

Living With Purpose
Philippians 1:19-26

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** There is one thing universal to all of mankind: Every man/woman seeks a purpose in life.
2. There is probably no one who has not asked such questions as:
 - A. "Why was I born?"
 - B. "Why am I here on this earth?"
 - C. "What is my reason for living, or for continuing to live?"
3. The fact all men search for a "purpose" in life can also be demonstrated, for example:
 - A. Someone dies prematurely: "Oh, how tragic, they had so much life ahead of them, so much to do, so much to accomplish; but they didn't have a chance to reach their full potential."
 - B. Someone performs a terrible deed, commits a heinous crime or blows their mind out on drugs or alcohol, it is often said: "What a waste, poor so and so just wasted their life."
4. It is so sad that most people flounder in life and never fully come to grips with life:
 - A. They search, but never find, the true purpose of life ("I wish I'd never been born!").
 - B. The vast majority find the wrong purpose for life and end up wasting their lives.
5. Even more tragic are Christians that should know better.
 - A. This happens when we allow the things of this world to distort our purpose in life; distort our purpose to the degree we pursue "earthly" things rather than heavenly things.
 - B. If we let that happen to us we will ultimately depart this life "empty-handed" destroying our own soul and perhaps the souls of those in our "circle of influence" (e.g., family, brethren).
6. **3** So, today let us spend a few moments discussing **LIVING WITH PURPOSE**.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4 Purposes for which the majority of men live:** one or more usually a combination of...
 - A. **** Obtain money/material possessions:** "He who dies with the most toys--wins."
 - (1) A man's position/importance/value/esteem is often measured by the answer to this question, "how much do you make?" According to *Forbes* magazine the world's highest paid professional athletes are:
 - (a) Floyd Mayweather, Jr. (boxer): \$105 million.
 - (b) Cristiano Ronaldo (soccer): \$80 million.
 - (c) LeBron James (basketball): \$72.3 million.
 - (2) Some Christian's measure things this way too!
 - (a) "I need to move because the company is giving me a big promotion." or
 - (b) "My son/daughter has this 'big' new job with Corp X and they make \$\$\$\$!"
 - (3) America also has a preoccupation with financial planning/security, investments, etc. (The spiritual problems caused by "money" and "things" is not limited to "rich.")
 - (4) Is the value of a man measured by his checkbook balance?

Matt. 8:20: "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*" (No bank account, no net worth, no house or property, etc.).

Lk. 12:15: “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

- (a) Jesus speaks vividly of one whose wealth led him to poverty (Lk. 12:13-21).
 - (b) Making a living is not wrong, but losing sight of what is really important is wrong and tragic! I Tim. 5:8; Jas. 4:13-16; **I Tim. 6:10-12, 17-19**; Matt. 6:24-33
- (5) Pursuing riches as our purpose in life will leave us “empty-handed” in the end! No U-Hauls at funerals! **I Tim. 6:6-7:** “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”

- (a) Mansy who make a fortune end up wasting it:

- ☛ Nicolas Cage (actor) earned up to \$40 million per year; between 1996-2011 earned over \$150 million. But he had very expensive tastes (e.g., exotic animals, private jets, mansions, rare sports cars). In 2009 he owed \$6.5 million in back taxes and filed for bankruptcy.
- ☛ Mike Tyson (boxer) earned a staggering \$400 million during his 20-year boxing career. He filed for bankruptcy in 2003 with a total of \$23 million in debt including \$9 million divorce settlement, \$13.4 million owed to the IRS and \$4 million owed to British tax authorities.
- ☛ Michael Carroll is a Brit who won \$14.4 million in the British lottery in 2002. He lived like the “prodigal son”; “massive drug use, gaudy golden jewelry, and prostitutes.” He ended up in jail for a period of time for DUI (now has no driver’s license). For a time he lived off of unemployment, camped out in the woods and became suicidal. He now makes \$300/week working in a cookie factory.

Eccl 5:13-14: “There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun: Riches kept for their owner to his hurt. 14 But those riches perish through misfortune;”

- (b) Those not wasting their fortune can’t possibly use it all; their heirs will likely waste it.

Eccl. 5:10-11: “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity. 11 When goods increase, they increase who eat them; so what profit have the owners except to see them with their eyes?”

Eccl. 2:18-19: “Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. 19 And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.”

- ☛ New York hotel mogul Leona Helmsley (called the Queen of Mean) left \$12 million to her pet dog, Trouble.
- ☛ According to research by the *Wall Street Journal* inherited wealth is extremely hard to hold on to: 70% is lost by the next generation and 90% is gone after the second generation. For example:
 - ✓ Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794-1877) amassed a fortune of over \$100 billion (in today’s dollars) in the shipping and railroad industries. In 1973 a reunion of 120 Vanderbilt descendants included not one single millionaire.
 - ✓ Barbara Woolworth Hutton inherited the Woolworth five-and-dime store fortune of over \$500 million (in today’s dollars). She splurged on art, jewelry and seven husbands. She died with a net worth of \$3,500.

B. **** Experience as much pleasure as possible:**

- (1) Why do people take drugs? The euphoria they provide is pleasurable!
 - (2) Why do people get addicted to pornography and/or commit adultery? Sex is pleasurable! (Senate testimony claimed porn more addictive than crack cocaine!)
 - (3) The world's mottos are:
 - (a) "Grab for the gusto!" (*Old Milwaukee beer commercials*)
 - (b) Because, "It doesn't get any better than this!" (*Budweiser beer commercials*)

Lk. 16:19, 25: "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. 25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.'"

2 Tim. 3:1-5: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"
 - (4) The fact that sin is pleasurable is undeniable, but it ultimately leaves us bitterly disappointed (**Heb. 11:25:** "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,"; **1 Jn. 2:17:** "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."; Matt. 19:3-10).
 - (5) What God offers is of far greater value (**Heb. 11:26:** "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.").
- C. **** Achieve fame:** For example, sports (Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods), entertainment, business, academia, medicine, etc.. There's a big difference in wanting to be good at what you do and craving fame from what you do.
- (1) Seeking "fame" can take many subtle forms, and Christians are not immune, consider:
 - (a) Scribes & Pharisees: **Matt. 23:5-7:** "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'" ("Woe to you...hypocrites...Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" **v. 33**; **v. 38:** "See! Your house is left to you desolate...").
 - (b) Apostles: **Lk. 22:24, 26:** "Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. 26 But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves."
 - (c) Christians at Corinth: **1 Cor. 1:11-12:** "For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.'"
 - (2) For Christians, fame seeking leads to shame (Acts 5:1-10; just ask Ananias & Sapphira!).
 - (3) If the world stands, who will remember Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, Elvis, or Madonna in 2,000 years? Compare to:
 - (a) Widow who contributed "two mites" (Mk. 12:42ff).
 - (b) Persistent widow who wore down the unjust judge (Lk. 18:1ff).

(c) Dorcas who was “full of good works and charitable deeds” (Acts 9:36ff).

(4) The key to true fame is humility (Matt. 18:2-4; Phil. 2:1-5).

D. ** Obtain and wield power: “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.” (Abraham Lincoln)

(1) Absalom, David’s third, and favorite, son (2 Sam. 14:25-26; good looking, long hair; 15:1-6: “*chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.*” But he usurped David’s authority by judging lawsuits; 15:13-14: “*The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.*”; so David had to flee Jerusalem; 18:9).

(2) Power grab ended in humiliation! 2 Sam. 18:14-17 (Absalom got stuck in the tree branches and was killed by Joab. His dead body was thrown in a pit in the woods and covered with stones.)

(3) Power like fame can take many more subtle forms (1 Cor. 1:10-13; **Col. 2:8**: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”; 18-23: “self-imposed religion, false humility, neglect of the body..”; Acts 15:1; 3 Jn. 9, “...Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them...”; **Acts 20:30**: “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”; Jn. 3:30; Phil. 2:5-8).

E. **5** Three critical observations about what most people pursue in life:

(1) ** Materialism, pleasure, fame/power - are real dangers to Christians:

(a) Can choke out the word: **Matt. 13:22**: “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.”

(b) Can lead to seeking “positions” in the church: Matt. 20:20-28; Acts 20:30.

(c) Can lead to wrong attitude toward the lost: **Lk. 15:7**: “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

2. ** They carry a very high cost! (e.g., shatter our family life, lost health, and the ultimate loss of all losses...one’s soul, 3 Jn. 9; Prov. 23:29-35: “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause?”; Matt. 16:26).

3. ** In a very real sense these pursuits are stupid! Because, we must remember that our earthly accomplishments are vain – because they pertain only to life “under the sun” (**Eccl. 2:9-11**: “So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. 10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor. 11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.”; **2 Pet. 3:10b**: “...both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”)(e.g., MJ’s 6 NBA titles, Tiger’s 14 “Grand Slams”).

2. **6** Life’s true purpose (purpose for which the very, very few live!):

A. Paul’s understood it: **Phil. 1:21**: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

B. Paul followed God’s eternal purpose, Paul let God give him purpose in life.

(1) Man sinned; but God’s foresight/foreknowledge provided redemption!

- (2) God's eternal purpose is the redemption of man through Christ Jesus: **Eph. 1:3-11; Col. 1:12-23; 2 Pet. 1:1-4**
- (3) ****** In Christ: (We really need to meditate very often and carefully on these things!)

"every spiritual blessing"	"forgiveness"	"redemption, forgiveness of sins"
"chose us"	"riches" (unsearchable)	"reconciled"
"holy"	"fellowship of the mystery"	"holy, blameless, irreproachable in His sight"
"without blame"	"boldness, access, confidence"	"all things that pertain to life and godliness"
"adoption as sons"	"qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints"	"exceeding great and precious promises"
"accepted in the Beloved"	"delivered from darkness"	"partakers of the divine nature"
"redemption"	"translated into kingdom"	"escape the corruption that is in the world through lust"

C. What's the point?

- (1) From all eternity God had a purpose for man, for you and for me and for every man/woman--to be His friend, to be His companion, to be intimately associated with Him for all eternity.
- (2) But we blew it!! SIN! An infinitely holy and righteous God cannot befriend sin, cannot find companionship or be intimately associated with carnal man -- it's like mixing oil and water -- it **WILL NOT** happen.
- (3) But, God has a plan, an eternal plan; whereby, though we through sin lost our original purpose for life; God has restored that grand purpose through Jesus Christ.
- (4) There is only **one true purpose** for you and I: **Phil. 1:21**: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."; **Gal. 2:20**: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."
- (5) And until we grab on to that purpose with every fiber of our being, we will never find true happiness, true meaning, or a true purpose to our lives: **Phil. 3:7-15a**
- (6) God is our maker, He is our designer; how could we ever think we could find happiness and fulfillment without pursuing the purpose for which He designed us and made us?

III. CONCLUSION: 7

1. There is no need for anyone to wonder what their purpose is in life or to flounder about trying to find their purpose in life.
2. God has the grandest purpose for us in life, a purpose more fantastic than any purpose we could ever come up with on our own.
3. His purpose is to give real meaning to our lives, to make us so close to Him that we can live with Him eternally.
4. Don't you want to make God's purpose your purpose!
5. Does your purpose in life harmonize with God's purpose? If not, why not respond to His invitation?
6. **** Phil. 1:21**: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." If we put anything other than "Christ" into the first blank we cannot put "gain" in the second blank.

(Partially based on a sermon by Richard J. Boone, Chattanooga, TN)