

“What Purpose is Driving You?”

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Many of us are very proficient at planning our lives – from saving for our children’s future education to arranging for our retirement years from now. In our society, the inculcation of this mindset begins at a very early age. “Those who fail to plan, plan to fail”, we are told.

There is nothing inherently wrong with saving for our children's future or our own. The problem is that we are often driven to excessive busyness to accomplish our goals. This lifestyle of busyness has a way of making us oblivious to the passage of time. We wake up on a Monday morning, and before we know it, it is Friday night and we are looking forward to a relaxing weekend. Then, within what seems to be an eye blink or two, it is Sunday night and we are preparing for another workweek.

To what extent do we understand how short our lives really are? Do we really know what our purpose in life should be? Let's begin with the end.

- **Life is Short**

Psalm 39

⁵Indeed, You have made my days *as* handbreadths,
And my age *is* as nothing before You;
Certainly **every man at his best state is but vapor**. Selah
¹¹When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity,
You make his beauty melt away like a moth;
Surely every man is vapor. Selah [Emphasis added]

Psalm 62

⁹Surely men of low degree *are* a **vapor**,
Men of high degree *are* a lie;
If they are weighed on the scales,
They *are* altogether *lighter* than **vapor**. [Emphasis added]

The Hebrew word used in these verses for “vapor” is *hebel*, and it can also be translated “breath.” How long does a breath last? A second, perhaps two? The psalmist knew that in the context of eternity, our lives are extremely brief, yet we spend so much of our time and energies

attempting to beautify and improve the earthliness of them. We buy new cars, homes, clothes, and various other items in a hope to fulfill our ‘need’ to be happy and secure, while we in reality are mere pilgrims on this planet. We spend days and weeks on projects that we are convinced need to be done, only to find that the *quantity* of time expended on them does not equal the *quality* of time we have lost through them.

I am not implying that we should not do things that better some aspect of our earthly lives. However, if given the choice of cleaning gutters or spending a few minutes of time in prayer for our neighbors, the gutters can wait!

James echoed the psalmist’s view of the vaporous quality of man’s temporal life, and he added another element to it by asserting that we may not even have the ability to adequately plan for the *immediate* future.

James 4

¹³Come now, you who say, “**Today or tomorrow** we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; ¹⁴whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For **what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.**

¹⁵**Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”** [Emphasis added]

James was not writing about choosing what sandals to wear or what shawl to buy; nor was he speaking against making business plans. He was referring to those aspects of life that define who we are.

In James’ example of some folks, their ‘life’ was one of buying and selling, and they planned on going to various places in the hopes of making a profit. In the context, James advised those people to first submit their decisions to the sovereignty of God. Why? Because life is short and ultimately rests in the hands of God’s sovereignty – “if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”

In addition, it also appears that these people made life-changing decisions (“spend a year there”) without consulting the Lord first. As believers, we need to exist as God’s people who know and follow His will. What is the best way to know God’s will? James told us previously:

James 4

^{“7a}Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

This brings us to the next point: His primary purpose for us.

- **Pursuing God and His Kingdom**

His ultimate purpose for us may be a lot different than many of us think. I believe pursuing intimacy with God is a believer’s ultimate purpose in life, for in that place of intimacy, God will reveal to us His will for our lives and we will be able to hear Him clearly. Apart from intimacy with God, our ability to distinguish God’s directing voice is hindered, and we may end up traveling down the wrong paths for years. Having a close, intimate relationship with Almighty God is the key to knowing the will of God. Through this relationship, God will direct us to assist Him in the building of His kingdom.

David believed that God designed the purpose for his life prior to his birth:

Psalm 139

¹⁶Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.

And in Your book they all were written,

The days fashioned for me,

When *as yet there were* none of them. [Emphasis added]

Others in Scripture believed this as well:

Jeremiah 1

⁴Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

⁵“ **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.” [Emphasis added]

Galatians 1

¹⁵But when it pleased God, **who separated me from my mother's womb** and called *me* through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, **that I might preach Him among the Gentiles** [Emphasis added]

The truth may very well be that the Lord has a planned collection of days for *us* that make up His blueprint for our lives. That blueprint outlines as its main pursuit God Himself, and results in our partnering with Him to build His kingdom: "For we are God's fellow workers" (2 Corinthians 3:9). David, Jeremiah and Paul all collaborated with God in different ways to build His kingdom.

"But *they* were kings, prophets, or apostles", we think, and then shrug off any notion that there is any possible application for us. Obviously, we are not all called to be kings or apostles or prophets, but God's purpose for each of us while we sojourn here – to love and walk with Him in intimacy - will result in our co-laboring with Him.

As the Westminster Catechism states, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." One way to glorify God is when, out of our intimate enjoyment of God, a profound and purposeful determination is birthed to partner with Him in the work of His kingdom. Moreover, we never have to participate in the kingdom labor alone: "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them*" (Mark 16:20a). He worked with them because while they were enjoying Him in intimate fellowship, they followed His lead in their ministries (see John 5:19-20).

- **The Lord Provides**

The Lord is well aware that while we inhabit this planet, fellowshiping with Him and building His kingdom, we will have temporal needs. Perhaps knowing that mankind has an innate desire to satisfy its own needs, Jesus cautioned us about dwelling more on the necessities of life than on pursuing the King and His kingdom:

Matthew 6

²⁵“Therefore I say to you, **do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?** ²⁶Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?
²⁷Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?
³¹“Therefore **do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’** ³²**For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.** ³³**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.** ³⁴**Therefore do not worry about tomorrow**, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble. [Emphasis added]

Kingdom pursuits will develop a kingly dependence, and a kingly dependence will produce a kingly focus. When we focus on the King, we can be assured that He will give us whatever we need to live on earth as His kingdom's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20).

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus admonished us to “Seek *first* the kingdom of God.” Where do our priorities lie? What purpose are we pursuing in life? Career? Prestige? Power? Education? Seeking the kingdom of God presumes an initiatory seeking of the King. Therefore, if our 'primary purposeful pursuit' is not the King, we are on a road that offers no assurance of provision or protection via His kingdom. However, when we pursue the King, He will provide us with the necessities that He deems appropriate. He is Lord of all the earth (Psalm 47:7-8); thus, everything we need is under His rule and reign. Are we willing to live with what He provides?

Pursuing God and His kingdom's advancement will not always be like a walk on the beach at sunset. At times, it will entail heartache, struggles and pain. Paul, who knew something about pain in following the King (2 Corinthians 11:23-33), gave us some encouragement about that.

- **Trials Are Temporary**

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

Paul did not advise us to run around with blindfolds on, ignoring the visible world that buffets us. Rather, he encouraged us to not become so preoccupied with the temporal world that afflictions and problems cause us to lose sight of the eternity that awaits us. And a small foretaste of the eternity that awaits us is obtained when we spend time in God's beautiful presence. We can spend all of our time chanting, "Woe is me", or we can pursue intimacy with God, obtaining His presence, grace, and power to engage the barriers that hinder us, and thereby continue our partnership with Him in advancing His eternal kingdom.

- **Conclusion**

What purpose in life is driving you?

Colossians 3

¹If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Psalms 73

²⁸But *it is* good for me to draw near to God;
I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
That I may declare all Your works.

Our main purpose in life should be to draw near to God in continual intimacy. It is then that we will know His will and extend His kingdom by partnering with Him to "declare all [His] works", blessing the lives of this world's inhabitants in offering them salvation, healing, and deliverance.