

Daily Devotionals

for The Purpose Driven Life class

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Day 1- It All Starts With God

Why am I here? What is my purpose? What would change if I wasn't here? It seems everyone will ask one of those questions, or one like it, during their lifetime. I know I have before. It's a big question that people have been struggling with for a long time. It's really sad to know that many people go through life and never find the answer. The biggest reason is that people often look to the wrong place for the answer.

Most people start by asking "What do I need to do to make myself complete?" But the problem has always been that we don't know! We didn't design this life, so how can we figure out how to complete it by ourselves? Thousands of years of asking "What feels good to me?" has not helped us answer the question of why we are here. People have worked all their life to become successful, rich, smart, powerful, or happy at marriage and relationships, only to find that there was still something missing. So after we realize that we can't figure it out on our own [which is what most people never get past], we know we simply need to go to who designed this life.

This sounds like a problem, but we have an edge. God loves us. God designed us with a purpose. And God wants us to know our purpose. So we look to the Bible, God's message to us, for help. And the Bible tells us this:

"For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible,... everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him." -Colossians 1.16 [the Message]

So the big problem with people asking "What do I need to do to make myself complete?" is that they are asking the wrong person... themselves! Without God we won't be able to figure out what our purpose is.

Thinking About My Purpose:

Know. It's not just about me.

Remember. Everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. -Colossians 1.16b [the Message]

Think about it. Have I ever seen, or can I see anything today, that lets me know that life is bigger than just me?

Day 2- You Are Not An Accident

When people get annoyed from looking for their purpose and not finding it, it is often easy to just give up and think they are just a big mistake. The problem with that is that the Bible tells us that no one is a mistake, and that God has a great plan for each of us. If you let yourself think everything is a chance or accident, then you will wind up not caring about yourself or other people, which can lead to depression, boredom, selfishness, anger, hate, racism, suicide, and all kinds of other things which hurt us and others. God doesn't want that.

The Bible tells us, "You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Each day was recorded in your book." -Psalm 139.16. This means that God designed you. That means he knew who would be your parents. He knew what race you would be. He knew how tall you would get. He knew your talents, when you would be born, and how many hairs you would have on your head.

Sometimes these things make us upset, when we'd like to look different or have different parents or live in a different time. But when we accept that God loves us so much that he created us to be something special for exactly where he put us, then we have to accept that we are not a mistake and we have hope for a real purpose.

We also know from the Bible that "Long before he laid down the earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love." -Ephesians 1.4a. The fact that we are alive is no coincidence. It had to be carefully planned. God designed us, and this world, because he loves us.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. I am not an accident.

Remember. "I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born." -Isaiah 44.2

Think about it. If I believe that God designed me to be just like I am, what about me do I need to learn to accept? [looks, personality, family, where you live, etc.]

Day 3- What Drives Your Life?

You have a reason to go through life and do things. Most people do not have the right reason. Here are some of the things that can drive our lives.

Guilt- Sometimes we let our past mistakes control our lives and drive our future. The problem with using guilt to drive us is that we can't let go of our failure and we put ourselves down.

Anger- Some of us who have been hurt by someone else hold on to that pain and use it to drive our lives. This way will hurt you more than you hurt them. Only forgiveness can help you get past this.

Fear- When we are afraid of new things we miss out on the excitement God planned for our life. The Bible tells us that when we understand God's Love and trust in it, it will take away our fear.

Things- Sometimes we let things control us. We ignore trying to make ourselves better, and focus on getting stuff. The fact is everything in this life will pass away. If having more made us better then losing things would make God Love us less. And he doesn't care about how much you have since he owns it all anyway.

Approval- Some of us make decisions for our life based on what others think of us. If we do this, then we will be disappointed because we can't please everyone. Jesus told us that we can't even serve two masters. Trying to please people will make you fail at pleasing God, yourself, and everyone else.

Most of us are caught in one or more of these traps at some point. None of them make God happy, fulfill our purpose, or lead us to feeling good about ourselves. But God designed a better way.

Purpose- When our life is driven by purpose, we have meaning, clarity, focus, motivation, and we are preparing for eternity. Purpose makes tomorrow worth living and today a lot easier. It is how we were made to live!

Remember that one day we will have to stand before God and tell him what we did with the life he gave us, and what we did with Jesus. What we did with Jesus will change where we spend eternity. What we do with our lives will change what we do in eternity.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. A life driven by purpose leads to confidence and peace.

Remember. "You, Lord, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you." Isaiah 26.3 (TEV)

Think about it. What would other people say drives my life? What do I want them to say drives my life?

Day 4- Made to Last Forever

Life is more than this world. Your soul inside of you goes on forever. And our time on earth is just a warm-up for eternity.

It is hard for many of us to accept that one day we will die. That is because this world is all we know. If you are not prepared, the next part seems frightening. There are only two places to go after our bodies quit going. Heaven or hell. And if we don't make the arrangements to go to heaven by accepting Christ, then we only have hell left.

This life is really just preparing us for eternity. We cannot understand eternity, because it is too much for our brains to grasp. But we do know that eternity is far more than this life could possibly be.

When we understand that this life is simply a stepping stone to real life, we start to do things differently. Some things become more urgent. Others lose their importance. Relationships begin to matter more than money. Our time suddenly becomes very valuable. We get a bigger view.

If you struggle with heaven as much as I used to, you'll be happy to know the cartoons are wrong. We won't be in robes on clouds and do nothing all day. Remember that the same God who designed this earth and all its fun has taken more care in developing our true home. The God who designed us knows what will make us happiest, and has built that to be our home forever. If we choose in this life to join Him there, then our true home is waiting for us.

Don't ignore that you are going to die, even if it seems far away. Realize that your time is short, and that things like people's opinions, success, and wealth in this world will all go away. Live your life so you can be happy that it affects your future.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Our bodies will die but we will go to eternity.

Remember. "This world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever." -1 John 2.17

Think about it. Since what I do affects me forever, what is something I need to stop doing today, and what is something I need to start doing today?

Day 5- Seeing Life From God's View

Did you know that how you see life changes your life? It's true. For instance, if you see life as an opportunity to get to be famous and popular, you won't be happy unless you have lots of friends. Your view of life affects your goals, your studies, your dreams, your relationships, your wants, your happiness, and much more. There are as many different views about life as there are people. Some see life as a fight, a party, an adventure, a roller coaster, or something else. But the Bible gives us three views. Today we will discuss how it is a test and a trust. Tomorrow we will discuss how life is a temporary assignment .

The Bible says that life is a *test*. We are often given tests in this life. The reason we are given tests isn't to fail us, but to help us grow. Being tested helps us to get better. If a teacher gave the same test four times in a row with a week in between each one, you'd probably do better on the last one. Even if you didn't study, you could see what you missed last time and know to try a different answer. In life you will be tested by anger, tragedy, opportunity, unhappiness, inconvenience, lines at the store, and all other situations. At each test, we can demonstrate and grow. We develop love, and patience, and other things that we can't develop any other way.

The Bible also says that life is a *trust*. A trust is where someone puts you in charge of something. You can use it, but it should be in good shape when it is returned. A good example of this might be borrowing your friend's car. If you return it smashed up and with two flat tires, then they won't want to let you use it again. If you return it full of gas and washed instead, they will think you are trustworthy. God has given us gifts, talents, money, relationships, and other things. Life is a trust in that he will see how we handle these gifts. We should return them in better shape than they were given. This is easier to do if we admit that they belong to God, not us, in the first place.

Money, which is a test and a trust, is one of the most difficult things to handle. The Bible tells us that where we put our treasure, our heart is. That just means that what we spend money on first is the most important. As an example, if we choose not to give our tithe to God this month so we can buy a movie, game, CD, or something else, we have just said that whatever we bought is more important to us than God.

We need to see that we are just passing through this world, and that everything in it belongs to and is returned to God. Only then can we realize that we will be accountable for how we treat his things.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Life is a test and a trust.

Remember. "Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won't be faithful in large ones." - Luke 16.10a

Think about it. What are some tests from God that I go through? What are some important things God has given to me?

Day 6- Life is a Temporary Assignment

You are going to die. I hate to be the one to break it to you, but your body will not live forever. All that you accomplish and store up in this life that is not eternal will be left behind. For most of us, these are not happy thoughts. For some of us, they are refreshing.

The Bible tells us not to get too comfortable in our skin. This world is not home for us. When you were born you switched homes. From a small tummy to a huge world. Sight, smell, sound, and many other things you couldn't know because you hadn't ever experienced them are today so common you don't think much about it. Heaven is that again. This life will seem so small and limited compared to the life to come. That's because this isn't where you were meant to stay.

Most of us forget that truth at some point. We live here on earth like that's the whole story. We make bad decisions because they seem best for this life right now. But this life will go away, and you can't be sure when. If it's tomorrow or a hundred years from now, at some point you will leave your body and all its possessions behind. Then you will get a real picture of what you've done with your life.

Whether it's a comic book, a computer, a car, a house, or a winning lottery ticket, nothing is worth getting in the way of your relationship with God. What you know as life today will end, but the next life will go on forever. Don't trade something eternal for something that will be gone tomorrow.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. This world is not my home.

Remember. "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." -2 Corinthians 4.18

Think about it. Since this world isn't my home, what am I going to do differently?

Day 7- The Reason For Everything

The reason for everything we do is to show the glory of God. That is the ultimate purpose of everything and everyone. God designed it all, put it all together, and without him it couldn't have happened. The glory of God is who God is. If you want to see it, look around. You can see it in everything. The grass, the walls, the air. Science is just now beginning to figure out how complex and amazing even the simplest things are. God is amazing and complex, and certainly deserves our devotion.

God deserves glory since he is the basis of all things. Unfortunately, two things don't give him glory. Fallen angels and people. Whenever we choose to ignore God and go our own way, we act as if we are in control of things and our plans are better than his. This rebellion is the basic part of all sin.

You can bring glory to God when you fulfill God's plan [your purpose] for your life. There are five purposes for our life which complete us when we balance them. They are:

Worship- It glorifies God when we recognize who he is and what he's done for us.

Fellowship- It glorifies God when we love other Christians.

Discipleship- It glorifies God when we work to become more like Christ, his son.

Ministry- It glorifies God when we serve others.

Evangelism- It glorifies God when we work to bring others into a relationship with him.

These are our five purposes, and in working towards them, we aren't just performing a duty, we are expressing love to God and working towards making our lives better. If we choose to be God's and glorify him, it requires a total life change. What we spend our time on, our attitudes, our friends, and everything else will change. But God isn't trying to take away all of our fun. He is trying to show us what life is truly about.

So now we have to decide. If you chose to live for God, then know that he wants the best for you. We already know what it feels like to live for ourselves. Guilt, fear, anger, depression, wanting, and so many more painful things. If we accept God and work towards glorifying him, these things fade away. Read the last few days of devotions again, and know how much God loves you. He wants what is best for you.

If you have not given your life to God, here is how. Admit you've lived your life for yourself and made mistakes. Then accept that through his son Jesus Christ's death on the cross, you can be forgiven of your mistakes. Finally, go out and work on fulfilling these purposes for your life!

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. It's all for him.

Remember. "For everything comes from God alone. Everything lives by his power, and everything is for his glory." -Romans 11.36 [LB]

Think about it. What can I do to be more aware of and thankful for God's glory?

Day 8- Planned for God's Pleasure

Did you know that you bring pleasure to God? That is why he created us. He loves us so much he is glad to have us around. Just like the parents of a new baby. Just having the baby in the house can bring joy. God also gave us the ability to experience this world. Our senses and emotions help us to be thankful of what God has done for us. And he gets pleasure out of seeing us enjoy what he made for us.

That is basically what we mean when we talk about *worship*. Realizing who God is and what he's done for us. This is a part of fulfilling our lives. God made us to recognize him because he loves us and wants our attention. And he deserves it. We were created to have a relationship with him, and only by doing this can we become what we were designed to be.

Some people think worship is boring. They confuse worship with certain things we do. Like sing, pray, read the Bible, meditate, and other things. All of these can be worship, but worship is really more than just that. Worship can also be being at the beach, or talking with friends, or wondering what it would be like to be able to drive. Any time that we appreciate this world God has made for us, we are worshipping.

Worship does benefit us, but that isn't why we worship. We worship for God, because he deserves it and he enjoys it. When we have the right heart and attitude, worship helps us too. But that isn't why we do it. So we need to worship even when we don't feel like it. If we are worried that other people won't like how we talk about God, pray, or sing, we need to remember that it isn't something we do for us or them. It is for God's pleasure.

If you ever get confused about worship, just remember that worship isn't part of your life, it is your life. We shouldn't wait until Sunday to worship; we should be worshipping all week long. It should start before you open your eyes in the morning and take a break as you fall asleep. God already knows our thoughts and attitudes, and we should try to keep them pleasing to him. That doesn't mean that you have to walk around all day only thinking, "God is good" to yourself. But it does mean that all of your words, thoughts, and actions should be thought of as something you are doing for God to please him. And the more we focus on who God is and what he has done for us, the more we will understand that worship is falling in love with God.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. *I was planned for God's pleasure.*

Remember. "The Lord takes pleasure in his people." -Psalm 149.4a (TEV)

Think about it. What is something that I already do every day that I can start doing as if it were directly for God?

Day 9- What Makes God Smile?

You do. That is your goal anyway. More than anything else, God wants a relationship with us.

God is happy when we put him first, above everything else. Above all of our things in this world. God is happy when we trust that he will take care of us. He likes it when we find out what he wants us to do and then we do it without complaining or making excuses, and without asking for details we don't need or understand. God is happy when we do our best for him. God likes us to go all out for him and not have great plans that we never finish or do a sloppy job. God is happy when we remember who he is and what he does for us.

When you do something that you are proud of, isn't it nice to have others notice? Sure it is. And God feels the same way, except that he has a whole lot more to be proud of. We need to keep him in mind during the day and be thankful for some of the wonderful things he does for us. God is happy when we use our abilities. He put them in us! He wants us to become ourselves.

We are human for a reason. God wants us to enjoy this world, and become happy people. There are sins that hurt us that he wants us to avoid, but there is more to life than staying on your knees all day praying. Make the most out of the opportunities that God gives us. Yes, you can play video games for God's pleasure, but don't do that instead of getting to know him.

God is happiest when we love him and put him above other things. He doesn't want us to ignore other things, but we should know that he made them for us and that he knows how they can help us or hurt us. When we put God above things, we find out how much he cares about us.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. God smiles when I trust him.

Remember. "The Lord is pleased with those who worship him and trust his love." -Psalm 147.11 (CEV)

Think about it. Since God knows me best and wants me to be happy, what should I put him in charge of in my life?

Day 10 - The Heart of Worship

Surrender is a basic part of worship. Without surrender, you cannot truly worship. Our problem is that surrender isn't a nice sounding word. Surrender is when a defeated army gives the victor its guns. Surrender is when a criminal comes out with his hands up. Our culture teaches us to never give up, never stop going, and not to quit until we have it all. But without surrender, we can never really worship God.

Surrendering to God is giving ourselves completely to him. It means realizing that God can handle it better than we can, and putting him in charge. A lot of us can realize that God knows what to do, but it is very hard for us to come to a point where we let him. Three things get in our way. Fear, pride, and confusion.

Have you ever seen a group do a trust fall? It's where someone in the group closes their eyes and falls backwards into the waiting arms of the group. For some people it is easy to fall back; for others it is harder. It depends on how much the person falling is willing to let go of control and trust that the group will catch them. I've seen a group drop someone. They didn't care about each other and didn't pay attention. Some people fear that God will let them fall, but when we understand how much he loves us, we begin to learn that he cares more about us than we care about ourselves.

Our pride also gets in the way. Sometimes it is hard to realize we are not in charge. We don't like to say that we don't know everything, or that we don't always make the best decisions on our own. Often, we will admit this but refuse to act on it. We say that God is wise, powerful, and loving, but then we don't look to him for help or accept his advice when it comes. We want to fulfill our own plans for our life, never asking the God who created us how to make ourselves complete. Pride is the first sin that humans committed. We need to learn to look to God, who is bigger than us, for the answers.

Surrender may still sound pretty bad to you. If you are confused about what surrender is, then it will be hard to give your life over to God and truly worship. Surrender to God is not bowing before a slave driver. It is letting God complete you. It is doing what he asks, knowing that he knows me better than I know myself. It is doing whatever he calls us to, knowing that as God, he has information that we don't. Surrender is accepting that sometimes what we have to do may not make sense, but trusting that God knows the right way to do it.

The Bible tells us what happens if we are willing to surrender. We can start getting peace. Peace about what to do. Peace about our conflicts with others. Peace about our past and future decisions. We are also then used to do mighty things for God. Our lives become exciting and complete, but with a peace that makes no sense.

The fact is that in your life you will surrender to something, and if it isn't God, it doesn't look very good. Some people surrender to money when they will do whatever it takes to get it. Some people will surrender to the will of others when they do things to get their approval. Some people will even surrender to chaos, by being driven from something different at each moment. If you don't choose to surrender to God, your life will be frustrating and disappointing to you.

Surrender is not a once in a lifetime thing. We must choose to surrender every day, and for most of us every minute. We have to surrender each decision to God, because as humans we tend to wander from a decision when the emotion wears off or we get worried again. Only by

continually choosing to give ourselves to God can we fulfill our first purpose of worship and move on to living a complete life.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Surrender is the heart of worship.

Remember. "Surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes." -Romans 6.13b (TEV)

Think about it. What in my life do I need to surrender to God?

Day 11- Becoming Best Friends With God

God really wants one thing from us. To be our best friend. God doesn't want to be someone you come to just when you need something. No one wants that kind of friendship. God wants to be in our thoughts and our hearts all day, every day. But he doesn't want to force a friendship with you, because that really isn't a friendship at all. He wants to spend time with us, without any strings attached. He likes you that much.

We were designed for this type of friendship with God. In the garden of Eden before the fall, it was like that. God just came and spent time with Adam and Eve. But ever since we decided that our way is better than God's, he has loved us enough to let us make our own mistakes. Now we are confused on how to get back to a real friendship with God.

If you want a friendship with someone who wants to be your friend, what do you do? You spend time with them. That way you get to know each other, you have good times and memories, and the friendship builds. Even when you go through tough times, and you will go through tough times in this world, it is easier with a friend around. So how do we spend time with God?

The fact is, he is with us all the time. So all we have to do is recognize this and do something about it. If we want to talk to him, we just pray. We don't have to kneel down and close our eyes and bow our heads. Those are habits made to keep us from being distracted while we pray. Real prayer is just going through the day, letting him know how you feel. Once a girl asked me for advice on how to pray. She said that she didn't know how to pray and she was worried she was doing it wrong, so I asked her how she prayed. She said, "I just go around all day and think to myself, 'God, what do you think about that song?' or 'Thanks for giving me friends' and so on." I told her that is exactly what God wanted. To be a close friend you talk to about everything.

Another good way to get to know God is through meditation. That is a big scary word that people think means you have to sit in a yoga position for hours on end. It really just means to spend time thinking about something. God gave us a lot of information for everyday life in the Bible, so spend some time reading it and then think about it through the day. If God says to love my neighbor, am I doing it? What would loving my neighbor look like? Spend time thinking about God and what he's done for us. The more you get to know him, the better you will understand how good a friend he is.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. God wants to be my best friend .

Remember. "Friendship with God is reserved for those who reverence him." -Psalm 25.14a (LB)

Think about it. How can I remind myself throughout the day to talk to God and think about him?

Day 12 - Developing Your Friendship with God

You can be as close to God as you choose to be. Unfortunately, that means if you aren't very close to God, it's because you don't care enough to do it. God wants to get close to you and is willing to do whatever it takes on his end. We just have to be willing to try on our side. In order to get closer to him, we have to make some choices.

I must choose to be honest with God. God already knows what is going on in our lives and in our hearts. When we don't admit how we feel or what we are doing, then we don't get very close to God. God wants us to let him know just how we feel about things.

I must choose to obey God. If we really want to get closer to God, we'll do what he asks and not put it off. By refusing to do what he asks or trying to say we'll do it later, we are saying that something else is more important than God. God wants what is best for us, so by not doing it we are hurting ourselves, even if we don't understand it. One thing that is very important to God is telling others about him. When we don't, we are telling God he isn't important to us. It's that simple. If we want to get close to God, we'll do it.

I must want friendship with God more than anything else. More than worrying about what others will think or say. More than money. More than anything. If I really want to get close to God, I have to realize that nothing else is more important than this. It will be hard at times, but it will always be worth it.

There is nothing more important to our lives than God. Every day we make choices to get closer to him or ignore him. God tells us in the Bible that he gets very offended by people who tell him they want a friendship with him, but then won't do what it takes. ["I know you inside and out, and find little to my liking. You're not cold, you're not hot-far better to be either cold or hot! You're stale. You're stagnant. You make me want to vomit." -Revelation 3.16 (the Message)] He knows that if it matters to us we'll do it, and he knows that if we don't do it, we don't care. No excuses.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. I'm as close to God as I choose to be.

Remember. " Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you." -James 4.8a (NLT)

Think about it. What do I need to do to get closer to God that I will do every day?

Day 13- Worship That Pleases God

God deserves everything you have. When we say that we want a relationship with him, anything less than our best is an insult. We are called to worship God with everything we have, but that doesn't just mean Sunday morning. That is only offering one morning of one day of the week. Worship is something we need to be doing all the time. Worship isn't just singing and praying either. Worship can be lots of different activities, but all of the activities will have some things in common.

We need to be accurate. We need to know who God is and worship him. If we don't read our Bibles, how will we know who he is? If we focus too long and hard about any one part of God, we can fall into thinking he is something that he is not.

We need to be real. When we worship, we need to make sure that we mean what we say. If we truly know God and understand him, we can praise him even when times are tough. There are lots of ways for different people to worship. Make sure that you don't try to force yourself into only one method that doesn't draw you closer to God. Some people like to sing, but others spend time outdoors alone. Some people like to read their Bibles more often; others like to go out and serve. None of these are wrong and all have their time and place, but don't force yourself to always do the same one.

We need to think about what we say. When we sing, think about it. What is this song saying? When we pray, don't say the same thing every time. If we continually say the same things, they begin to lose meaning to us and become rituals. Real worship is very meaningful. When we share something that is important to us, it hurts our feelings if the other person isn't paying attention. God likes us to pay attention to what we say and think when we worship.

We need to be down to earth. Real worship can cost us things in this world. Time, money, friends. We have to put God first or we can never truly worship.

In order to have a growing relationship with God, we have to put it first above everything else. If we don't, we won't. If God isn't first, we can never know true worship in a life changing way, and our relationship with God can become a burden instead of a blessing.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. God wants all of me.

Remember. " Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." -Mark 12.30 (NIV)

Think about it. What pleases God more, what I do in public or in private? What should I do about that?

Day 14- When God Seems Distant

No matter how hard you try, there will be times when God doesn't feel very close. Believe it or not, this is normal. A relationship with God isn't based just on feelings. At times this will be very hard to accept. When you feel great about your relationship with God one day, and the next it doesn't feel the same, our natural way of thinking is that something has changed. The fact is we are humans and our emotions can change with as little as our diet or sleep. Thankfully, God isn't as up and down as that. When we don't feel our relationship with God emotionally, there are some things we can do to help us stay on track.

Tell God what we feel like. It's okay to let God know it doesn't feel the same today. All through the Bible, some of the closest people to God let him know that they just don't feel close, and he always seems to appreciate us letting him know.

Remember that God doesn't change. We do. God has been the same since the beginning. If we keep that in mind, it is a little easier to trust that he hasn't moved away from us or forgotten us.

Know that God will keep his promises. He always does. Of all your friends, he is the one you can count on no matter what.

Remember that God has already done so much for you. If you have a relationship with God, that means that you have accepted his gift of Christ's death on the cross. Don't think for a moment that someone who has brought you this far and done this much for you would leave you there.

Even if God did nothing else to build a relationship with us, he would still deserve our full devotion. But remember that he stays and we tend to leave when it doesn't feel the same. Stay true to God and continue doing what brings you closer to him, even if it feels different today. Tomorrow you will be happy that you did.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. God is real, no matter how I feel.

Remember. "For God has said, 'I will never leave you; I will never abandon you.'" - Hebrews 13.5 (TEV)

Think about it. What will I do if I don't feel the same tomorrow?

Day 15- Formed for God's Family

You were made to be part of something more. You were created to be a part of God's family. In addition to our purpose of getting closer to God, we are also called to grow closer to each other. God treasures relationships. In order to grow as a part of God's family, there are things we must do.

Baptism is the first thing we are told to do. It is not optional, according to the Bible, and should not be put off. Baptism is a picture to the world of your choice to be part of God's family. If you are not faithful to this command, it is like telling God you don't want others to know that you belong to him. Obviously, if no one else knows that you are part of God's family, you will not grow closer to others and will not be able to fulfill this purpose in your life.

God is proud of his family. If you have accepted Jesus, then he makes you holy. The mistakes we have made aren't important. God loves us and wants us to get to know each other. If you ever feel down, just remember that God thinks you are very special, and help others in the family know that God loves them too.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. I was made to be part of God's family.

Remember. "His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ." -Ephesians 1.5a (NLT)

Think about it. How can I treat the other members of God's family better starting today?

Day 16- What Matters Most

The most important thing that you will do with your life is love. All through the Bible all the commands that people are worried about can be summed up by simply saying, "Love others as you love yourself." -Galatians 5.14b If we don't get it into our heads that life is bigger than us and stop focusing on ourselves all the time, we'll miss the point of it all.

It isn't easy. You can't learn to love others overnight, and even those who do pretty good still make mistakes. We have to keep at it until we get it right. That means we have to keep meeting in smaller groups. Times where we can get to know each other and find out about each other. We are called to love everyone, but God really wants us to love other Christians with a special effort because that is how people on the outside see that we are different.

Love can't be an item on our to do list in life. It has to be our to do list. It has to be in everything we do. It must be really important to us. God designed life to be completed by relationships, so without them we start to get lonely and miserable. How you treat other people still makes a difference after you've left the room. If you give someone a compliment and then leave to do something else, they don't stop thinking about it just because you aren't in their eyesight.

God also uses how much we love to see how much we can handle. If we never share what we are blessed with and are always selfish, what would be the point in him giving us more? In loving others we learn to give, and by giving we learn more about God and get blessed in return.

You see love most through time. Your time will run out someday; you can't make more. People have gone bankrupt and started over to make a good life, but a dead person can't get more time. So if you look at love taking time, you can see how it is an important decision. You have to put that choice above other choices. If you don't love because you don't feel like it right now, you missed the point. Imagine if parents said to their babies, "I can't change your diaper right now. I need me time." or "I don't feel like feeding you today." Love is a choice you make and you are blessed when you love even if you don't feel like it.

Don't wait to start trying to show others love. It will get harder every day you put it off. Look for ways to get to know others. Look for ways to be nice to them. Say nice things about them. Go talk to someone who no one else talks to. Try meeting someone you don't know and talk to them about God. Stop thinking about yourself and know that what God says is important, is, even when it doesn't make sense. Do it and see.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Life is all about love.

Remember. "The entire law is summed up in a single command, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" -Galatians 5:14 (NIV)

Think about it. Are relationships important to me? What can I do to make sure that they are?

Day 17- A Place to Belong

Once you believe in God, you belong to other believers. Our relationship with God was not designed to be a secret. It has to be shared to be real. We see in the Bible and in history that spiritual lone rangers don't make it. The way the Bible describes it the church is a body, and the Christians are the limbs and organs. If you cut off one of the pieces, the body suffers, but the piece dies. That is what happens if you cut yourself off from the church. You were created with a special role, and without you fulfilling that role our church cannot be complete.

The Bible makes it clear that a person is to take part in a local fellowship [church], not just attend. In fact, in the Bible, the people who weren't a part of the local fellowship were those who were kicked out for public sins. Attendance is not enough. You also need to participate and love others in the fellowship in order to grow, or you will eventually stop growing and separate yourself from God.

Having a church family identifies you as a believer, pulls you away from selfishness (thinking its about you), and helps to develop spiritual growth. The church also needs you. You were called to share your gifts, talents, experiences, and everything else to complete the church, and also to show love and to share the message of God to unbelievers. If you aren't a part of a church fellowship (big church), small group, and ministry, you will eventually stop growing and separate yourself from God.

Commitment to a church is part of fulfilling God's plan for our lives, so we will never be truly complete and content until we do. The Bible makes it clear that God expects us to do this. "That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all-irrespective of how we got here-in what he is building." -Ephesians 2.19 [the Message]

The Bible also gives us a picture of what happens if we aren't committed to a church. "In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't." -Romans 12.4-6 [the Message] Please take this to heart and commit yourselves to each other, as God commands us.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. I have to belong, not just believe.

Remember. "In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." -Romans 12.5 (NIV)

Think about it. Does my level of involvement in my local church show that I love and am committed to God's family?

Day 18- Experiencing Life Together

Real fellowship is not just getting together and hanging out. It can start with that, and building friendships is important, but real fellowship goes deeper. Real fellowship involves sharing. Sharing is simply giving and receiving. You tell about yourself and find out about others. You talk about what is difficult for you and find out the same for them. Fellowship can be sharing mistakes you've made, things that make you happy, where you feel you are with your individual relationship with God, and many other things. One of the best questions I've ever been asked was, "What is your biggest temptation?"

Now, obviously you don't want to share this stuff with everyone. That is why we meet in smaller groups within the big church. Smaller is better. In my experience, an ideal group would be between two and nine people. Ultimately, it is best when each person gets to and has to talk about what is going on. That is the fellowship that God wants for our lives.

Here are some things to look for in real fellowship. Authenticity. People get honest and share things they wouldn't normally share. If you share something that you are afraid will change someone's opinion of you, that is authenticity. Mutuality. When we need and depend on each other. When we first truly share, we will fear that the other person will leave us or tell others what we said. Once we truly trust each other not to leave, we begin to depend upon each other and grow in fellowship. Sympathy. We learn to feel what others are feeling, which helps us understand them and know better how to help. Mercy. When we truly build fellowship, we learn not to judge each other by our difficulties and mistakes, but learn to help each other through them and keep from repeating them. Mercy is not ignoring the mistakes; mercy is not connecting someone's value with their mistakes.

True fellowship takes time and effort. Don't be disappointed if it doesn't develop right away, or when you share your first struggle. But know that it is worth the effort, and that without it our lives will never have complete purpose.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. I need others in my life.

Remember. "Share each others troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ." - Galatians 6.2 (NLT)

Think about it. What is something I can do today to connect with another believer in one of the ways listed above?

Day 19- Cultivating Community

Fellowship is truly developed in a community. A community is a group of people committed to each other. It takes God's power to develop a loving Christian community, but he allows our choices to affect whether that community grows or dies.

If we want a community, we have to learn to be honest. We must learn that we have to open up and share some things, and we have to be honest to our fellow Christians when we see them in trouble. This does not mean we say what we want when we want, but we must not be afraid to do these things out of love and concern, and for our growth.

A community takes humility. We must admit we need help. We all do. We can't get help until we admit we need it. The more we admit our imperfections to ourselves and others, the more we can open up to growing and getting past our problems.

Community needs courtesy. We are all different. Every one of us has things that someone else might think is weird or wrong. Some people seem really difficult for us to be around. We need to understand that we appear that way to others as well, and learn to overlook things that don't matter.

We need confidentiality to build a community. Confidentiality simply means that we don't tell secrets that don't need to be shared. The Bible calls that gossip, and it is a sin. It tears the church down and hurts people, and what hurts the church and Christians hurts God directly.

A community needs to meet frequently. A community can't be built by meeting once a year. We need to meet often, and be committed to it, so we get to know each other and grow.

This isn't going to happen overnight or by accident. A community takes time and effort, but it will be worth it. A community that fellowships will bring us closer to each other, closer to God, and help complete God's purposes in our lives.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Community requires commitment.

Remember. "We understand what love is when we realize that Christ gave his life for us. That means we must give our lives for other believers." -1John 3.16 (GWT)

Think about it. What do I need to do to be a part of a real community that pleases God?

Day 20- Restoring Broken Fellowship

Relationships are important. Since it takes so long to build relationships, we are told to make sure we work at repairing them if they get broken. God knows that if we get in an argument, it is hard to make peace with the person, but we are supposed to work at it. We also need to work at not getting into arguments in the first place.

Here are some tips for helping restore broken relationships.

Pray first. When we talk to others about broken relationships, we tend to gossip. When we talk to God and ask his help, we work toward fixing the relationship.

Go first. It doesn't matter if you did it or they did it to you, we need to be the first one working toward getting it made right.

Think about them. Try to see it from their point of view. Arguments take two people, and you may both be right and wrong about some things.

Admit you did it too. Don't wait to see what they do, if you were in the wrong, even a little, admit what you did wrong.

Go after the problem. Don't bring up the past. Don't bring up new things. Don't insult the person. Just try to fix the real problem that got you here.

Cooperate. Don't try to fix unimportant things. Worry about the big stuff, and just try to get along when you don't see eye to eye.

Try to get back together, not get even. Marriages, friendships, even churches tend to split over little things. Work on living in peace, not trying to find out where someone is wrong and making that an issue. If they are wrong, try to work on that peaceably. Don't say, "I told you so" if they ever learn that they are wrong.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Relationships are worth restoring.

Remember. "Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody." -Romans 12.18 (TEV)

Think about it. What relationship in my life is broken, and what do I need to do to get it right TODAY?

Day 21- Protecting Your Church

Whose job is it to protect your church? I'll give you a hint, it isn't Superman. Every Christian has a responsibility to protect the church. Not protecting the building from super villains, but protecting the unity of the church. These attacks don't come from outside, they come from within.

It is our responsibility to stick together as a church. Those who don't work for the health of the church work against it. We are given several ways that each of us can protect our church.

Look for common ground. In the Christian church, we have the same God, the same Saviour, the same hope, and so many other things that are taught very clearly in the Bible. Don't try to divide. Try to focus on what is common to all who claim Christ.

Be realistic. Other Christians are people too, and they make mistakes just like we all do. Be prepared to get hurt sometimes, knowing that we all need more of God in our lives.

Encourage. Most people criticize when they see what is wrong, instead of cheering on what is right. Those who encourage others will build up the church instead of tearing it down.

Refuse to gossip. Do you realize that just listening to someone gossip is gossiping? According to Rick Warren, "Gossip is passing on information when you are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution." If you let someone complain to you about things that are none of your business, you are tearing down the church.

Try resolving conflict God's way. Talk directly to the person.

Support your pastor and leaders. They aren't perfect, but they are trying. Pastors do the best they can with each situation as they know how. They may not make every decision correctly, but they are accountable to God for the responsibility of doing their best. By supporting them, you support the church.

Now you are ready to be a superhero. Go and protect your church!

Thinking about my Purpose:

Know. It is my responsibility to protect my church.

Remember. "Let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony and the growth of our fellowship together." -Romans 14.19 (Ph)

Think about it. What am I doing to protect [or tear down] the unity of my Church? What can I do about that today?

Day 22- Created to Become Like Christ

Part of your design is to become something else. God made you to become like Christ, and if you are not working towards this purpose, your life will not have complete purpose.

We were made in God's image, meaning that our souls are immortal. We are given the ability to think, and we can have relationships with other people. Being made in God's image does not give you his power, but you can work towards knowing his values, his attitudes, and his character.

We are meant to become like Christ, and becoming isn't always easy. We were designed to be working towards this, and as much as being lazy may sound nice, we will never truly be fulfilled unless we are working towards being like Christ.

In order to become more like Christ, we must cooperate with God. Even when we don't understand what is going on, we must be ready to do whatever he asks, often before we even know what to do. We must do what it takes to grow. We must read the Bible, fellowship with others who are trying to grow, and be involved in God's work. These are ways God has designed for us to become like Christ.

We also need to realize that becoming like Christ takes time. It is something we must work towards and we will see progress, but we must also realize that the transforming will never be truly completed in this life.

For many, this effort doesn't sound like fun. However, those who are truly working at becoming Christ-like know that it leads to a fulfilled life.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. I was created to become like Christ.

Remember. "As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more." -2 Corinthians 3.18b (NLT)

Think about it. Where in my life should I ask God for help to become more like Christ today?

Day 23- How We Grow

Many Christians don't grow because they don't ever plan on growing. It's usually not that they don't want to grow, but growth doesn't happen by accident. Growth is a result of time spent working towards something.

Deciding to grow is only the first step. **We must be willing to commit to growth.** Growth will probably be uncomfortable and inconvenient. When we realize this and work towards it anyway, that is when we learn whether we really want to get closer to God or if we are just pretending and playing games. We can make excuses about how we are busy or tired or whatever, but if you want to get close to God you will figure out how to get around those things. If you don't care about your relationship with God, you won't change anything.

We need to be clear that we cannot earn our salvation. Salvation comes from Christ's death on the cross, and it is a gift for us to accept. Salvation is where we begin our new lives, but so many Christians stop there. We are given a new life, but we need to develop it. What if a baby chose never to eat? It wouldn't get very far, would it? That is where so many Christians are. If you are saved yet don't do anything to grow, you are like that baby who will never develop, and that new life that God offers won't become what it was designed to become. And life will be pretty miserable.

If we are going to change, we must begin at the beginning. Just trying really hard won't make it happen. We have to change our thoughts. If we want to grow up, we have to start thinking about things beyond ourselves. We must realize that our life will never be complete by focusing on ourselves, and that by thinking about the needs of others we grow.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. It isn't too late to start growing.

Remember. "Let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God- what is good and pleasing to him and is perfect." -Romans 12.2b (TEV)

Think about it. What is one thing I need to stop thinking about my way, and start to think about God's way starting today?

Day 24- Transformed by Truth

We are transformed when we replace the lies in our lives with truth. The Bible is a source of truth for our lives. The Bible is not simply a book, it is God's Word, which is active. It is alive and can give you truth and life, but we must first work on bringing the Bible into our lives on a daily basis.

First we must accept that the Bible is true. Not that it is true in parts or that it is a pretty good book, but that what is written inside is exactly what God intended to tell you. It is either absolutely true or not. What good is a compass if every time it goes to west, you say, "This compass doesn't know what west is. It must be something else." We either have to trust it fully or we don't really trust it at all.

Once we believe that the Bible is absolutely true, we must find out what it has to say. What good is knowing someone who has all the answers if you never ask the questions? There are five ways to get into the Bible and learn what it has to say.

Receive it. When you get ready to read it, prepare yourself to find truth and accept that truth when you do.

Read the Bible. How can you expect to find out what it has to say if you never look? It is sad that we expect that five minutes of Bible reading a week can compete with two hours of television. Television itself is not bad, but it certainly isn't the truth.

Research it. When you read the Bible, interact with it. Choose to write down things that you wonder about or insights that you find. The difference between reading the Bible and studying it is asking the right questions. Ask who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Remember it. So many people lie and say, "I can't memorize scripture." That says they aren't trying. You can memorize. You know your phone number. You probably know a friend's number. That proves you can memorize. You likely know your phone number because you kept working at it until you learned it; then you use it every so often. It is the same with scripture. The more we work at it, the more we are able to remember it.

Reflect on it. Think about what you read during the day. Don't just read it once and forget about it.

Now apply it. Take what you find out and put it into practice. It will likely take a lot of work in figuring out what to do then doing it, but by doing it you are fulfilling your purpose and transforming your life. It will be worth it.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. The truth transforms me.

Remember. "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." -John 8.31 (KJV)

Think about it. What do I know that God wants me to do that I am not doing? How can I start doing it today?

Day 25- Transformed by Trouble

God can use every problem. Our everyday circumstances are even more important in helping us fulfill our purpose than special Bible study times and other methods because they happen everyday, all day.

God does not create trouble for us. Trouble can come from simply living in a world where people make mistakes, and it can even come from our own actions at times. Trouble is part of life, but God can use it to help make us better, which will help us to get through other troubles that will come.

Romans 8.28-29 tells us:

"That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good. God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him." (MSG)

This passage tells us some things about our lives. God is in charge and can work in our lives, and we were designed to become more like Christ. Christ's life was developed by difficulty. Even when he was just born, someone wanted to kill him! [Matthew 2.13] It was through these difficulties that people saw what was really inside. [Luke 23.47]

When faced with problems, work toward responding as Jesus would. Remember that God is in charge and wants good things for you. Rejoice and give thanks, because God thinks you are worth making better. Finally, don't give up. It will probably be hard, but it is worth it.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. There is purpose behind every problem

Remember. "That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good. God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him." Romans 8.28-29 (MSG)

Think about it. What are some tough things I have overcome and have made me better?

Day 26- Growing through Temptation

Temptation is an opportunity to grow. All through our life we are presented with different things to produce spiritual growth, and temptation allows us to exercise our character by doing the opposite.

Temptation stays pretty much the same, but many of us still fall for the same old tricks. First, Satan figures out something you desire. Often, these can be good things but he will tell us that another route will make us just as happy. For instance, we may want security. God wants us to trust in him, then we can be truly secure. Satan would tell us that storing up money can make us secure, even though wealth can disappear.

First, Satan makes us question what we know. We find ourselves wondering about what we know of God and how he wants us to live, and not looking to the source for information.

Next, we accept the lie and choose to believe it. At this point we are telling God that our opinion is more important than his word.

Finally, we act upon the false desire.

Now that we know how we are tempted, we need to look at how to escape temptation. First, realize that temptation itself is not sin. Don't be scared by thinking that temptation is more powerful than God in you. Next, look for how you are usually tempted and try to break that pattern. If you are tempted to sin every time you talk to someone, you need to change those conversations or maybe even that friendship. Then request God's help. Pray quickly, and prepare to move to get away from the temptation, however God tells you to move!

Don't try to fight temptation on your own. Without God and others looking out for us, we will have a very hard time. Look to him and his word, then surround yourself with others who want to do the same thing.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Temptation is an opportunity to do good.

Remember. "God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." -James 1.12. (NLT)

Think about it. How can I become more like Christ by defeating a temptation that I often face?

Day 27- Defeating Temptation

There is always a way out. Satan will tell you that the temptation is more than you can bear, but he is a liar. The Bible tells us how to overcome temptation.

Think about something else. When we think about things, our mind works towards them. Don't try to sit there and fight your brain, distract it.

Ask others to help you. None of us like to admit we need help, but by telling others about our temptations, it brings them into the light. Pick a close friend or support group who you can trust and develop a relationship where you help each other.

Resist the devil. If we humble ourselves and are right with God, then we don't give Satan a foothold. First, remember that you are saved and a child of God's. Then use scripture that you memorized to counter Satan's attacks. Obviously, if you don't know scripture, you need to challenge yourself to begin memorizing some.

Realize where you are vulnerable. If you have fallen before, don't put that temptation in front of yourself again. Know that every one of us can make mistakes, but don't let your guard down.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. There is always a way out.

Remember. "God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it." -1 Corinthians 10.13b (NLT)

Think about it. Who could pray for me to help me defeat a persistent temptation in my life? It won't help unless I ask them to pray for me.

Day 28- It Takes Time

There is no shortcut to spiritual maturity. Just like a good friendship takes a long time to develop, so does a good relationship with God. God does not want to come in and completely change you in an instant; he wants you to grow up strong. That takes time.

There are reasons it takes time. Humans are slow to learn. We often repeat our mistakes, and we have to repeat what we do right in order to really learn it. We have a lot of new things to learn. Our sin habits and our old attitudes were developed over years, and it takes time to see things from God's point of view. We have to come to the point where we understand ourselves. Addicts usually think that they could stop at any time. We have to learn that we need help to get past what we want to leave behind.

Growth can be scary, and God wants to take us at a pace that does not make us want to run away. However, if we don't keep trying to get closer to him, even these small steps will be frightening. Habits aren't formed overnight. We have to keep doing the right things over and over until it becomes part of who we are. If the first time we did something it became a permanent part of who we are, we could never get past our mistakes.

We don't always *feel* like we are growing. Trust that God is still working. Keep a journal of where you are and what you struggle with, and looking back over it later will help you see where you have developed. Be patient. Accept that it takes time, and be glad God wants to keep working with you. Finally, don't get discouraged. Know that God is trying to help you make your life better, and when the going is hard, you are getting stronger.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. There is no shortcut to maturity.

Remember. "God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure he will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again." -Philippians 1.6 (NCV)

Think about it. Where do I need to keep trying to develop spiritually?

Day 29- Accepting Your Assignment

Part of your design on earth is to give back. You aren't made to simply stand around using up food and air. You are designed with a ministry, a way to give back and be a part of creation.

You were created to serve God. There are things that only you can do for God, because he created you so precisely.

You were saved to serve God. We need to give as we have been given.

You are called to serve God. As a Christian, service is part of the deal. Service doesn't save us, but as Christians we can't get the most out of life without it.

You are commanded to serve God. Serving is something we are told to do. So often we think we need to prepare more, but God wants us to do what we learn. Early Christians understood that there is no difference between truly knowing and doing.

The fact is that we will have to give God an account of what we did with our lives. Only by giving back can we have life to the fullest. We are built to serve, and when we serve we are doing what God wants of us. We need to constantly remind ourselves of this.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Service is not optional.

Remember. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." -Ephesians 2.10 (NIV)

Think about it. What is my excuse for not serving, and what can I do to get past it?

Day 30- Shaped for Serving God

You were shaped to serve God. A person who is manufacturing a new product needs to ask, "What will this be used for?" In that same way, God designed you with a purpose. You were designed with a specific ministry. From your DNA to your daily experiences, God has something special in mind for you.

God's design for you is composed of your **SHAPE**, or your:

Spiritual Gifts,
H*Heart,*
Abilities,
P*ersonality, and*
E*xperiences.*

These are things that God gives to you, and he will not let them be wasted.

Your *Spiritual gifts* are designed by God to complete you and help you in your ministry. These are gifts that cannot be developed without accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior. They are given only to benefit you but to benefit others as well, and you will not be fulfilled unless you use them that way.

Your *Heart* is the part of you that likes certain things, hopes, and enjoys. It is how you feel and what inspires you. When you allow God to come into your life he doesn't want to make you a robot and remove all of your joy, he wants to complete you. That is why he will use what makes you happy to develop your service. It's easier to do things that we like anyway! God designed you, and he wants to use the things that make you unique to better fulfill your life and the life of those who you will impact.

Tomorrow we will talk about *abilities, personality, and experiences.*

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. I was shaped for serving God.

Remember. "God works through different men in different ways, but it is the same God who achieves his purposes through them all." -1 Corinthians 12.6 (Ph)

Think about it. How can I see myself excited about serving others and enjoying it?

Day 31- Understanding Your Shape

You are unique and have a special mix of abilities that God has designed for you. We call this mix your **SHAPE**, and yesterday we looked at your *Spiritual gifts* and your *Heart*.

Your *Abilities* are your natural talents. Playing piano, working on scientific formulas, or teaching children are all examples of God given talents. Some studies have told us that the average person has from 500 to 700 different talents, and all can be used for God. When we do what God wants us to do for his glory, we are serving him and completing his purpose for us.

Your *Personality* is the specific unique way that God designed you to react to the world and events around you. You are deeply unique, and God designed you so that no one else is like you, no one else could take your place, and no one else can be who you are. You are irreplaceable.

Your *Experiences* are also part of God's design for molding you into who he wants you to be. Some different experiences could involve family, school, job, church, ministry, and even painful experiences. Believe it or not, God can use your pain more than anything else if you'll give it to him. Painful experiences develop your character, and you will be able to help others in similar circumstances. Also, painful experiences constantly remind us of how dependent we are upon God, and that we must be willing to share them so that we can help others come to God. Our mistakes, shames, faults, fears, and so many other things that we want to hide can be used by God to help others and heal ourselves if we choose to give them to him and let him work at completing us. Rick Warren tells us, "Don't waste your pain; use it to help others."

Through these five areas, God has designed you specifically to be able to do things that no one else can. Realize that by using each of these areas, you can work towards fulfilling your unique purpose for him here on earth.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Nobody else can be me.

Remember. "God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings." -1 Peter 4.10 (LB)

Think about it. What unique parts of my SHAPE do I have to offer my church?

Day 32- Using What God Gave You

God made you what he wants you to be. If that is what God wanted, we need to learn to rejoice in what he gave us, not be jealous or frustrated at what he didn't. He designed you with a purpose and it is in fulfilling that purpose that you will find true joy and happiness. So how do we figure out what our design is?

Test yourself. Don't always rely on some standardized spiritual gifts test. Get into God's Word. Spend time with him. Get plugged into different ministries. Then you will be better able to judge what makes you happy and complete, and what you are gifted in. Think about yourself. Not what serves you, but where do you enjoy serving? What is an area that doesn't feel like a chore, but you look forward to it time and again? In what area do others see you doing your best and enjoying it? These questions will help aim you toward a good area of service for you.

Look at your record. Where's an area that you've seen God work through you before? Where is an area that you have been hurt? Examine yourself and remember that God can use both of these things to develop your service for him.

When you find where you fit, enjoy it! Get involved and develop it. Do what it takes to be a part of God's work, and continually work at areas where you can improve your service. Don't focus on others and wish that you were them, focus on developing your shape and your relationship with God personally, and he will use you in a unique way that no one else can match.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. God deserves my best.

Remember. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." -2 Timothy 2.15 (NIV)

Think about it. What has God given me that I can begin developing today?

Day 33- How Real Servants Act

A true servant of God is one who serves others. Jesus led the way in this by washing his disciples' feet. We aren't called to be in charge of others or to lead others, but to serve them. God will develop your servant nature by giving you two ministries: one in which you are shaped, and one in which you are needed at the moment.

Someone who wants to follow God will be open for opportunities to serve. When we have spare time, yet always fill it up with things that amuse us, we are leaving no time to serve. If you put off your homework until the last minute and then an opportunity to serve comes up, you have to choose between two things you should be doing. Usually you will find you don't have time for your relationship with Christ after you are done with your math. We don't get to choose when we serve in our growing opportunities, we simply make ourselves available by giving ourselves time to respond to God's growth opportunities for us.

Someone who wants to follow God will also look for areas where they are needed. Pay attention to others. Yesterday I was at a restaurant and a man I was with started watching the door. We all turned around to see what was happening. Before we knew it he had gotten up to open the door for a woman on crutches. He kept his eyes open and responded as soon as he saw the need, and God made him a little more like Christ that day.

Someone who wants to follow God does what they can with what they have. Don't wait until the perfect circumstances arrive. Don't say, "If only." Get going and get closer to God. We are all imperfect and make mistakes. Don't let those shortcomings hold you back from getting closer to God.

Someone who wants to follow God will also try to do everything that they do with their whole heart. It doesn't matter how big or needed a task is, it simply matters that by doing it you are serving God and that you give it your all.

Someone who wants to follow God is faithful. This means that if you start something, finish it. Don't take on something else, even another opportunity to serve, if you are going to be unable to complete what you have already started. If you say you are going to do something, do people who know you trust that it will get done 100% of the time?

Someone who wants to follow God doesn't draw attention to themselves. You have to choose if you are going to serve yourself or God. If you are doing it for people to recognize you or to talk about it, you aren't doing it for God. Most of the people truly serving God don't get a lot of recognition, and when they do they humbly accept it. A true servant is doing what they do for God, and they know that God remembers and rewards those who do his will.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. I serve God by serving others.

Remember. "If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded." -Matthew 10.42 (NLT)

Think about it. Which one of these characteristics of someone who wants to follow God is most difficult for me?

Day 34- Thinking Like A Servant

In order to be a servant, you have to think like one.

Servants think about others more than themselves. If we think about ourselves, the blessings we will gain from serving, or thinking it is a bargaining chip with God, then we aren't serving with the right thoughts.

Servants know they don't own things. Servants realize that everything in this world will go away, and everything came from God. As a result, true servants aren't always trying to get more. They are trying to use what they have for God.

Servants start with Christ. They don't need others to think they are wonderful for serving because they know that Christ loves them. Until you learn that Christ's approval is all you need, you will be held back in serving.

Servants realize that ministry is an opportunity, not an obligation. When we understand ministry, we enjoy serving!

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. To be a servant I must think like a servant.

Remember. "Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus." -Philippians 2.5 (NIV)

Think about it. Am I usually more concerned about being served or looking for ways to serve others?

Day 35- God's Power in Your Weakness

God knows all about you. He knows about all your weaknesses. While we make excuses and fear that our weakness will stop us from serving him, he knows that everyone is imperfect and even uses our weakness. God is not limited by us. We need to learn to give our weaknesses to God.

Admit your weaknesses. Stop pretending they aren't there. Figure out what they are and write them down. God already knows them and loves you anyway.

Don't get worried about your weaknesses. They remind us to keep looking to God. We need to remember that his work is not about us, it is about him. Our weaknesses remind us who is really in control of everything.

Tell others about your weakness. One of your biggest weaknesses may be that you aren't willing to admit to others that you aren't perfect! Being honest can be scary, but you don't need to list your problems to everyone. The point of this is so that those you trust can watch out and help you. Then you can be more honest and humble.

Take pride in your weakness. When we have admitted our weaknesses and find that God uses us anyway, we have reason to celebrate. God takes the time to work with us. Until we admit our weaknesses to ourselves and others, we will struggle with feeling like we are trying to do the work by ourselves.

Thinking About My Purpose:

Know. God works best when I admit my weaknesses.

Remember. "My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness." -2 Corinthians 12.9a (NIV)

Think about it. Am I getting in the way of God's work by trying to hide what he and everyone else already knows? If there is a weakness I am not being honest about to him and others, then I probably am getting in his way.

Day 36- Made for a Mission

God designed you with a *mission*. When you do things for believers, it is your service. When you do things for unbelievers, it is your mission. Your mission is to bring other people to know God. Your mission is your fifth purpose and is very important to God.

Your mission is continuing what Jesus did. We are told that reaching out to unbelievers is not optional. It isn't something that some people do and others don't, it is something that Christians do. You may be the only one who can reach a particular person.

Your mission is a privilege. God is willing to use you to reach out to others. That should amaze you.

Telling others how they can have eternal life is the greatest thing you can do for them. There is nothing more important or worthwhile you can do.

Your mission has eternal significance. Whether or not you share the Good News with others can directly affect how they will spend eternity. Will anyone be in heaven because of you?

Your mission gives your life meaning. Everything else passes away. Why bother with things that don't last?

Our mission is not to worry about when our time is up or when Christ will return. Our mission is to spend the time we do have on things that are eternally important to God.

What will it cost? Everything. But what else is more worthwhile? What is worth more than giving it all so that one more person can come to know an eternal relationship with God in heaven? Is popularity more important? Is there a friendship more important? Is money more important? Nothing in this world is more important than bringing others to God. Realize that, and focus your life around that mission.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. I was made for a mission.

Remember. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." -Matthew 28.19-20 (NIV)

Think about it. What fear keeps me from telling others about Christ and fulfilling my mission?

Day 37- Sharing Your Life Message

God has shaped a unique *Life Message* for you. That Life Message is composed of four separate parts, each of which is part of your ability to share the good news of God's Love to others.

Your testimony. People can't be forced into Christianity. At some point they must take a step of faith and make it their own. What you have to offer that people can't argue with is what happened for you and how it has changed your life. Some people love to argue about things of faith, but you can't argue away hope, joy, peace, love for others, or other things that God develops. These make no sense to an unbeliever. Practice what you would tell someone when it comes up, and make sure you include the following: what your life was like before you met Jesus, how you realized you needed Jesus, how you committed your life to Jesus, and how your life has changed since then.

Your life lessons. These are things you have learned along the way. You should write down the things you learn. For instance, one day you may read in the Bible that foolish people get into lots of fights (Proverbs 14.29) and say to yourself, "I don't want to be foolish!" Keep a journal of things that you learn and prepare yourself to help others learn the same or similar lessons. Anyone can say, "You are stupid!" but more people listen when you say, "I used to do that, but then I found a better way."

Things that are important to you. There is so much pain in the world, but many people find one that is particularly hard for them to understand. Often, these may be things that have affected you personally. This could be people who suffer from abuse, depression, abortion, poverty, or any number of other things that hurt so many people every day. Sometimes what affects you may be more positive, and you may really care about starting new churches, missionary work, or even working with students [:)]. Find out what you really care about, and that will be part of your life message.

The Good News. What is the good news? As Rick Warren puts it, "When we trust God's grace to save us through what Jesus did, our sins are forgiven, we get a purpose for living, and we are promised a future home in heaven." How much better does it get than that? The Good News takes care of our biggest problem today, our needs for tomorrow, and the fear of what happens after death! It's Great News!

If you don't care about God, you will never care about sharing him with others. *If you do care about him, then you will find ways to share about him and what he has done and is doing for you more and more often.* Ask yourself this, "**Will anyone be in heaven because of me?**" Everything else in this life will burn away. Focus on what is really worth it. Go get one more for Jesus. Don't wait, don't make excuses, don't let your fear rule you. Obey God.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. God wants to say something to the world through me.

Remember. "Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect." -1 Peter 3.15b-16 (TEV)

Think about it. Write down your personal story today (include the four sections above: testimony, life lessons, things important to you, and the Good News). Share it with someone who believes in Christ and who you look up to. Now think about who else you need to share it with and share it with them tomorrow. Don't let fear stop you from doing what God wants.

Day 38- Becoming a World-Class Christian

God's call to us to reach the world for him is a personal call to you. You have two choices: either look to your own needs or to the needs of others. Looking to your own needs for fulfillment is what the world expects. Followers of Christ need to look outside of themselves. Those who don't know Christ are selfish and are never fulfilled, those who have accepted Christ need to look to the needs of others and give themselves away to get the most important thing in return, a fulfilling relationship with Christ.

In order to go from our old ways to the new, we must first *stop thinking about ourselves*. Begin looking to the spiritual needs of unbelievers. Start praying for guidance to help others get closer to God.

Next, *think beyond the places you know*. There is a big world out there and places where Christians struggle and are persecuted. Begin praying for people you may never meet: missionaries, world leaders, and those in other countries and places who need to hear about Christ. Pay attention to world events and pray for people to see God reveal himself in their times of need.

Think about things that are eternal. It is easy even for Christians to get caught up thinking about possessions of this world, but they all pass away. Work on thinking about the needs of others and how you can help. Your efforts to help others see Christ will not pass away. You can trade things that don't last for things that do.

Finally, *don't focus on excuses*. When you begin doing what Christ asks of his followers, all kinds of excuses will come to mind. Instead of not doing what you are called to do, begin working on creative ways to overcome those excuses. If you think you are too young, remember that 1 Timothy 4.12 says, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." You can be an example to others because of your age! If you think you have too little to give, read Mark 12.42-44. Start praying about ways that what you see as weaknesses can be gifts that lead others to a relationship with Christ.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. God's call for us to reach out to others is a call to me.

Remember. "Send us around the world with the news of your saving power and your eternal plan for all mankind." -Psalm 67.2 (LB)

Think about it. What can I do to help others around the world in the next year?

Day 39- Balancing Your Life

Balance is what brings health to a Christian's life. Do you remember the five purposes God has for your life? Love God- **Worship**, love your neighbor- **Serving**, make disciples- **Evangelism**, baptize them into- **Fellowship**, and teach them- **Discipleship**. All of these purposes can be found in the "great commandment" and the "great commission". It is very difficult to balance all of them, but health and growth comes from that balance.

Get a partner to help. Have someone else who you trust evaluate your life and help you put things into perspective. An outside viewpoint is often the way to see where you are falling short, and an outside encouragement is often the best way to keep going.

See for yourself. Take time to review yourself every now and again, and if you see yourself falling short in any of the five purposes, try to get back on track.

Write your own story. Begin to track these areas in your life by journaling. Write down both where you are doing well and where you need more work. Record both failure and success. Just as olympic athletes record the slight variations of their workouts to push themselves further, we should constantly be looking and striving to do our best for the Lord.

Help others. When you find something that works, let others know. Let others know the five purposes. Memorize them and pass the information on. The purpose of life is not a secret. It's good news.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Balance brings health and growth.

Remember. "Live life with a due sense of responsibility, not as those who do not know the meaning of life but as those who do." -Ephesians 5.15 (Ph)

Think about it. What must I do to get the purposes in my life balanced, and how can I use the methods above to stay on track?

Day 40- Living With Purpose

With purpose, your life can change the world. Without purpose, people get depressed and bored. In order to help keep your life on track, it is useful to develop a life purpose statement.

A life purpose statement summarizes how you see yourself fulfilling the five purposes in your life. It gives you direction and it defines success for you. It will clarify your roles in life, and express your unique shape. Take time to write it out and have someone who you see being obedient to God and understands their life purpose check it over.

You'll want to answer these questions for yourself. Keep in mind what you say is your goal, but what you do is your real answer.

What is the center of my life? What will I worship? Where will I spend my time and effort? What will I end up putting first in my life and dropping everything else for? Many say they want Christ as their center, but then they constantly keep themselves too busy and make choices that keep them away. **The things that keep you from developing your relationship with Christ are really your center.**

What is your life character? How will you practice discipleship? God is interested in your heart. *Are you developing it?* It takes most people a lifetime to build true character. *When did you start and how hard do you try?*

What is your contribution? How will you serve? Figure out your unique SHAPE that we talked about, and try to fulfill it. That will bring you the most fulfillment and joy, and help you make your best trip through life for you and others.

What will your life communicate? How will you fulfill your mission to those who don't know about Christ? Do you plan to tell others? Include your testimony. How are you going to go about bringing others to knowing Christ?

What will be your community? How will you fellowship? Are you going to try to follow Christ lone ranger style? (It doesn't work, by the way.) How serious are you going to get about connecting to other believers? Will you tear your church down by talking about Christians and their ministries behind their backs, or will you protect it and use biblical methods to resolve conflicts and get along with others?

Your life purpose should reflect what you want God to say about your life. You will want to fulfill God's desire for you in your time on earth. You are unique and have a purpose, and by fulfilling that purpose, you will change your life and the lives of those around you.

Thinking about my purpose:

Know. Living with purpose is really the only way to live.

Remember. "For David... served the purpose of God in his own generation." -Acts 13.36 (NASB)

Think about it. When will I take the time to think about and record my answers to life's five great questions? When will I put it on paper?