. Come to Christ today. Lesson # 1296 January 12, 1997