

**WHAT ON EARTH AM I HERE FOR?
Colossians 1:15-20**

**Purpose Driven Life Lenten Series
February 17, 2010
Pastor Nathan J. Thompson**

Welcome to 40 Days of Purpose. We're ready to start on this journey I've been talking about these past few weeks. Today we're going to look at life's three greatest questions: 1) The question of existence—Why am I alive? 2) The question of significance—Does my life matter? And 3) the question of intention—What is my purpose?

Now this first question, “Why am I alive?” is not exactly new. It has been asked by people for thousands of years. And perhaps you have also struggled with this question. A person by the name of Jack Hanley once wrote, “I hope life isn't a joke, because I don't get it.”

Through the years many well-known philosophers, scientists, writers and intellectuals have pondered this question, “What is the purpose of life.” And some have actually admitted that they didn't have any idea. Carl Jung, the famous psychiatrist is quoted as saying, “I don't know the meaning, the purpose of life, but it looks as if something were meant by it.”

You know, my friends, this is really sad because a life without purpose isn't a life worth living. It is no coincidence that suicide is the number two killer of teenagers and that it is touching many others. You see if you take God out of the equation, as so many have done and want to do, you don't really have very many other alternatives to try and find meaning.

You can certainly try the mystical approach—look within and find your purpose within. And yet if that really worked all of us would know our purpose. And yet it takes more than looking within. You can try the survivalist approach—the purpose of life is just to stay alive. In other words, you're just here for biological and reproductive reasons.

You can try the hedonistic approach—the purpose of life is pleasure; have fun, party-hardy. You can try the materialistic approach—life is all about the acquisition of things. Your life is measured by the things you own. And yet the problem with that is that the one who dies with the most toys still dies.

You can also try the self-help approach. Go into any bookstore these days and you will find hundreds of books, many of which talk about your life purpose. And yet most of these books say the same thing—you've got to invent or create your own purpose in life.

And they all give the same basic approach—discover your dreams, go after your goals, dream big dreams, believe you can achieve, have faith, figure out what you're good at, never give up. Now these are all good advice and they will, if you do these things, make you a success.

And yet being a success, and knowing your purpose in life, are not the same thing. You can be a great success and still not know, “What am I here for?” You see, my friends, the purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, happiness or your own peace of mind. You were made by God and until you understand his purposes life won't make sense.

So why does God want us here? Proverbs 16:4 says, "*The Lord has made everything for his own purpose.*" We are created for God's purposes. God is the one who has five major purposes for you and in the next 40-days we're going to read about, discuss and learn about these purposes.

Today, however, I want you to understand that God created you to love you. You were created to be loved by God. God is love and God wanted to create something to love and so he created you. He didn't need you, but he wanted you. You were created to be loved by God.

Now the second key question of life is, "Does my life matter?" The prophet said in Isaiah 49:4a, "*I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain for nothing.*" You, however, my friend, were made for meaning and if you don't have a purpose, life doesn't make sense.

Now it is important to note that each person is going to go through life living at one of three levels. The first and lowest level is the survival level. This is where most people are living today. In the survival mode they are just getting by, just existing, not really living. They simply put in their time and live for the weekend.

A step up from that is the success level. This is where many of you may be. By the world's standards you've got it made. You've got a comfortable living, you have possessions, you have freedom, you may have prestige and may be quite successful. And yet many are asking, "If I'm so successful how come I don't feel fulfilled?"

Well to do that you need to go to the third level which is the significance level. And yet how do you do this? Well you first of all need to know the meaning of life. You secondly need to know how much you matter to God. And thirdly you need to know and live God's purposes for you.

The good news, my friends, is that God wants you to know how much you matter to him and he wants you to know his purposes. He doesn't want you to live in the dark. And if you journey with us these next 40 days we're going to talk about and look at these things.

And as we do this it is important to understand that these purposes of God are not just for these next few months, or simply for the rest of your days on earth. No, God's purposes are eternal. God says, "I have plans and purposes for your life but they don't end in death." Remember this: I was made to be loved by God and I was made to last forever.

So to the question of why am I alive God says, "I made you to love you." To the question of does my life matter God says, "Yes, you matter. You matter so much that I intend to keep you alive for the rest of eternity."

So then comes the third question, "What is my purpose?" What on earth am I here for? My friends, we live in a time when many are questioning the existence of God. And yet if there is no God you are just a freak of nature and your life doesn't matter. And yet the truth is that there is a living God and he made you for a purpose.

Now if you want to know the purpose of a gadget or how it works, you need to either talk to the creator or inventor of this thing, or you need to look in the owner's manual. And in the same

way, the only way you know the purpose of life is not in some self-help book, or in some meditation process, or in some holistic philosophy.

The only way is that you've got to talk to the Creator and look in the owner's manual. That's the only way to know your purpose. It all starts with God, continues with God, and ends with God. *"In the beginning, God created."* Colossians 1:16 says, *"All things were created by him, and in him all things hold together."* If you want to know your purpose, start getting to know God.

The more you get to know God, the more you're going to understand the wisdom of God, which means the more you will understand the meaning and purpose of life. You're not going to learn it on some talk show. You're not going to learn it at some séance, or reading tea leaves, or going to a seminar. The only way is to get to know God in a personal way. For it's all about God.

Now you may be asking, why 40 days? Well, if you remember the Bible is very clear that God considers 40 days to be a spiritually significant time period. Noah's life was transformed by 40 days of rain. Moses' life was transformed by 40 days on Mt. Sinai.

The spies were transformed by 40 days in the Promised Land. The city of Ninevah was transformed in 40 days. Jesus was empowered for ministry by spending 40 days in the desert. And the disciples were transformed by 40 days with Jesus after the resurrection.

The next 40 days, my friends, are going to transform your life. I am absolutely confident of that. If you take 15-20 minutes each day to read the Purpose Driven Life daily messages, if you participate in our Lenten services with a video each week, if you worship and share in all seven messages and if you pray and listen with an open heart, your life will definitely be transformed.

Now I realize that each of you here today are at different stages in your spiritual journey. And yet that doesn't matter. This series can help you no matter what stage you are in. Some of you are seekers and are saying, "I'm not sure I buy into this, but I'm intellectually honest enough to check it out." Congratulations, we're glad to have you on the journey.

Some of you are brand new believers and you're excited about growing the right way. Some of you are stumblers who say, "I call myself a Christian, but I'm not very close to God, and I have been living lately more for my plans than for God's." Well 40 days is the time to come home, to come back to a life of meaning that really matters.

And some of you are strong believers and you're going to not only going to grow much deeper with God, but you're also going to bring others along, too. You're going to pass this message on and help someone else know God's love and purpose for them. Your life and faith are going to grow in amazing ways these next days as you are open to God's Holy Spirit.

My friends, I want you to know that God had a purpose for bringing you here today. He wants you to know him, to believe in him, and you wants you to know his purpose for you. So may we all pray today, "Jesus, come into my life and help me understand your purposes. Amen."