



# Christian Book Summaries

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Volume 2 . Issue 23

## The Purpose-Driven Life

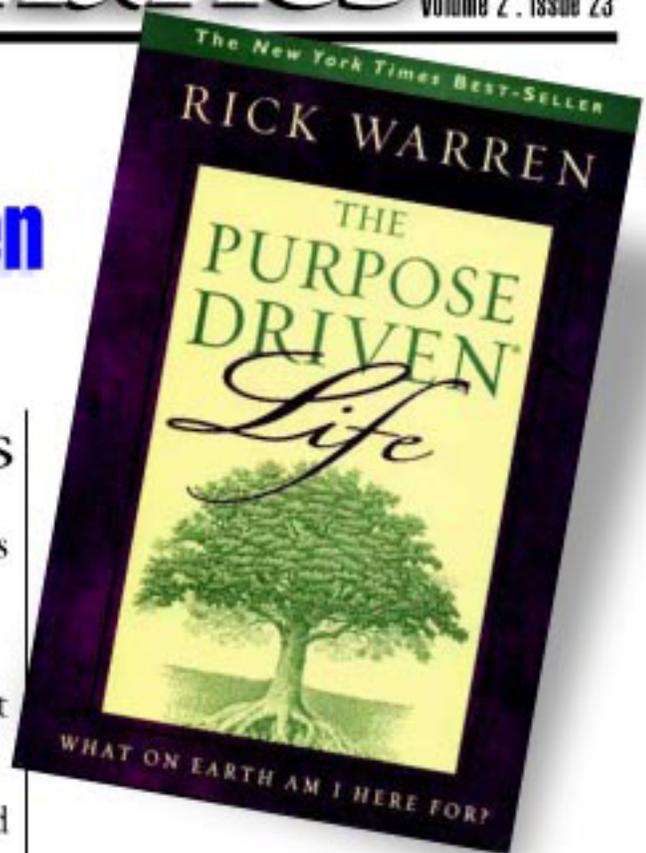
### A Quick Focus The Book's Purpose

- Explain God's meta-purposes for the Christian life
- Furnish a panoramic biblical theology of spirituality
- Challenge believers to commit to living according to God's purposes
- Offer practical suggestions and concrete steps for growth
- Help people to discover their individual role in God's overall plan

### The Book's Message

When we know *why* we exist, we will also know *how* we should live. And God has answered that all-important question. His Word reveals a fivefold purpose for our lives, allowing us to orient our attitudes and activities according to a successful game plan.

However, we must first lay aside our own agendas and submit to the wise authority of God's Word. And we must be willing to ask ourselves some hard, honest questions if we truly hope to transform this insight into change. Guided by a



by Rick Warren

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thorough, biblical roadmap rather than a piecemeal, ad hoc spirituality, we can find the joy of living life as God intended. 

### Seven Main Points

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## Most of us never find out why we are here, because we

are looking in the wrong place. Our self-help, me-centered approach doesn't work because we are the design, not the designer. Achieving success by reaching our own goals is not at all the same as fulfilling our purpose.

The Bible tells us that God had a purpose for your life before you were even born, a purpose that was part of His grand, eternal, and cosmic plan. You were created as an object of His love. Only in a loving relationship with Him can you answer the *why* question.

What drives you? What steers you through the twists and turns of life? Living according to God's purpose for your life offers the fulfillment that other motivations ~like guilt, anger, fear, materialism, and acceptance~fruitlessly pursue. These are powerful forces, but they are cannot help us to fulfill our purpose, because they do not propel us in the right direction.

### When you know your purpose:

- 1) *Life has meaning.* You can endure almost anything, because you always have hope.

- 4) *Life is motivated.* Purpose produces passion.
- 5) *Life is preparation for eternity.* Your inheritance will deteriorate; your accomplishments will be surpassed. God's opinion is the only legacy that really matters.

**“Every act of our lives strikes some chord that will vibrate in eternity.”**

Whether it's on a conscious level or not, most people have a metaphor that helps define life for them. If it's a party, then life is all about having fun. If it's a race, they are constantly in a hurry. If it's a contest, they want to win. This life picture will determine our expectations, values, relationships, and objectives.

The Bible presents us with three metaphors which, taken to-

gether, communicate God's more accurate view of what it's all about.

- *Life is a test.* Your character is constantly being both developed and revealed by tests. Every circumstance has eternal meaning.
- *Life is a trust.* Our time, our resources, and our capabilities are all on loan from God. We are stewards of all that He gives us, and we will be rewarded based on how we handle God's goods.
- *Life is a temporary assignment.* It is variously described as a mist, a fast runner, a breath, and a wisp of smoke. We must remember that life is short and that earth is only a temporary home.

We are like ambassadors sent into a foreign country. We're supposed to relate to the world around us, but we are not to become so fond of it that we forsake our loyalty to the homeland. Unfortunately, many Christians have developed a traitorous attachment to the world's pleasures.

God is not concerned that we don't feel entirely at home here, because He's prepared something better. Many great saints lost every-

# FOUNDATIONS

- 2) *Life is simpler.* Rather than basing decisions on the pressures of the moment, purpose-driven people act according to long-term objectives.
- 3) *Life is focused.* Too many people confuse activity with productivity. Purposeful living allows you to selectively concentrate on that which really matters.

## of a PURPOSE-DRIVEN LIFE

thing for God, but they ended up in His Hall of Fame, because they recognized that this was only a temporary assignment.

“The ultimate goal of the universe is to show the glory of God. It is the reason for everything that exists, including you.”

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There is only one ultimate good ~the glory of God. Everything, from the smallest particle to the greatest galaxy, was made to express and to magnify God's nature, His importance, His splendor, His power, and the wonder of His presence. The ul-

timate manifestation of God's glory was found Jesus. Scripture says that Christ fulfilled God's purpose here on earth, and we are to follow His example.



## PURPOSE #1

# Planned for God's Pleasure

**God smiled when** you came into the world. He created you, not because He needed to but because He wanted to. Bringing enjoyment to God is the very first purpose of your existence, and anything you do to bring God pleasure is called worship.

You may need to rethink your concept of worship. Worship is more than an activity, more than elements of a church service, more than a special religious experience. Worship is a lifestyle. Worship is not for us but for God. And the kind of worship that pleases Him is defined by our own passion and commitment to bring God pleasure.

**“Worship is not part of your life; it is your life... In the Bible people praised God at work, at home, in jail, and even in bed.”**

The Bible tells us to worship God continually. How is that possible? By performing every activity for God's glory and pleasure and in constant communion with Him. It's like being in love and thinking of your lover no matter what you do.

If our first purpose in life is to make God smile, we need to know what pleases him. For this we turn to the example of Noah, a man who made God happy.

- 1) *Love Him supremely.* Noah stayed close to God, even when he was the only one.
- 2) *Trust Him completely.* Noah trusted God when it seemed ludicrous. After all, it had never rained, and it took 120 years to build the ark.
- 3) *Obey Him wholeheartedly.* Noah had to do exactly what God said if he was to save life on earth.
- 4) *Praise and thank Him continually.* Everyone loves to be appreciated, and God is no exception.
- 5) *Use your abilities.* When God told Noah to leave the ark, He told His servant to go back to daily life. Everything we do, regardless of how mundane, can bring Him pleasure if we do it with an attitude of praise.

What transforms seemingly ordinary activities into worship? The key is surrender. At first glance, surrender sounds like losing. But in Romans 12:1 Paul challenges believers to surrender as an act of true worship.

Christ is the ultimate example of surrender. Facing crucifixion, He asked God to take away the suffering only if it would further the divine agenda. Similarly we submit to God by patiently enduring a difficult situation that will bring Him glory.

Worship begins with surrender, but it should result in friendship. One of the great mysteries of our existence is that the God of the universe desires to be our best friend. But to take advantage of this wonderful privilege, we must learn the six secrets of relating to a perfect and unlimited being:

- 1) *Constant conversation* through a continuous, open-ended communication, sometimes called “practicing the presence of God.” Rather than just setting aside time for devotions or spiritual retreats, God wants us to meet Him in the midst of our everyday activities.

**“If you are seeking an experience of His presence through all of this, you have missed the point. We don't praise God to feel good, but to do good.”**

- 2) *Continual meditation* on who God is and what He has done. Meditation is simply focused thinking on Him and not on our problems.
- 3) *Honesty before God.* God's friends don't play games with Him. God values authenticity more than clichés.
- 4) *Obedience in faith*, even when we can't understand what God is doing, deepens our walk with him.

True friendship is not just a passive sentiment. It implies action~not trying to impress God by great accomplishments but simply following the example of Christ. Remember that Jesus pleased God for 30 years before even beginning his ministry.

God is looking for wholehearted worship offered in spirit and in truth. Such worship must be accurate,

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**PURPOSE #1~PLANNED FOR GOD'S PLEASURE**  
continued from page 3

based on the truth of Scripture and the real nature of God. It must reflect sincere emotion. Worship should be thoughtful, engaging our minds rather than causing us to fall into stylistic ruts.

It also pleases God when worship is practical. He commands us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, because worship requires more than just sentimentality. Worship includes giving, doing, and behaving.

What do we do, however, during those "dark nights of the soul," when God seems distant and every religious exercise is devoid of meaning? Realize that this is a normal Christian experience. God sometimes tests our friendship with Him by distance, teaching us to seek Him rather than just an experience of Him. We need to tell Him exactly how we feel, focusing on His unchanging nature rather than on our murky circumstances. Even though we may feel abandoned at the moment, we must rehearse what He's done for us in the past and trust Him to keep His promises in the present and the future.



**PURPOSE #2**

# Formed for God's Family

**This purpose began** with God's plan to raise up a family and for you to be part of it. This spiritual family is made up of all believers~past, present, and future~and it will last forever. Being part of God's family guarantees us a rich inheritance: we will be with Him forever; we will be like Christ; we will be freed from all distress; we will receive rewards; and we will share in Christ's glory.

As members of God's family we have the wonderful privilege of being brothers and sisters of His Son. What drives this family dynamic is love, but learning to love is an unnatural challenge for us. So God puts us in a family of imperfect people to prepare us to live together forever and to witness to the world.

Most of the things we do will have a short-term impact and be forgotten, but love leaves an eternal legacy. Nevertheless, too often we still allow our busyness to crowd out relationships.

**"Time is your most precious gift, because you only have a set amount of it. You can make more money, but you can't make more time."**

How can you evaluate whether or not you are loving as you should? Consider where you spend your time. We invest our time in activities and pursuits that mean the most to us. Love's focused attention is what others want and need from us.

There are no Lone Rangers in the Christian faith. Jesus paid a high price for you to be part of the Body of Christ, but for one part to fulfill its function, it must be connected to the rest of the body. That's why God expects you to belong to a local fellowship.

Being part of a church family identifies you as a true follower of Christ, and it makes you part of a collective witness that no individual can duplicate. There you can learn to unselfishly give to other believers and to humbly depend on them. And they will help guide your Christian walk and keep you accountable.

The Body of Christ also needs your unique contribution, your spiritual gift. Since the five purposes of the

church are identical to God's purposes for you, it is an ideal place to experience synergy with others who are on the same path.

Real fellowship is more than just attending meetings together; it means sharing life together. This requires a small group of people in which everyone participates. Where there is real fellowship, you will find authenticity. People risk telling the truth about their struggles and are encouraged by mutual sharing. They offer sympathetic help and the mercy you need to be forgiven and to forgive.

**What does it take to cultivate community?**

- *Honesty*~Having the courage and grace to speak the truth in love. Often our fear of conflict keeps us from addressing our problems at their root.
- *Humility*~Pride creates a barrier to fellowship because it blocks God's grace.
- *Courtesy*~Considering the feelings of others, respecting differences, and exercising patience with less than ideal members of the group.
- *Confidentiality*~Gossip will kill community. Openness is cultivated when personal information remains personal.
- *Frequency*~Deep relationships take time. Members must get together often in order to reach this critical mass.

**"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less...Humble people are so focused on serving others, they don't think of themselves."**

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**PURPOSE #2—FORMED FOR GOD'S FAMILY**  
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True fellowship is not just about developing relationships; it is about repairing them as well, for conflict is a constant in human relationships. To restore a broken relationship, talk to God first. Then, whether you are offended or sense that you have offended someone else, contact that individual as soon as possible. Sympathize with his or her feelings, and demonstrate a co-operative spirit by confessing your part in the conflict. Remember that the relationship is more important

than the issue, so aim for reconciliation rather than resolution.

Unity is the soul of fellowship; so don't create division over differences. Don't be too idealistic, as people will fail, and only patient commitment to the group will keep you from jumping ship. Commit yourself to encouragement rather than criticism. Avoid gossip, whether you're speaking or listening. And support your church leaders in their peacemaking role.



Even temptation is an opportunity for growth. Through temptation God ripens the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. That's why we learn joy through sorrow and acquire peace in the midst of chaos.

**“God uses the opposite situation of each fruit [of the Spirit] to allow us a choice... Every time you defeat a temptation, you become more like Jesus.”**

**PURPOSE #3**

# Created to be like Christ

**God created man in His image and likeness~** meaning that we are spiritual, intellectual, relational, and moral beings. This image, however, has been distorted by sin. Christ, the perfect image of God, came to renew our character according to His example.

You cannot become like Jesus by your own efforts; you must make the right choices in order to take advantage of the Holy Spirit working in you. His power is released when you take a step of faith, laying aside your old behavior, changing your thinking, and adopting new habits.

**“Sadly, millions of Christians grow older but never grow up. They are stuck in perpetual spiritual infancy, remaining in diapers and booties. The reason is that they never intended to grow.”**

Christianity is not a philosophy, but it is based on truth. And if we abide in God's truth it will change us. Abiding in God's truth means accepting the Bible's authority rather than making choices based on false and ever-changing authorities like culture, tradition, reason, or emotion.

We must, however, assimilate that truth, receiving it with an open heart and mind. We need to read the Bible systematically and study it for an even deeper understanding of its message. Memorizing Scripture makes it available for instant retrieval. And reflection, or meditation, helps us to reap its full benefit.

But we can't read the Bible all the time, so God uses our 24/7 circumstances to shape us. He could have kept Joseph out of prison, or Daniel from the lion's den, or Paul from shipwreck. But He knew that in their lives, as in ours, problems prompt us to seek Him.

The short term may be painful, but God's long-term plan is good. Rather than asking, “Why me?” we need to ask, “What should I be learning here?” We grow not when life is easy but when we respond in a Christlike way.

Satan, of course, has a different goal in mind, and his temptation strategy has not changed since the beginning of time. He finds a sinful desire within us that he can exploit or a legitimate one he can twist. He causes us to doubt that God's way is really the best way. He deceives us into considering an enticing alternative. And, finally, we take that step of disobedience.

How can we counteract this strategy? Accept temptation as a fact of life, and don't be intimidated. It is not a sin to be tempted. In fact, the closer you get to God, the harder Satan may work on you. So, recognize your own weaknesses, avoid at-risk situations, and call on God for help.

Since God wants temptation to be a growing experience, He always makes a way out. Sometimes you must simply refocus your attention or remove yourself from that environment. Focusing on the temptation only makes it more attractive, so resist Satan rather than the temptation itself. And don't be afraid to call in reinforcements. Sharing your struggles with someone else and building systems of accountability is especially helpful when dealing with habitual sins.

It seems that God is not concerned about how quickly the process moves along as much as how strong the believer grows. Clearly, God could do this work in an instant. Often, we stand in the way

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**PURPOSE #3~CREATED TO BE LIKE CHRIST**  
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of progress. We learn slowly, and there's a lot we need to unlearn. We are unwilling to face our true selves and see where improvement is needed. And, once we do, the process of growth is often painful, tempting us to ease off. Character is just the sum total of our habits, and establishing good habits takes time.

Adopting a lifelong perspective on growth means that you have to believe God is at work in you, even when you can't feel it. If you keep a journal of what He is teaching you, it can help to remind you of the lessons learned. But be patient with God's timetable, and don't give up on yourself. God hasn't.



**PURPOSE #4**

# Shaped for Service

## Why are you here?

God intends for you to add value to this world, not just take from it. He created you and then saved you for the express purpose of service, to do His holy work.

This holy work is your *ministry*, and it's not just for professionals. Every child of God is a minister, called to full-time service. Even the maturity that God builds into us is for the purpose of serving Him better. If we have no outlet for all that God is pouring into our lives, we become as stagnant as the Dead Sea.

Service is important for at least two reasons. First, our eternal reward will depend on how much attention we devote to others as opposed to ourselves. Second, the only lasting significance we can find in life has to do with fulfilling God's design for service.

Every created being has a shape designed for its function. You, too, are a unique example of His handiwork, and He blessed you with ability and personality to serve Him in a specialized way. The acronym, **SHAPE**, shows how you can discover your role.

**S is for Spiritual Gifts.** God has given every believer certain divinely empowered abilities to build up His body. We are not to focus on the gifts we do not have but on using those that God has given us.

**H is for Heart.** God has given each of us a unique emotional "heartbeat" that beats more passionately for some things than for others. Since God wants you to serve Him with your whole heart, these passions can be a clue as to your place of service.

**A is for Abilities.** The average person has 500 to 700 different skills and abilities. Some are inborn, others acquired. Since they come from God, they are just as important, just as spiritual, as your spiritual gifts.

**P is for Personality.** God loves variety, and He uses all types of personalities and temperaments. It should feel good to do what God made you to do, and this will help you to determine where and how you should serve.

**E is for Experiences.** Experiences from your family, education, vocation, spiritual walk, ministry, and personal difficulties will help define your place of service. The painful experiences, which we would rather forget, are perhaps the most telling.

**"God never wastes a hurt!  
In fact,  
your greatest  
ministry will  
most likely  
come out  
of your greatest  
hurt."**

Don't compare your ministry to that of others, and don't try to copycat. God made that shape just for you, so rejoice in it. Be satisfied with God's design but not with your level of proficiency. Your giftedness can be developed. Practice, experiment, and get good feedback to give God your best.

Discovering the ministry God made you to perform is one thing, but learning to be a servant is quite another, as illustrated by the disciples' wrangling about which of them was the greatest. Sometimes God even gives us ministries that are not fitted to us, just to keep us from using our shape as an excuse not to serve. Your primary ministry should fit your shape, but remember that your secondary ministry is whatever needs to be done right now.

Real servants don't get bogged down with activities in which they cannot make an impact. They remain available to respond to God when He opens up an opportunity. Real servants pay attention to the needs around them. They are sensitive and spontaneous, always at the ready. They are not perfectionists but trust that God can use their best effort. Real servants serve with the same attitude in both big and small responsibilities and stay faithful to their ministries, even when times are hard and others let them down. They don't need constant attention and celebrity status to serve.

This attitude of service doesn't just happen; it usually requires an attitude adjustment. Here's how to tell if you have the true servant mindset.

1. *Do you think more about others than yourself?* Serving to get attention or admiration is manipulation, not ministry.
2. *Do you think like a steward or like an owner?* Servants know that their resources don't belong to them.
3. *Do you think about your own work or focus on what others are doing?* Real servants don't

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have time for competition and they are not derailed by criticism.

4. *Do you base your identity on Christ or on your ministry?* If it's the latter you'll constantly be trying to prove yourself by looking important rather than doing whatever needs to be done.
5. *Do you think of ministry as an opportunity or an obligation?* If you're not excited by the prospect of serving there must be something wrong.

What do we do about our weaknesses in ministry? Naturally, we want to avoid them at all costs. But not God~He delights in using our weaknesses. Weaknesses may include physical limitations, emotional traumas, or below-average talent. Everybody has some; so don't be afraid to admit your weaknesses. God pours His power into clay jars.

The real trick is to be content with our weaknesses. These frailties cause us to depend on God; they prevent arrogance, they encourage interdependence; and, perhaps most importantly, they help us to minister compassionately. The great heroes of the faith were people who ministered through their weaknesses.

In order to capitalize on your weaknesses in ministry, become vulnerable enough to share them. You will find that taking this risk gives you more freedom and invites God's grace to bless your ministry. So, like Paul, thank God for your limitations!

**“Our strengths create competition, but our weaknesses create community.”**



## PURPOSE #5

# Made for a Mission

**God invites you** to join Him in the important work He is doing in the world. We've already spoken of your service to believers, which is your ministry. But God also calls you to serve unbelievers, and this is called your mission. You share in this great task with every other Christian, and yet there is a unique role in God's program reserved especially for you.

Our mission is to reconcile others with God so that He can fulfill His five purposes in them as well. Jesus began this mission, and now He has appointed us to complete it. There's nothing more meaningful that we can do for another human being than to share with them the Good News.

You don't have to quit your job to share in this mission. In fact, God has strategically placed you right where you are. There are people that only you can reach, and this unique role gives your life meaning.

**“To fulfill your mission will require that you... stop praying selfish prayers like ‘God bless what I want to do.’ Instead you pray, ‘God help me to do what you’re blessing!’ ”**

God has developed in you a life message that He wants to share with the world. The essence of witnessing is sharing your own testimony. Your story is unique; it's easier to grasp than theological principles; and it's hard to argue with. Tell what your life was like before Christ, how you knew you needed Him, how you committed your life to Jesus, and how He has made a difference.

You should make a note of some of the major life lessons you have learned, so that you'll be ready

to share them with others. These might include lessons from difficulties you have gone through, from other people's experiences, or from Scripture. Speak out about the godly passions He has stirred up in you~perhaps a cause or a group of people with special needs. And always look for opportunities to share the message of how others can come to know Christ for themselves.

You have a choice of being either a world-class Christian or a worldly Christian. Worldly Christians are in it for personal fulfillment. You'll find them at concerts and seminars, not at missions conferences. World-class Christians, on the other hand, are the only people on the planet who are fully alive, because they have discovered their calling.

History is *His story*, and God has invited you to be part of it. In our shrinking world it is increasingly easy to make a difference. In a few hours you can take a short-term trip to a distant culture, and in a few minutes you can correspond over the Internet. Here are some tips for thinking like a world-class Christian:

- 1) *Shift your thinking from yourself to others.* Focus on the spiritual needs of the people around you and consider ways you can move them toward God.
- 2) *Shift your thinking from local to global.* God is active everywhere, and you can join Him through prayer. Watch the news to see how changing events will open up evangelistic doors. Take a mission trip.
- 3) *Shift from temporal to eternal.* Don't waste your time with the world's fads; invest your time and resources in a project that will last forever.

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**PURPOSE #5—MADE FOR A MISSION**  
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- 4) *Shift from excuses to creative involvement.* Most Christians have never even considered whether or not God wants them to serve cross-culturally. Don't wait for a special call. You've already been called. Instead of making excuses, look for opportunities.



## A Balanced Purpose

### In the Olympics

an athlete must excel at five sports to win a medal in the Pentathlon. Our lives are much the same. The truly successful individual learns to fulfill all five of God's purposes and, as a result, lives a balanced life.

**“A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will make you a great Christian.”**

Such a balance is not easy, because we naturally concentrate more on the things that excite us most. If you want to develop a well-rounded spiritual life, you can start by joining a small group. Talk through these principles with others and gain from their feedback, examples, and encouragement. Make a personal study of the more than 1,000 Scripture passages noted in this book. Give yourself a spiritual checkup regularly to make sure that you are giving adequate attention to each of God's purposes.

Chart your spiritual journey in a journal. This reinforces the lessons learned and clarifies what God is doing in your life. Be honest, and write both the wonderful and the unpleasant.

Don't forget to share your insights. Now that you know God's purpose for your life, you can carry the message to others. Like Jesus, we want to complete the work God

has given us to do, living a purpose-driven life and passing it along.

Living on purpose is real life; otherwise you're just existing. Everyone struggles with the great questions of identity, importance, and impact. When you discover God's five purposes you will know the answers and have a firm basis for living.

The challenge now is to re-orient your life to fulfill these purposes. Writing a personal life purpose statement can help. It will help to define success for you in terms of God's overarching design. In your life purpose statement you define the center of your life. You'll know when God is at the center. When He is, you worship. When He's not, you worry.

**“God is far more interested in what you are than what you do. Remember, you will take your character into eternity, but not your career.”**

“But how about God's will for my schooling, my career, or my marriage?” you ask. The fact is that these issues are secondary to fulfilling God's basic purposes, which you can do in a variety of settings.

This is your opportunity to follow David's example, serving God's purpose in your generation. Paul, too, lived a purpose-driven life. There is no greater legacy. Work for a reward that lasts forever, and live for the day when you will stand before the throne, praising God forever for His eternal purpose.



## Christian Book Summaries

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