



Seasonal Devotional

40 Days of Purpose

Please see RevMel for a copy

Intro & Day 1 for review

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My Covenant

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A JOURNEY WITH PURPOSE

Getting the Most from This Book

This is more than a book; it is a guide to a *40-day spiritual journey* that will enable you to discover the answer to life's most important question: What on earth am I here for? By the end of this journey you will know God's purpose for your life and will understand the big picture—how all the pieces of your life fit together. Having this perspective will reduce your stress, simplify your decisions, increase your satisfaction, and, most important, prepare you for eternity.

YOUR NEXT 40 DAYS

Today the average life span is 25,550 days. That's how long you will live if you are typical. Don't you think it would be a wise use of time to set aside 40 of those days to figure out what God wants you to do with the rest of them?

The Bible is clear that God considers 40 days a spiritually significant time period. Whenever God wanted to prepare someone for his purposes, he took 40 days:

- Noah's life was transformed by 40 days of rain.
- Moses was transformed by 40 days on Mount Sinai.
- The spies were transformed by 40 days in the Promised Land.
- David was transformed by Goliath's 40-day challenge.
- Elijah was transformed when God gave him 40 days of strength from a single meal.
- The entire city of Nineveh was transformed when God gave the people 40 days to change.

- Jesus was empowered by 40 days in the wilderness.
- The disciples were transformed by 40 days with Jesus after his resurrection.

The next 40 days will transform *your* life.

This book is divided into 40 brief chapters. I strongly urge you to *read only one chapter a day*, so you will have time to *think about* the implications for your life. The Bible says, "*Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do.*"

One reason most books don't transform us is that we are so eager to read the next chapter, we don't pause and take the time to seriously consider what we have just read. We rush to the next truth without reflecting on what we have learned.

Don't just *read* this book. *Interact with it*. Underline it. Write your own thoughts in the margins. Make it *your* book. Personalize it! The books that have helped me most are the ones that I reacted to, not just read.

FOUR FEATURES TO HELP YOU

At the end of each chapter is a section called "Thinking about My Purpose." There you will find:

- **A Point to Ponder.** This is a nugget of truth that summarizes a principle of purpose-driven living that you can reflect on throughout your day. Paul told Timothy, "*Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.*"

- **A Verse to Remember.** This is a Bible verse that teaches a truth from that chapter. If you really want to improve your life, memorizing Scripture may be the most important habit you can begin. You can either copy these verses onto small cards to carry with you, or purchase *a Purpose-Driven Life Scripture Keeper Plus*.

- **A Question to Consider.** These questions will help you think about the implications of what you have read and how it applies to you personally. Let me encourage you to write your answers in the margin of

this book or in a notebook, or obtain a copy of *The Purpose Driven Life journal*, a companion book designed for this purpose. Writing down your thoughts is the best way to clarify them.

In appendix 1 you will find:

- **Discussion Questions.** I strongly urge you to get one or more friends to join you in reading this book during the next 40 days. A journey is always better when it *is shared*. With a partner or a small reading group you can discuss what you read and bounce ideas off each other. This will help you grow stronger and deeper spiritually. Real spiritual growth is *never* an isolated, individualistic pursuit. Maturity is produced through relationships and community.

The best way to explain God's purpose for your life is to allow the Scripture to speak for itself, so in this book the Bible is quoted extensively, using over a thousand different verses from fifteen English translations and paraphrases. I have varied the versions used for several important reasons, which I explain in appendix 3.

I HAVE BEEN PRAYING FOR YOU

As I wrote this book, I often prayed that you would experience the incredible sense of hope, energy, and joy that comes from discovering what God put you on this planet to do. There's nothing quite like it. I am excited because I know all the great things that are going to happen to you. They happened to me, and I have never been the same since I discovered the purpose of my life.

Because I know the benefits, I want to challenge you to stick with this spiritual journey for the next 40 days, not missing a single daily reading. Your life is worth taking the time to think about it. Make it a daily appointment on your schedule. If you will commit to this, let's sign a covenant together. There is something significant about signing your name to a commitment. If you get a partner to read through this with you, have him or her sign it, too. Let's get started together!



WHAT ON EARTH AM I HERE FOR?

A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump; a God-shaped life is a flourishing tree. Proverbs 11:28 (Msg)

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord....

They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NLT)

It All Starts with God

*For everything, absolutely everything,
above and below, visible and invisible, . . .*

*everything got started in him and
finds its purpose in him. Colossians 1:16 (Msg)*

*Unless you assume a God, the question
of life's purpose is meaningless.*

Bertrand Russell, atheist

It's not about you.

The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.

The search for the purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That's because we typically begin at the wrong starting point-ourselves. We ask self-centred questions like What do *I* want to be? What should *I* do with *my* life? What are *my* goals, *my* ambitions, *my* dreams for *my* future? But focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life's purpose. The Bible says, "*It is God who directs the lives of his creatures; everyone's life is in his power*"

Contrary to what many popular books, movies, and seminars tell you, you won't discover your life's meaning by looking within yourself. You've probably tried that already. You didn't create yourself, so there is no way you can tell yourself what you were created for! If I handed you an invention you had never seen before, you wouldn't know its purpose, and the invention itself wouldn't be able to tell you either. Only the creator or the owner's manual could reveal its purpose.

I once got lost in the mountains. When I stopped to ask for directions to the campsite, I was told, "*You can't get there from here. You must start from the other side of the mountain!*" In the same way, you cannot arrive at your life's purpose by starting with a focus on yourself. You must begin with God, your Creator. You exist only because God wills that you exist. You were made *by* God and *for* God-and until you understand

that, life will never make sense. It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other path leads to a dead end.

Many people try to use God for their own self-actualization, but that is a reversal of nature and is doomed to failure. You were made for God, not vice versa, and life is about letting God use you *for his* purposes, not your using him for your own purpose. The Bible says, "*Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life.*"¹²

I have read many books that suggest ways to discover the purpose of my life. All of them could be classified as "self-help" books because they approach the subject from a self-centered viewpoint. Self-help books, even Christian ones, usually offer the same predictable steps to finding your life's purpose: Consider your dreams. Clarify your values. Set some goals. Figure out what you are good at. Aim high. Go for it! Be disciplined. Believe you can achieve your goals. Involve others. Never give up.

Of course, these recommendations often lead to great success. You can usually succeed in reaching a goal if you put your mind to it. But being successful and fulfilling your life's purpose are *not at all* the same issue! You could reach all your personal goals, becoming a raving success by the world's standard, and *still* miss the purposes for which God created you. You need more than self-help advice. The Bible says, "*Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.*"

This is not a self-help book. It is not about finding the right career, achieving your dreams, or planning your life. It is not about how to cram more activities into an overloaded schedule. Actually, it will teach you how to do *less* in life-by focusing on what matters most. It is about becoming what *God* created you to be.

How, then, do you discover the purpose you were created for? You have only two options. Your first option is *speculation*. This is what most people choose. They conjecture, they guess, they theorize. When people say, "I've always thought life is . . .," they mean, "This is the best guess I can come up with."

For thousands of years, brilliant philosophers have discussed and speculated about the meaning of life. Philosophy is an important subject and has its uses, but when it comes to determining the purpose of life, even the wisest philosophers are just guessing.

Dr. Hugh Moorhead, a philosophy professor at Northeastern Illinois University, once wrote to 250 of the best-known philosophers, scientists, writers, and intellectuals in the world, asking them, "What is the meaning of life?" He then published their responses in a book. Some offered their best guesses, some admitted that they just made up a purpose for life, and others were honest enough to say they were clueless. In fact, a number of famous intellectuals asked Professor Moorhead to write back and tell them if he discovered the purpose of life!

Fortunately, there is an alternative to speculation about the meaning and purpose of life. It's *revelation*. We can turn to what God has revealed about life in his Word. The easiest way to discover the purpose of an invention is to ask the creator of it. The same is true for discovering your life's purpose: Ask God.

God has not left us in the dark to wonder and guess. He has clearly revealed his five purposes for our lives through the Bible. It is our Owner's Manual, explaining why we are alive, how life works, what to avoid, and what to expect in the future. It explains what no self-help or philosophy book could know. The Bible says, "*God's wisdom ... goes deep into the interior of his purposes.... It's not the latest message, but more like the oldest-what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us.*" God is not just the starting point of your life; he is the *source* of it. To discover your purpose in life you must turn to God's Word, not the world's wisdom.

You must build your life on eternal truths, not pop psychology, success-motivation, or inspirational stories. The Bible says, "*It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.*" This verse gives us three insights into your purpose.

1. You discover your identity and purpose through a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you don't have such a relationship, I will later explain how to begin one.

2. God was thinking of you long before you ever thought about him. His purpose for your life predates your conception. He planned it before you existed, *without your input!* You may choose your career, your spouse, your hobbies, and many other parts of your life, but you don't get to choose your purpose.

3. The purpose of your life fits into a much larger, cosmic purpose that God has designed for eternity. That's what this book is about.

Andrei Bitov, a Russian novelist, grew up under an atheistic Communist regime. But God got his attention one dreary day. He recalls, "In my twenty-seventh year, while riding the metro in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) I was overcome with a despair so great that life seemed to stop at once, pre-empting the future entirely, let alone any meaning. Suddenly, all by itself, a phrase appeared: *Without God life makes no sense*. Repeating it in astonishment, I rode the phrase up like a moving staircase, got out of the metro and walked into God's light."

You may have felt in the dark about *your* purpose in life. Congratulations, you're about to walk into the light.

DAY ONE | THINKING ABOUT MY PURPOSE

Point to Ponder: It's not about me.

Verse to Remember: "*Everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him.*" Colossians 1: 16b (Msg)

Question to Consider: In spite of all the advertising around me, how can I remind myself that life is really about living for God, not myself?